

[Note: roll is probably not roll, but actual intent unclear atm]

Peking, 4 February 1929.

My dear Friend,

[] so many thanks to you for your telegram, Christmas card, and letter all so full of good will and friendship. I have been wanting to write to you for some time but have waited till I had your commission fully carried out and that is just to-day. Your cheque for \$2000 exchanged for Mex\$4.3000, and as soon as I had received your instructions, I set to work to get you what you wanted. It has taken time, it has been more difficult than formerly, but for all that, when you see the things, I thinking you will agree with me that we have been very successful. I have not wished to influence you in any way these last couple of years, so I have not advised you to buy. Now that you have sent some money on your own initiative, I can tell you that you have done a very wise thing. Things—good things—are not to be had on the open market, and prices, especially as regards paintings have gone up very much, simply because the supply has been drying up all along. All the things I am sending you are from the Palace; and could not be bought on the market. I have exceeded the amount you sent me by Mex 770, but when you read my letters and above all, when you see thing things, I think you will agree with me that you would have wished me to do so.

The first thing I got was the Red [] Lotus at \$250. Next I got the Song Dolls, 1400+1000=\$2400, and then came the beautiful crystal vase and the pair of rose quartz vases together. If I had kept within the amount sent, I should have had to split up these 3, and so doing would have had to give so much for what I wanted to keep that the left one would be a bargain. As it was I got the 3 so cheap, Mex \$2200, that I considered I would not act in your best interests if I did not receive all 3. The price for the 3 is 2200, but I have had to specify them separately, so the a/c stands as follows:

- 1 Song Roll, [] and [], by Li An- \$1400 (MWCh32:L9/C-613)
- 1 Song Roll, Landscape, by Liu Sung-nien- 1000 (MWCh32:L1)
- 1 Ch'ien Lung, Crystal Vase 1300 (MWCh3:42/C-521)
- 1 Ch'ien Lung, Rose Quartz Vases (?) 900 (MWCh3:38/C-510, MWCh3:39/C-511)
- 1 Ch'ien Lung, Rose Quartz Lotus 250 (MWCh:3:40/C-512)

Expenses: Boxes, packing \$25

Mr. Albert \$50

Customs dues 52.50

Parcel post 15.06

C[] Invoices 6.50

Photographs 15.25

Measures 56.50

Sum 220.81

}

Expenses 4.850

220

=

5.070

4.300 (Received \$4.300)

=Balance \$770

I have put Albert down for \$50, if you feel inclined to give to give [] a little more do so. He has evaded me to get the things out, and at a week returned [], so as to avoid calling attention to [] the things.

[see vase when it comes from storage]

Things really were, right from the Palace.

Now for a few detailed remarks. All seals etc. You will find translated on the special [] enclosed papers. The Red Quartz Lotus has Emperor Ch'ien Lung's seal [we've determined], indicating that it was a piece he was particularly fond of. The Crystal Vase has on the top of the rest of the cave also Ch'ien Lung's seal, indicating it was a personal thing, and in addition quotations by the same emperor. These have not been easy to translate, but we have done the best we can. If you think you can find better expression in Eugene than what we have found, by all means do so.

The Sung Roll Birds & Flowers, by Li An [MWCh32:L9] was said to be one of the finest of its kind in the Palace Collections and, if not the best I have seen of this kind.

The Landscape Roll by Liu Sung-nien [C-606 MWCh32:L1] is very good and has much atmosphere, especially I think around the reeds. It depicts the famous poet Su Tung-pu [Su Tung-p'o/Su Dongpo?] entertaining some friends. The long pieces of poetry is by the famous Yuan painter Chao Meng-fu.

You will notice that these 2 rolls come to you in their original brocade covers, as they were kept in the Palace. I have been particularly fortunate in attaining them with their covers as this is never done. The covers are always retained and displayed in order that people may not be able to trace them back to the Palace. I only got them by solemnly promising that they would not be shown to anyone here and should be sent out of the country at once. I think you will find this interesting, as I show you have carefully the sex paintings were looked after in the Palace. All these things could not be had on the market, and if they could be had, would cost several times more than what you have given. There seems to have been a strong foreign demand for roll paintings these last few years, for they are very scarce, and very dear, I hear. Personally I have none of the quality of the Li An Roll, nor have I bought any quality roll since you were here last.

Before the revolution, peach-[flower] and apple-green porcelain were very scarce, and very expensive. When the palaces were looted (cut read[?]) in 1922-24, a good many of these 2 kinds came out and I took the opportunity of buying as many as I then could. In making up the parcels for you—they were parceled here on Feb. 23—but I have only got the final papers today—it struck me that, as far as I know, you have no apple-green in your collections, and so I send you one, with my love and good wishes to you and your museum.

It is a Sung-Chung [?] apple-green and comes from the palace. The Chinese prefer to apple-green to be as light in colour as possible, and the one I send you is said to be very good. As I could not give the Court as vendors, nor get any receipt from them, I have had Mr. Lowell make out the necessary receipt, but nothing is from him. When he made out the decorations or

[] here in my house, he remarked that you had got them very cheap indeed, and he knows the prices. Mr. Albert helped me to pass the things through the Customs, and work out the Consular services.

I have considered it necessary to photograph the things so as to prevent any substitution either in packing here or as results.

You ask me in our letter to price certain things that you have preciously bought so as to arrive at the American Value of them. I see what you mean, but, of course, I do not know what prices similar things fetch in America, even if they could be had. However, we can arrive at a very fair estimate. Is the first piece, you got your things very cheaply and for under market value. You should then have to value them only from time to time. I should be inclined to and at least 300% as an antique, and I shall tell you why. 2 years ago I was asked to price some paintings in [Yamanaka's] pieces here. I found that he charged 4 times what I could get the same things or similar thing for here. Another thing, I know that foreign dealers buying antiquities here, reckon with a profit of 300%. To sum up, I cannot remember the individual things on your list, and in order to expertize and value such things, I must see them, study them, and then give a justified and just estimate. If you, for the time being, do as the dealers do, add 300% to the prices for which you have bought them, you are within a very safe, modest estimate, for you got them cheaper than what they get their things, as they rely on the market, and I buy privately. When I come to America, which will probably be next year, I shall come and see you and your museum, and I can then expertize and value what you have given them. /over

My dear Friend,

I have got that far, and now feel easier in mind, but alas friend. You know the winter is []ther an enemy these last 6 years that I have found it very difficult to overcome, and only God and his Omnipotent Love have made it possible, and I feel very grateful. But for Him, I should not be here. My work is still before and before that is done, I cannot go.

I expect to have a decision by the end of the year. The council, or rather the President of the Council wrote and asked for an extension till the end of the year wen they hoped they found could be arranged. All the public bodies in Los Angeles have written in to the Council requesting that the Collection be secured for Los Angeles.

The Metropolitan and all the leading museums in America are willing to take parts of the collection, but none of them has room for the whole lot.

However, that is all in God's Hands, I am doing His work in this matter. All the things are His, not mine.

When I do come, I am coming to see you. You will be sure, and we can then give a a fair estimate of your gift.

All loving and true thoughts and wishes for you, my dear Friend,

Your friend,
Normann Munthe

Correspondence, Notes, Expense List, and Invoice for Objects Obtained by Gen. Munthe and Shipped to Gertrude Bass Warner in Eugene, Gertrude Bass Warner papers, UA 022, Box 05, Folder 06, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, Oregon. Transcribed by Tom Fischer.