Editors’ Note & Announcement of a “Special Issue” on Taiwanese Art

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When we assumed the editorship of the Southeast Review of Asian Studies, Mark Ravina, former president of the Southeast Conference, joked that if our marriage could survive editing a journal featuring a dozen different languages and a half dozen different character sets, it could survive anything. That was a year ago. We’re still married, and if anything the shared trauma of our close-encounter with The Chicago Manual of Style has brought us closer together. It’s true that our pillow talk has taken a strange turn and now revolves around issues like the relative merits of SimSun and MS PMincho, but it never lags. Were our daughter listening through the wall, she would hear us often mention the name of Steve Gump, as in “How do you think Gump did that?”

It was a busy but productive year. The happy thing about editing, as opposed to writing, is that progress is concrete and measurable. The writer may think he’s found the mot juste when in fact he’s only succeeded in making himself pretentious. The editor, on the other hand, progresses undeniably. You can dispute matters of style and interpretation, but you can’t discount the victory of catching a typo or remembering to italicize the ampersand (one of Steve’s more elegant innovations — behold: &). Each day brought a gratifying sense of one foot put in front of the other.

The present volume indicates the active, varied intellectual life of the Southeast Conference of the Association for Asian Studies (SEC/AAS), an organization with a long and proud history and plenty of vigor going forward. Some twenty scholars from the U.S. and Asia contributed to this issue, sharing their expertise in archeology, art, dance, economics, film, history, literature, political science, and religion. During our year of work on this issue, we developed new interests and rediscovered old interests, and we hope that you will do the same.

Like all first endeavors, ours leaves room for improvement. We would like to encourage more discussion of certain nations (Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, etc.) that are underrepresented in this volume. We would also like to urge more attention to the Asian influence on Western culture, as reflected, for example, in the paintings of Édouard Vuillard and the architecture of Greene & Greene and the poetry of J.H. Prynne — the avenues of
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possible investigation are endless. This kind of exploration serves the normal intellectual purposes, but also serves as a salutary reminder, amid unease about "cultural imperialism" and anxieties about globalization, that the nations benefit from eavesdropping on each other's genius. Finally, we would like to encourage a certain freedom from academic convention, to which end we have loosened the definition of the "scholarly note" to include original works of art, interviews, poems, translations, and personal memoirs, and renamed the note section "Essays & Ideas." The academic article has the advantage of rigor but the disadvantage of a tendency toward jargon and formula. We hope to strike a better balance between the professional voice and the personal voice, starting with our next issue.

In both large and small ways, we benefited from the help of others. Steve Gump, the former editor, left us a purring engine that we had merely to avoid gumming up. His innovations were numerous and his attention to detail was microscopic. We regularly solicited Steve's advice, and he invariably responded with long and detailed disquisitions, often within the hour. We only hope that we have lived up to his example and preserved his legacy intact. Tom Pynn, our associate editor, midwifed a diverse selection of scholarly notes and book reviews. We thank him heartily for his expertise and for his patience with a process that was sometimes a bit discombobulated. The members of the Editorial Advisory Board, listed on the inside front cover of this volume, provided help and advice, and the members of the SEC governing board provided crucial institutional and financial support. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill provided additional financial support. Jan Bardsley, chair of the Department of Asian Studies, was particularly instrumental in securing UNC's patronage. Our fellow North Carolinian Ken Berger yet again justified the word "master" in the title "web master," and we owe him our thanks for making this issue of SERAS available on the worldwide web. Please see the fruits of his labor at http://www.uky.edu/Centers/Asia/SECAAS/Seras/2010/2010TOC.html.

Twenty-five colleagues reviewed submissions this year. Peer-reviewing is a thankless task, but we would like to make it a little less so by mentioning those who helped. They are John Caldwell (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill); Qing Chang (Washington University in St. Louis); Cal Clark (Auburn University); Mark Driscoll (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill); Hal French (University of South Carolina); Steve Geiz (University of Tampa); Jie Guo (University of South Carolina); Jinn-yu Hsu (National Taiwan University); Sarah Jorgensen (University of Tennessee at Chattanooga); Jieli Li (Ohio University); Hsiao-ting Lin (Stanford University); Wei-cheng Lin (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill); Ronnie Littlejohn (Belmont University); Daniel A. Métraux (Mary Baldwin College); Rana Mitter (Oxford University); Masako Osada (a freelance journalist in Johannesburg); Richard Rice (University of Tennessee at Chattanooga); James Robson (Harvard Uni-
versity); Mike Smitka (Washington and Lee University); Steve Tsang (Oxford University); Michelle Wang (Georgetown University); Tan Ye (University of South Carolina); Xiaohong Yu (Harvard University); and Jing Zhang (New College of Florida). We thank all of these specialists for contributing their time and expertise to SERAS.

We encourage you to consult the “Instructions for Authors” (pp. viii–xii) and to begin work on material for next year’s volume. SERAS is eager to receive submissions touching on all aspects of Asian society and culture, past and present. No subject should be considered too eccentric or obscure, as long as it falls generally within the purview of the humanities and social sciences and within the geographical bounds marked by India to the southwest, China to the west, and Mongolia to the north.

Our next issue, we are excited to announce, will be a special issue devoted – though by no means exclusively – to the fine art of Taiwan. We welcome your comments and suggestions and most of all your contributions. We await your queries and creativity at seraseditors@hotmail.com.