

# Backstory

Within these pages resides what you might call the “*Confessions of an Impecunious Art Lover*.” As a typically low-paid state-college science professor, I nevertheless enjoy contacting—as in collecting, viewing, and touching—affordable, and even some not so affordable, pieces of art. This book displays and describes many of the pieces that I have been privileged to hold, view, touch, wear, appreciate, and enjoy across several concurrent collections. May it convey to you my hope that you, too, can participate in art this way at one level or another. (Many reputable sources of art are available; see the inside back cover for a few of them.)

My systematic art collecting began when a family member hit a special birthday and wondered about getting old. My gift of reassurance came as a beautiful, shaped piece of meteorite from the early days of our solar system: “You are not old; *this* is old, over four billion years old!” That, and a nice night out, improved everyone’s feelings, and many “old things” followed.

Since that time, an overlapping set of interests has continuously retained my attention. Beyond my own photographic art, these have focused on some Native American arts, particularly from the Southwest (e.g., pottery, weavings, personal silver and turquoise decorations, baskets) along with Japanese woodblock prints, Chinese paintings, custom knives, and other edged art (all as indicated by the chapter titles).

## *ID Numbers, Values, and Status Codes*

Readers appreciate the inclusion of certain bits of information. So the description of each item in this book contains a three-digit number to identify the item (starting with 001), a valuation, and a status code.

The valuation provides a monetary estimate, in US dollars, of the value of the piece. Far too many factors contribute to the accuracy of these estimates to make them much more than “ball-park” figures, as the saying goes. Still, they are probably accurate enough to be a bit high in 2015 and a bit low by 2025 and beyond.

The “status code” for each item is an abbreviation of each item’s status at the time of publication. Here are the status codes and the meaning of each one:

- ✿ IU: *In Use* (e.g., a family member is currently wearing or displaying the item);
- ✿ OD: *On Display* (e.g., at a museum; contact the author at ledoux@canton.edu for details);
- ✿ IS: *In Storage* (for now, but not always...);
- ✿ OC: *On Consignment* (contact the author at ledoux@canton.edu for details);
- ✿ GC: *Gone from Collection* (e.g., contributed, or given as a gift).

## *About Photos, Captions, & Credits*

Except for the photos on the covers, most photos in this book have captions, and acknowledge the photographer. Photos lacking an acknowledgement are records that the author made.

Two photos appear on the front cover. One shows a Burntwater weaving (artist unknown; see Chapter 2). The other shows a seed jar by Dorothy Torivio (Acoma, NM; see Chapter 1).

The rear cover features nine photos. The reader will find the details for these in their respective chapters.

## *About the Signature Seals*

During my earliest teaching interval in China (1979) my department chair, Prof. Shi Mingde, helped me with cultural as well as administrative considerations. Chinese history had made signing documents with a seal the more respectable method. Consequently he helped me obtain a seal using, not the standard, off-the-shelf renditions of character sounds for my name, but rather using a set of appropriately sounding characters that retained some relevant meaning with respect to my identity. This produced the smaller seal.

Then, during my later teaching interval (1990–1991) when Prof. Shi noticed my photographic art (see Chapter 9) we designed an art name and signature seal (the larger seal) which is something that the art culture in China expected. Many of my art photos had come with us (i.e., with me and my wife—who was the official foreign exchange faculty—and our then five-year-old son) to serve as part of the apartment-wall decorations, and ultimately as gifts (for more information about this trip, see Case & Ledoux, 1997, in the bibliography).☺

*Stephen F. Ledoux*  
*Canton NY USA*  
*October 2015 ☺*



*Beautiful Sights and Sensations—  
Small Collections of Native American  
and Other Arts*



“Underwater Life on Europa” (original: 10 X 15 inches; see Chapter 9)

*Various pleasing  
“Objets d’Art,”  
some for feeling &  
others for seeing ❖*

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Photo from *The Master Weavers* by Mark Winter, Toadlena Trading Post

**2004 weaving by Mae Lewis, Navajo**  
(46 X 71 inches; see Chapter 2)

*Beautiful Sights and Sensations—  
Small Collections of Native American  
and Other Arts*



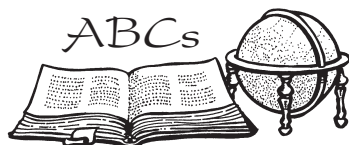
“Debate” (original: 1 X 1.5 inches; see Chapter 9)

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Stephen F. Ledoux

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*Various pleasing  
“Objets d’Art,”  
some for feeling &  
others for seeing ❖*



# Beautiful Sights and Sensations— Small Collections of Native American and Other Arts

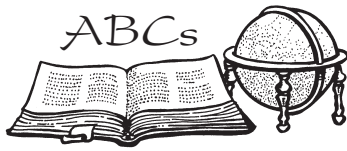
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Chinese calligraphy scroll painting (see Chapter 6)

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***Dedication***

*To my spouse*

*Nelly Maude Case*

*Who shares artistic interests*

*As an Artist of Sound* ♪



“Musician Playing Koto” by Chikanobu (1899; see Chapter 5)



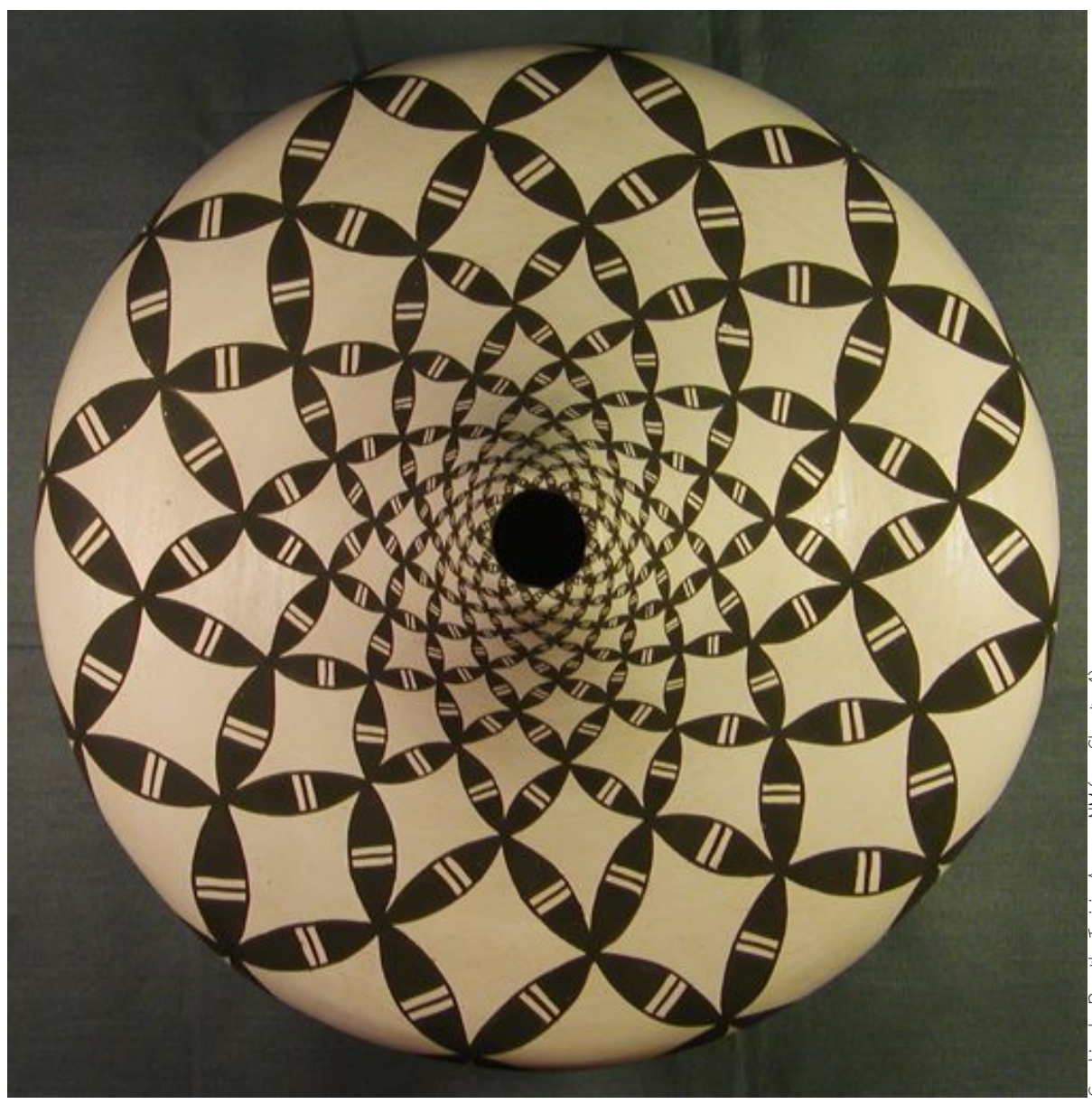
## *The Arts of Typography*

The current publishing world, with its emphasis on the quick processing of electronic files, increasingly sees the words *typography* and *lost art* appearing together. As an exercise in hope for the future, this book attempts to respect most typographic considerations (including all the usual ligatures, i.e., fi, fl, ff, ffi, and ffi). Thus, this book is set in the Adobe Garamond, Adobe Garamond Expert, and Tekton collections of typefaces. In addition, as a valuable basis for the typographic standards of this work, and as much as possible, this book follows the practices described in two highly recommended volumes by Ms. Robin Williams (both of which Peachpit Press published in Berkeley, CA, USA).

One volume is the 1990 edition of *The Mac is Not a Typewriter*. The other is the 1996 edition of *Beyond the Mac is Not a Typewriter*. For example, on page 16 of the 1990 book, Williams specifies practices regarding the placement of punctuation used with quotation marks, an area in which some ambiguity has existed with respect to what is “proper.” In addition the present book follows the advice in these books about avoiding “widows” (which is the name for leaving less than two words on the last line of a paragraph) and “orphans” (which is the name either for leaving the first line of a paragraph alone at the bottom of a page, or for leaving the last line of a paragraph alone at the top of the next page). Also, since some confusing alternatives remain regarding the use of hyphens and dashes, this book would simply limit hyphens to separating the parts of words that break at a line end (although this book never breaks words at line ends) while “en dashes” most commonly separate the whole words of compound adjectives, and “em dashes” set off multiple-word—a compound adjective with an en dash—phrases or clauses. (Note that ebook formatting typically ignores most of these easier-reading characteristics in favor of the reasonable convenience of on-the-fly reformatting.)



*Beautiful Sights and Sensations—  
Small Collections of Native American  
and Other Arts*



Seed jar by Dorothy Torivio, Acoma, NM (see Chapter 1)

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**Stephen F. Ledoux**

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"Coy Sunset" (see Chapter 9)



Art knife by Jim Downs, Robert Eggerling, and MB (see Chapter 7)

## Introductory Remarks

We start with this completely un-creatively titled chapter. That makes a certain sense, because this chapter really just provides the basic bits of background information that help us more thoroughly appreciate the various types of art that appear across the remaining chapters.

Of course, for any of those types of art, dozens of volumes are available that can cumulatively take you ever more deeply into the details—analytical or technical or whatever—of your favorite arts. Here we only begin that process, so that you can better appreciate the individual pieces, and the variety of pieces, that each chapter features. The “starter” bibliography then provides some details on a basic selection of the more elaborate volumes. The material here will occasionally reference some of these basic selections, usually using the format of “(author, year [of publication]).”

In a sense, this book approximates the catalog for a museum exhibit. Early in his article, “Exhibit creation: From curator’s vision to finished product,” Marcus Monenerkit (Comanche/European-American) describes a connection between artists and exhibit curators. “Both work to communicate and make a statement about a chosen subject or cultural phenomenon. [Each] engages a vision, a history, and knowledge, and in turn creates a human expression of a chosen theme” (p. 30, *57th Annual Heard Museum Indian Fair and Market Guide*, in partnership with *Native Peoples* magazine, 2015). The theme of the exhibits in the chapters of this book concerns some vision, history, and knowledge about a range of art interests in which anyone could share.

While the “Backstory” (see inside the front cover) provided some parameters about that theme, here we begin to examine some of the contributing vision, history, and knowledge by mainly considering the particular origins of my collecting interest over the years in each of the art types appearing across the subsequent chapters, collecting interests that often both overlapped in time and shared in themes (e.g., Japanese woodblock prints and Chinese paintings, or the art of custom knives and the art of Japanese swords and fittings). Then, in each chapter, we introduce some general considerations for each art type before covering the specific details of each art piece that appears in the chapter.

We begin, however, in a standard manner, although with our own complicated twist. We begin with definitions of *art*.

### Art, Costs, and Considerations

#### Defining “Art”

Any dictionary provides a range of definitions of “art.” These are the definitions that ground most discussions and books on art. The realities of my “career” life, however, induce a different kind of definition. As this writing happens, I am still spending that career-life as a professor of Behaviorology, the natural science of human behavior, the discipline that studies why behavior happens (and which is not a part of, nor any kind of, “psychology”). Behaviorology can provide definitions of art that, while not actually inconsistent with the standard definitions, are also consistent with the findings of natural sciences.

One such definition of art would state that, scientifically, art is the novel products of, and the conditioned production of, responding induced by a wide range of environment-behavior contingencies, in an equally wide range of media, that may or may not produce reinforcing effects from its uses (i.e., its functions) but that indeed produce emotionally reinforcing effects, for others as well as the artist, that typically evoke the human verbal response of “beautiful.” Yes, that *is* quite a mouthful. (Making it a bigger mouthful, the term “reinforcing effects” in this context refers to effects that make the art-production responses and art-appreciation responses occur again later under similar conditions.)

Of course, all that was already too much to say, when many readers have lacked the opportunity to become even minimally familiar with the behaviorology discipline. So we will not pursue the matter here, even though this discipline can say so much more, not only about art and life but also about scientific answers that begin to address many ancient human questions, and that can contribute to solving global problems as well. Instead we have other points to pursue (while those readers ready for more on the natural science of behavior can consult Ledoux, 2014, and other books in the bibliography).

#### Managing Costs

In the “Backstory” I claimed to be poor (actually, “impecunious”). Is that not, however, a relative term? This question bears on how one affords art collecting, and the main answer we consider here derives from other scientific behavior principles (into which we will not go here) relating to the causes of gambling.

To start, though, remember that the connection between price and value often remains stable over some time frames. As an example, today a new art

object that is priced at \$500 (i.e., roughly 100 loaves of bread) may 40 years ago have “only” been priced at \$100 (i.e., still roughly 100 loaves of bread).

Even more relevant are income–disposal considerations. Like everyone else I have my faults (well, 95% of people have faults, and the remaining 5% are likely lying). But drinking alcohol (except within medically sanctioned limits) is not among my faults, and neither is smoking (as tobacco severely degrades health). This, of course, already leaves some “disposable” income (our economist friends have such a way with words).

Whether or not one engages in lottery playing, however, can have an even greater impact on disposable income. States vary but, living in New York State, I could have played every day of every year for the past 34 years. Indeed, I watched lots of people play this way. Typical daily costs ran \$2 to \$10. If you play \$5 per day, that adds up to \$25 (or more) per week, and about \$100 per month or \$1,200 per year. So, by *not* playing, I have “won” over \$40,000 that I could “play” with, over those 34 years, enjoying the collecting of art items that I could then wear, view, touch, handle, display, discuss, and so on, all of which prove more highly enjoyable—at least for me—than lottery playing.

In *theory* lottery playing can get you some dollars, possibly a lot of dollars. But in practice, for the vast

*vast*, majority of people, lottery playing essentially never does. If you can afford to play but don't, then you can have quite a stash to help in procuring various pieces of your preferred arts, some practical and all beautiful. You will also likely find fun in the activity, itself, of hunting for these treasures.

### *Some Remaining Considerations*

Before turning to some origins of the collections covered in this book, some other considerations deserve mention. For one, under each art type, I have tried to include a range of items that vary in quality (and thus also in value). As mentioned in the “Backstory,” the listed values “are probably accurate enough to be a bit high in 2015 and a bit low by 2025 and beyond.” Many of the items are either on loan to local museums or on consignment in local shops (producing a little cash flow that enables continued treasure hunting). If something you see in this book arouses your interest, use the three–digit “ID” number for the item to email the author (at ledoux@canton.edu) regarding its current location. While the status code that classified the location of each item in the collections (i.e., IU, OD, IS, OC, and GC) was accurate at the time of publication, it is not permanent; items periodically get retrieved from one location (e.g., storage, loan, or display) and placed in another (e.g., on consignment). Even though the meaning of these codes is listed in the “Backstory,” a repetition provides another place to check them, so here again is what each code means:

- ⌘ IU: *In Use* (e.g., by me or a relative or friend);
- ⌘ OD: *On Display* (e.g., at a museum);
- ⌘ IS: *In Storage* (for now, but not always...);
- ⌘ OC: *On Consignment* (in a reputable store);
- ⌘ GC: *Gone from Collection* (e.g., contributed, or given as a gift).

Now let's turn to some origins of the collections covered in this book. What variables prompted my interests, and where and when? Perhaps you will discover similarities with circumstances in your own history. We begin with the collections in the four chapters involving Native American Arts, and then we turn our attention to the five chapters involving other arts from around the world.

## Southwest Native American Arts

My art interests stretch back to fond childhood recollections of fascination with the Four Corners area of the American Southwest (where the corners of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah meet). Sadly, my family never had occasion to travel from Sacramento (CA) where I grew up, to any of the Four



Pair of buckles by Orville White, Navajo (see Chapter 3)

Corners states. Perhaps a sort of cultural deprivation induced an increase in my interest.

By the time I was a teen, my interest became more focused on the Native American *arts* of the Southwest. Curiously, this interest initially focused on the wearable art, the jewelry, created by native American silversmiths, in part because such jewelry is acceptably worn by both men and women. Also, I cannot readily admit to really liking neck ties. They were required dress throughout high school, and for decades they were standard attire at work (although in the cold climate of Northern New York State, they helped me keep warm). Nevertheless, when opportunities arose, you would find me wearing a bolo tie. These bolos, however, were factory made. Only later, when my son moved to California, and I got to make regular trips back and forth across the Southwest, did my bolos graduate to the art kind, leading to searches for pieces that grabbed me at least a little emotionally as well as aesthetically (i.e., well-crafted pieces that not only looked beautiful but also that prompted some range of feelings for and about them). Such searches also led to a growing appreciation, and inclusion in my collecting, of other kinds of silversmith-art jewelry, including cuff bracelets, belt buckles, necklaces, rings, and so forth.

Later still, my Native American art collecting developed and extended from jewelry to pottery. Then, expanding to include more of the sense of touch along with visual beauty (and perhaps offsetting the fragility of pottery) my collecting began to include weavings and baskets as well.

The first four chapters of this book deal with these four Native American art types. However, we cover these art types in an order more reflective of my current order of artistic appreciation or familiarity rather than the order of my initial interests; we cover these art types in this chapter order:

- ✦ *Pottery (Chapter 1);*
- ✦ *Weavings (Chapter 2);*
- ✦ *Silver, Turquoise, and More (Chapter 3);* and
- ✦ *Baskets (Chapter 4).*

## Other Arts from Around the World

The origins of my interest in other types of art vary widely, and sometimes may prove rather mundane. On the other hand, as you will see, they also share various interconnections.

From age ten to age 14, some particular circumstances contributed to a growing interest in oriental arts. The population in the greater Sacramento metropolitan area, where I lived, shared a diverse selection of world cultures, and this was

reflected in the material available for viewing on television (in the days of fewer than twenty channels, all available for free through a rooftop antenna). Back then, at least on Sundays, my schedule involved rising very early to deliver the *Sacramento Bee* (an evening newspaper the rest of the week) to customers on my route. Apparently, my rising time generalized to some Saturday mornings as well, when the rest of the household demanded minimal sound levels. The solution that evolved was to watch the Japanese culture channel. Since I did not speak Japanese, the sound could remain quite low, but very little programming provided subtitles. So my imagination was on its own in trying either to follow the actions of famous Japanese actors (e.g., Toshiro Mifune) or to figure out the plot lines of films from famous Japanese directors (e.g., Akira Kurosawa). Similar experiences occurred with respect to Chinese culture, and in both cases established my interest in contacting and understanding “things oriental.”

Later, that foundation differentiated into several lines of increased interest in particular areas of Chinese and Japanese arts. Whether or not such an interest became a collection passion, however, usually depended on additional circumstances that increased the availability of collectable items.

The same multiple culture milieu that produced the Japanese culture television channel also made Japanese metal arts (antique swords and furnishings) common enough to support collecting activities. Ever since then, wherever I lived (including four years in Australia) my enthusiasm for Japanese sword art collection and preservation has continued.

In the last decade, the circumstance of availability encouraged that appreciation for Japanese art to extend to another Japanese art form, the woodblock prints that suffused the 1800s. And before that, during the year that my wife and I taught in China



Japanese sword guard (tsuba) featuring Lady Murasaki Shikibu, Japan's first novelist, circa 1000 C.E. (see Chapter 8)

(with our then five-year-old son, a story worthy of its own book; see Case & Ledoux, 1997) we were surrounded by Chinese art. Paintings proved a preferable medium, especially scroll paintings, because they pack and travel well.

In perhaps a counter-intuitive way, my collecting of Japanese art swords and fittings paved the way for my increased interest in custom knives. As the costs increased for the more refined Japanese items that grabbed my attention—at the same time that life moved me closer to the fixed incomes of retirement—custom knives became more and more attractive. Furthermore, while usually several artists bear responsibility for the beauty of a Japanese art sword (e.g., the swordsmith, and the makers of the tsuba and other sword mounts) many custom knives are produced as “solo” efforts (i.e., by a single artist).

That solo-effort characteristic has a certain appeal. All of this interest in artistic activity and products unsurprisingly had yet another effect on me, which was an interest in producing my own solo-effort art. Again from a long history, having fun taking better and better pictures moved my endeavors into the realm of art. Especially in the last couple of decades of the twentieth century, photography provided me with the medium for my own artistic expression, born out of my own circumstances.

We cover all of those around-the-world art types in the last five chapters of this book. However, the order in which we cover these art types stems from an arbitrary though still artistic decision regarding what order might best maintain the interest of readers who may harbor an even greater range of interests. So, we cover these art types in this chapter order:



Chinese oil painting by Ju Huihoa (see Chapter 6)

- ✂ *Japanese Woodblock Prints (Chapter 5);*
- ✂ *Chinese Paintings (Chapter 6);*
- ✂ *Custom Knives (Chapter 7);*
- ✂ *Japanese Metal Arts (Chapter 8); and*
- ✂ *Reaching for Photo Arts (Chapter 9).*

## Color, and Collecting

Before we proceed, a comment about color will be helpful. Color contributes much to the appreciation of art. However, the color in books about art remains an art in itself, and a potentially expensive one. To keep the cost of this book accessible, we have not taken the extra steps to keep colors perfect. Instead, our approach to color reflects our preference for even slightly imperfect color—essentially always unnoticeable—over the alternative black and white.

Meanwhile, beautiful art comes in small packages from around the world. Various items are within the economic reach of many. While some obtain art for art's sake, and others obtain art as an investment, for most of us art collecting involves both. And any gain or loss, from letting items go, may or may not equal the gain or loss from more traditional monetary investments. Most art collectors find that this can become a sensitive issue as pieces come into, and later pass out of, their collections (as has, of course, been the case with the collections featured here). Remember, however, that even a loss from letting an art object go is less problematic than a mere monetary-investment loss, because one has benefited from enjoying the beauty of the object over the years, and remembers it. Furthermore, the art object really remains (unlike money, which seems really to be gone); the art has simply found a new home.

So join me now as we embark on a tour of appreciable and functional arts from around the globe. May your own collecting be as fulfilling for you as working with these collections is for me. ☺



Woodblock print by Kuniyoshi, 1848 (see Chapter 5)