

**Hysan Development, Bei Shan Tang Foundation and Art Museum of CUHK Present:
“A Century of Splendour: 20th Century Chinese Furniture from the Lee Family
Collection” Showcase**

Highlighting Historical Canton-style Furniture that was used in the Family’s “大屋”



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(Hong Kong, 25 October 2024) In celebration of the centenary of Lee Gardens, Hysan Development (“Hysan”), in collaboration with the Bei Shan Tang Foundation and Art Museum of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (“CUHK”), proudly presents the showcase **“A Century of Splendour: 20th Century Chinese Furniture from the Lee Family Collection”**. From now to 20 November, the showcase takes place at Urban Sky on 9/F of Hysan Place, displaying exquisite antique Chinese furniture from the Lee family’s collection. The showcase recreates the ambiance of Chinese businessmen’s mansions from a century ago, highlighting the unique blend of Eastern and Western influences. Some of these treasured pieces are revealed to the public for the first time, an exclusive chance to experience firsthand the glamour of a past era. Along with the showcase, a short, animated film is presented, narrating the story of the Lee family’s patriarch, Mr Lee Hysan and his residence on Kennedy Road. Additionally, the FORUM at Eslite, located on the same floor, features a collection of old photos, offering glimpses into the daily life of the Lee family during that period.



Left: The exterior of “大屋”; Right: The Living Room of “大屋”

Mr Lee Hysan received his education in the United States during his youth. He returned to China and then moved to Hong Kong, and built his residence on Kennedy Road. In 1923, he acquired East Point Hill in Causeway Bay, making it the foundation for what would become Lee Gardens, the cornerstone of the family business. These pivotal decisions anchored the destiny of the Lee family in Hong Kong and showed the Lee family's confidence in the city.

Over the century, Lee Gardens has evolved into a vibrant community, with the Lee family growing alongside generations of Hong Kong people. This furniture showcase not only displays the Lee family's cherished collection and their enthusiasm in promoting Chinese art and culture, but also highlights Hysan's century-long legacy as one of Hong Kong's pioneering establishments.

Ms Irene Lee, Chairman of Hysan Development Company Limited shared her fond memories of “大屋”. “After my father and uncle established their own families, they lived in ‘大屋’ with my grandmother, Wong Lan Fong. I spent my childhood there, surrounded by loved ones, who created enduring memories that I hold dear to this day. ‘大屋’ was far more than a building—it was a sanctuary, the emotional connection of our family's legacy.”

“The compound was like an amusement park for the children. We learnt to ride our bikes in the back garden, which had mango, lychee, wampi and magnificent magnolia trees as well as many fruit and flowering plants from our ancestral village. The next level had man-made rockery and fish ponds, and a clay tennis court which my father, a keen tennis player, enjoyed looking after. Another level was a swimming pool. We used to have flower shows in our garden, the most impressive one was the chrysanthemum display.”

“The children were allowed to roam freely in the house. The main reception rooms had a very large lacquer screen adorned with precious stones and gold and silver set in box shapes. We invented our first climbing wall game there! This screen is displayed at Hysan Place now.”

She continued, “This furniture display also features a curated selection of Canton-style furniture pieces that were once placed in the drawing room. These pieces not only represent traditional Chinese craftsmanship, but are also imbued with Western aesthetic influence. The establishment of ‘大屋’ stood as a testament to our family's commitment to establishing roots in Hong Kong, a city that will always be our home.”

“We are proud to present the furniture jointly with Art Museum of The Chinese University of Hong Kong and Bei Shan Tang Foundation. My father and Uncle J.S. donated the furniture to the Art Museum so that the public can enjoy viewing these heritage pieces and learning more about Hong Kong's history. We like to thank our partners for bringing the Canton-style furniture to Causeway Bay to showcase them to a new audience.”

Ms Lillian Kiang, CEO of the Bei Shan Tang Foundation, remarked, “The Bei Shan Tang Foundation has always been committed to advancing research and expertise in Chinese art and culture, aiming to enhance the public's understanding and appreciation of Chinese heritage. Established by our founder Dr Lee Jung Sen, much of the Bei Shan Tang collection has since been generously donated to Art Museum of The Chinese University of Hong Kong. These donations not only support academic research, but also allow the public to admire these valuable artefacts through exhibitions. The Chinese furniture featured in this showcase holds significant artistic value, while also representing the rise and development of the Lee family, an important chapter in their history. By recreating the drawing room of ‘大屋,’ this showcase offers

fresh perspectives on traditional art collections, ensuring they remain relevant and open to new interpretations in today's world. As we celebrate the centenary of Lee Gardens, we hope this collection will evoke the spirit of a time when Eastern and Western cultures converged."

Professor Josh Yiu, Director of Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, expressed his gratitude for the Lee family's generosity, "For over half a century, the Lee family has been a constant supporter of CUHK and its Art Museum. Since the museum's establishment, the family has contributed greatly, from infrastructure and artefact acquisitions to academic research. Dr Lee Jung Sen's benevolent donations over the years account for nearly half of the museum's collection. The century-old Canton hardwood furniture featured in this exhibition was originally housed in the Lee family's '大屋' and was later donated to the museum after the house was dismantled. The fusion of Chinese and Western elements in the Canton furniture resonates with CUHK's mission of bridging cultures. It also reflects the Lee family's deep-rooted sense of respect and heritage. We are honoured to collaborate with Hysan Development and the Bei Shan Tang Foundation in presenting this exhibition, continuing a friendship that has endured for over six decades."

"A Century of Splendour: 20th Century Chinese Furniture from the Lee Family Collection" showcase presents over twenty pieces from the Bei Shan Tang Foundation's early donations to Art Museum of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, along with rare treasures from the Lee family's private collection that have never been publicly displayed. The primary focus of the showcase is on Canton-style furniture, which emerged from the fusion of local craftsmanship and foreign cultural influences. Renowned for its grandeur and opulence, Canton furniture is characterised by the use of large, imported mahogany, often larger in scale than Ming Dynasty furniture. The exhibition pieces highlight intricate inlays of precious materials and gemstones, exquisite carving techniques, and distinctive decorative motifs from both Eastern and Western traditions, enhancing their vivid splendour. The integration of Western artistic elements into Canton furniture also reflects Hong Kong's unique position as a cultural gateway during the early 20th century.

| Details of "A Century of Splendour: 20th Century Chinese Furniture from the Lee Family Collection" Showcase | |
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| Date | From now to 20 November 2024 |
| Time | 12noon – 8pm |
| Location | Urban Sky on 9/F of Hysan Place AND FORUM at the Eslite on 9/F of Hysan Place (Until 10 November 2024) |

Photos and artefacts courtesy of the **Art Museum of CUHK, Lee Family Archive and Bei Shan Tang Foundation**.

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Appendix: Information on the Furniture Featured in “A Century of Splendour: 20th Century Chinese Furniture from the Lee Family Collection” Showcase

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| <p>Lacquer Wooden Screen with Jade and Precious Stone</p> <p>This item comprises two parts: the screen and the base. The rectangular screen with rounded corners is coated with lacquer. The front is painted in red with golden lines and the back is painted in black. The concaved front is a curio cabinet, featuring irregular but classy cabinet boxes partitioned by wood boards. The boxes are furnished with 15 colourful decorative items such as vases and flowers, bonsai and antiquity, made of jade, agate, precious stones, enamel and lacquer wood. The back is flat, featuring the gold-painted seal character of “longevity” (壽) in 48 styles (6 columns and 8 rows). The delicate base is made of hardwood, showcasing embossed carvings of dragons.</p> | <p>Couch with Ducks and Lotus Design in Canton-style</p> <p>The rectangular hardwood couch features symmetrical patterns and decorations, with just one armrest. The back near the armrest is higher, and it becomes lower towards the other end. The armrest features a duck eating grain on a lotus pond. The back features the carved landscape of a lotus pond with blooming lotuses and lush leaves in good order, decorated by birds, frogs, dragonflies and snails. The surface is carved with lines of lotus leaves. The front, left and right side boards have embossed carvings of lotus leaves, with the front also featuring carved crabs. The four curved legs are shaped like lotus leaves.</p> |
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| <p>Square Table and Stools with Marble Inlay in Canton-style</p> <p>This large square table is typically placed in the centre of the foyer and was used to receive important guests. As a result, the materials, shape, and design are all meticulously crafted. The tabletop is inlaid with a single piece of marble. The four legs are curved and carved from wood, providing a sturdy and elegant appearance. The sides feature three-dimensional, intricately carved interlaced branch patterns, and the centre is also inlaid with marble, showcasing a high level of craftsmanship. The overall design is substantial, with elegant and dignified decorations that convey a sense of luxury and grandeur.</p> | <p>Armchair with Lotus design and Teapoy in Canton-style</p> <p>The rectangular armchair features a slightly reclined high back and flat armrests. The seat is comparatively low with short legs. The back features embossed carvings of a batch of lotuses. The armrests feature cut-through geometrical patterns. The front legs are curved, while the rear legs are reclined.</p> <p>The rectangular low table features short and curved legs, with the surface inlaid with a round piece of marble. Its four side boards feature bamboo joints at the top and marble inlay at the centre.</p> |

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| <p>Blue and White Porcelain Large Jar with Wooden Stand</p> <p>In traditional Chinese mansions, large jars were typically placed in gardens for raising fish or storing water, and they were also used indoors for planting flowers and decoration. Due to the mass production of blue and white porcelain in both imperial and civilian kilns during the Qing Dynasty, this style became very popular and was well-loved by foreigners. As a result, people at that time enjoyed using blue and white porcelain for decoration or collection in their homes.</p> | <p>Square Stand with Marble Inlay in Canton-style</p> <p>The rectangular pedestal is typically placed on both sides of a hall for the purpose of displaying vases, and it generally appears in pairs. The surface of this pedestal is inlaid with square marble, and the upper edges are intricately carved with interlaced branch patterns, while the lower part is adorned with cloud patterns and other designs featuring traditional Chinese characteristics. Due to the decorative patterns covering all four sides and the empty space in the middle resembling a bamboo basket, it is commonly referred to as a 'pig cage table'. This is one of the distinctive features of late Qing Dynasty Guang-style flower tables.</p> | |
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| <p>Cabinet with Scroll Grass Design in Canton-style</p> | <p>Three Square Stands with Flowers and Birds Design in Canton-style</p> | <p>Teapoy with Painted Porcelain Inlay in Canton-style</p> |
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| <p>A Pair of Painted Pots and Vases</p> | <p>Carpet with Floral Design</p> | |



Antique silverware and dining pieces that were once placed on the dining table