

lion) for the leopards, which were the stars of their stand at the TEFAF fair in Maastricht the following year.

The Cohen and Cohen stand at TEFAF is always a magnet for collectors. Its chic but scholarly ambience is due in no small measure to their colleague William Motley, a former house master and drama teacher at Ampleforth College, the famous Benedictine monastery and boys' school in North Yorkshire. Will researches and writes the Cohen and Cohen catalogues, which are widely regarded as among the most erudite contributions to the scholarly literature on "mark and period" export wares. He also has a natural Inigo Jones-like flair for theatrical atmosphere in designing the firm's stands, though he is keen to play down his contribution. Nevertheless, his colleagues are fulsome in their praise. "Will is a brilliant researcher," Michael says. "He's also an absolute enthusiast like us." It's a quality appreciated by their clients and colleagues.

**"M**ichael and Ewa have been instrumental in broadening our appreciation, knowledge and passion for Chinese porcelain," says the collector Carol Zipkin Earle. "We benefit from their knowledge of the marketplace, their honesty, and their willingness to educate us. Moreover, Michael and Ewa suggest only pieces that contribute to and complement our collection."

Ron Fuchs, curator of the respected Reeves Collection at Washington and Lee University, agrees. "I have known Michael and Ewa for a number of years and have always been impressed with the quality of the objects they deal in and even more with their catalogues. They seem genuinely committed to trying to advance scholarship in the field. They also have a great sense of style."

The Cohens are well placed to divine the future for this



sector of the market. To what extent has it been affected by the growth of emerging economies? "The Russians are not interested," Michael says. "Middle Eastern collectors are interested to some extent, but most of our Middle Eastern clients now live in the United States."

China presents a different prospect, however.

"Chinese mainland collectors aren't interested yet, but they're starting to be," he says. "There is no cultural imperative to buy export wares in the way that they have done with imperial wares. But it will happen. At present the Chinese buy with ignorance because the Cultural Revolution ripped out the knowledge. They will need to acquire knowledge, but when they do they will control the market"

Ewa agrees, predicting that when the Chinese wake up to it, she and Michael, and others like them, will no longer be able to buy.

Michael knows this will be good news for some of his clients. "Prices will go through the roof. £100,000 will rise to £1 million. This has happened in all other areas. If I had put £100,000 into the right Chinese pieces in 1973, it would be worth £20 million or more today. The Chinese millionaire generation won't be able to afford what the Chinese billionaires are buying."

The Cohens' website now gets several hits a month from the Chinese but Michael and Ewa don't expect too much. "We got our first firm offer yesterday, which, if it comes off, will be our first Chinese buyer from the website."

It may be early days, but one senses it could be the first of many.

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Cohen and Cohen's indefatigable researcher and manager, William Motley. Photograph by Magnus Arreval.

This massive punch bowl made for the American market, with its sepia view of the Farmer's Free Bridge, built in New York, 1758, was possibly ordered by States Morris Dyckman.

