

翟健民，這位澳門出生的著名古董文物專家，在香港回歸中國的二十年間，乘著兩地合作不斷加深而帶來的機會，一躍成為全球最有影響力的藝術品商人之一。

MEET WILLIAM CHAK, THE MACAU-BORN ANTIQUE EXPERT WHO TOOK FULL ADVANTAGE OF HONG KONG'S INTEGRATION INTO CHINA TO, 20 YEARS LATER, BECOME ONE THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL ART DEALERS

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古董商和收藏家的最大分別往往在於，商人購買古董是為了出售圖利，而收藏家買的則是心頭好，目的是要把物品據為己有慢慢欣賞。

不過，凡事都有例外。有時收藏家也會在有需要時把自己的珍藏易手，而古董商也會對某些情有獨鍾的物品難捨難離，珍藏一輩子。

翟健民，香港最活躍的古董商，就是後者的最好例子。“2013年我在美國一個小型拍賣會找到一件唐英壽山石雕”，他對CLOSER說，“當我第一眼看到它的時候就知道我一定要擁有它，而且會不惜代價。這是一件我永遠不會出讓，而且是要留給兒孫的傳家寶。

唐英（1682-1765），瀋陽人，集畫家、詩人、書法家、作家和戲劇家一身，他在清朝雍正和乾隆年間擔任江西景德鎮御瓷廠的督陶官，以其對瓷器製作的卓越貢獻而聞名。

翟生提到的壽山石雕是一件於1750年間由唐英本人監製的自我雕像。在翟生的眼中，它之所以珍貴，除了因為它的稀有，最重要的還是雕像的人物和作者本身的歷史價值。“我曾經在北京故宮博物館見過唐英的圖像，當我一看到這件雕像時就馬上認出是唐英本人。他是中國瓷藝的頂級大師，沒有他，清朝的瓷器技藝根本沒可能達到如此巔峰。知道這件雕像將會被拍賣，我當時的心情就非常興奮。”

這件作品展現了笑容滿面的唐英，他穿着一件繡有龍圖案的長袍，身邊圍著五位年輕人，旁邊的石像刻有三首詩。拍賣會於2013年在加州的奧克蘭市舉行，拍賣雕像的是一名曾經長期照料駐中國的一位美國外交官的護士。拍賣行對雕像的估值訂在十至十五萬美

What usually distinguishes an antique dealer from a collector is that the dealer purchases antiquities with a view to sell them, making the greatest possible profit from that activity, whereas the collector buys them to keep them indefinitely, for perpetual enjoyment.

However that's not always the case. Sometimes collectors sell pieces out of necessity or trade them for others, while dealers keep some pieces for life, simply because they cannot bear to be parted from them.

William Chak, Hong Kong's largest antique dealer, is a case in point. "There is a Tang Ying piece that I bought at a small auction in America three years ago, which I will never sell," he says in an interview with CLOSER. "When I saw it for the first time, I thought to myself: I have to have it, no matter what price. It will be to leave to my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren."

Tang Ying (AD 1682-1765), a native of Shenyang, was a painter, poet, calligrapher, prose writer and playwright, and distinguished himself above all in the art of porcelain, having taken over supervision of imperial workshops during the reigns of Yongzheng and Qianlong.

The piece in question consists of a self-representation of Tang Ying in soapstone, dating from 1750. It is its rarity, but above all the figure portrayed and its author, that makes it so important in the eyes of Chak: "As soon as I saw the piece that was going to the auction I was very enthusiastic when I realized that it could only be the portrait of Tang Ying himself, since I had already seen a representation of his face in

元。最後，翟生以遠遠高於估價的二百萬美元成交，其中的競投過程高潮迭起，足以拍成一部緊張刺激的電影。

翟生向我們娓娓道來當年拍賣會的情況，把我們帶到當天的現場。“為了避免引起太多迴響，我決定留在香港，讓太太和我的助手出席拍賣會，”翟生說道。“當時準備出席那場拍賣會的中國行家有四五十位，他們都對那件拍賣品感興趣。但是，他們都知道我們的名聲和來意，明白到我們將很難被擊敗，於是在開拍前的幾小時，他們主動向我太太提出合作協議，同意大家之間不會互相競投，成交後拍品將會共同分享。這意味著雕像稍後將會被出售以分發利潤，這是我不要的東西。但是為了避免矛盾，我同意把此協議的上限定在八十萬美金，換句話說，當競投叫價超過這個數目時，大家就各自為政。”

25年來在古玩行業打滾，見過無數世面的翟健民知道，這件拍品的最後成交價將會和拍賣行的估價有相當大的距離。而他已經有心理準備即使再高價，也要把雕像投到。

果然，在開拍之後的一分二十秒內，八十萬美元的阻力位已經沖破。幾個小時前商訂的臨時協議即時無效，各人進入公平競賽。

僅僅二十秒過後，一百萬美元叫價聲起，現場即時響起一陣歡呼聲和掌聲。誰知競賽到此只是到了中場。又再過了漫長的兩分鐘，翟生經助手以電話投注叫出二百萬美元的競投價，現場再次引發新一轮更激烈的掌聲。在沒有更進一步出價的情況下，拍賣官一錘定音，翟生終於如願以償，投得這件心愛寶物。

翟生的策略得到了回報。透過助手作電話競投令他避免在現場與其他競投者正面交鋒，而他不惜代價要投得此重要珍品的氣派更加深了他在行業中領頭人的地位。翟生最後付給奧克蘭拍賣行二百二十三萬五千美元，亦即時以一千七百八十萬港元投得此唐英壽山石雕像。

我們去年訪問他時，正值香港國際古玩展之際，這是一場由他於2008年創辦的年度展覽。這件雕像藝術品就放置在展覽會的正中，成為大會的焦點。展覽場刊也都以它的照片為封面。當翟生向我們分享了這段驚險刺激的競投過程後，他滿意地說，錢花得很值。他重申能夠在這個場合展示唐英這樣一位影響深遠的藝術大師的作品實在非常有意義。

面向中國的藝術品櫥窗

我和翟健民第一次會面剛好是20年前的事，記得當時正是香港即將回歸中國的數天前。那天我們來到了他在荷李活道的古玩店，請他分享對未來的憧憬。他面上掛著那招牌式的燦爛笑容，告訴我們他對香港的未來充滿信心，甚至期待香港能夠透過和祖國的更緊密關係為本地的企業創造更多的商機。

二十年後的今天，他認為自己所取得的成就和他當年的願景息息相關。

“1996年，在香港主權即將移交前的一年，太太和我決定在北京購置物業，正彰顯我們當時對未來的樂觀態度。”翟生接著道出另一件對他人生影響非常大的決定：“我報讀了北京大學的考古學課程，這一決定改變了我的人生。在接著下來的四年，我穿梭於香港和北京兩地，一邊上課，一邊繼續經營公司的生意。雖然很不容易，即使是在2003年SARS爆發期間，我依然堅持奔走兩地。不過，我真的很享受那四年的時光。

在同一時期，翟健民認識了中國著名的電視主持人王剛。不久就被邀加入北京電視台一個叫“天下收藏”的節目做嘉賓主持。內容是要鑑別參加者帶上來節目的物品究竟是真古董還是贗品，翟生與其他

another black and white figure in the Forbidden City in Beijing. He is the great master of Chinese porcelain. Without him the porcelain industry would not have had the importance it had in the Qing Dynasty.”

The piece depicts a smiling Tang Ying wearing a robe with an embroidered dragon, surrounded by five young men and with inscriptions of three poems on a high relief composed of rocks. Held at auction in 2013 by an antique dealer in Oakland, California – brought there by a nurse who for many years cared for a former US diplomatic representative in China – the piece was valued between US\$100,000 and US\$150,000. Chak eventually bought it for US\$2 million, after a run-up and a bidding war worthy of a thriller film.

“To avoid being affected by emotion, I decided to stay in Hong Kong and sent my wife and one of my assistants to the auction,” Chak explains. “There were between 40 and 50 Chinese collectors there and they all had an interest in that piece. But, knowing our reputation, they realized that we would be hard to beat, so a few hours before the start of the auction they proposed a pact with my wife to share in the financial takings of the piece. Now this would mean that the piece would later be sold for distribution of profits, and that was something I didn't want. To avoid being accused of liability for not having an agreement, I suggested that we should share the piece only if it was auctioned for an amount equal to or less than US\$800,000. Above that value, each one was on his own.”

The gamble involved fewer risks than may appear on the surface. With more than 25 years of experience in the antique business and in auction visits, Chak was confident that, despite the auctioneer's assessment of relatively modest numbers, the piece would be sold at a very high price. And, yes, he was prepared to pay it.

Within one minute and 20 seconds of the start of the auction, the US\$800,000 barrier was exceeded. Undoing the improvised consortium arranged hours earlier. From that moment on, it was fair game.

Just 20 seconds later, an offer of US\$1 million was heard – an offer underscored with cheers and applause from the audience. But events had only reached the halfway mark. It would take another two long minutes and a telephone call from Chak's assistant to reach the US\$2 million mark, giving rise to a new round of applause, which doubled in intensity when, without further bids making themselves heard, the hammer slammed down on the auctioneer's table.

Chak's strategy had paid off. Not only had some of his competitors become isolated and therefore weakened, bidding by telephone through his assistant hid him from the others in the room, and the fact that he was willing to go to the end set him in a league of his own. Once the bid was cleared by the Oakland auction house, Chak paid US\$2.35 million, equivalent 17.8 million patacas.

Money well spent, he says. Last year, when we interviewed him, the piece was on display to the public at the Hong Kong International Antiques Fair (an event he has been organizing since 2008), at the centre of attention: not only did Tang Ying's piece occupy the central pavilion of the fair, as illustrated on the cover of the exhibition catalogue, it was also the theme of one of the seminars at the event. Chak is consistent in his emphasis that the work of the great Chinese master had never before received such an important tribute at an event of that nature.



"THE DAY I ENTERED BEIJING UNIVERSITY, I PROMISED GOD I WOULD NEVER BUY PIECES COMING FROM ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES".

A SHOWCASE FOR THE CHINESE WORLD

Our first meeting with William Chak took place 20 years ago, when Hong Kong was just days away from returning to Chinese sovereignty. At that time, we visited him at his antique shop, one of the largest on Hollywood Road in Central, and asked him about his expectations for the future. With the same broad smile that he still radiates to this day, he told us that he was not concerned about the transition from sovereignty to China, but he felt a great optimism for the opportunities that a closer relationship between Hong Kong and the Motherland would create for local entrepreneurs.

Now, two decades later, he explains that the success he has achieved has everything to do with this initial viewpoint.

"In 1996, a year before the transfer of sovereignty, my wife and I decided to buy an apartment in Beijing, which means we were optimistic about the future," he says, before telling us about another decision that has proven even more important: "I enrolled in the Archaeology course at Peking University, and that changed my life. For four years, I spent my life running between Hong Kong and Beijing, dividing my life between studies and business. It was not always easy, because in the middle of that SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, which in 2003 killed 300 people in Hong Kong) appeared and travel was discouraged. But despite all the difficulties, I was very happy over those four years."

Happy, in every sense of the word. It was at that time that he became acquainted with a Chinese television star, actor Wang Gang, who would eventually invite him to join the team from a Beijing television program on antiques called *Tianxia Shoucan* (*World Collection*). There, alongside other experts in ancient Chinese art, William assumed weekly responsibility for distinguishing true pieces from counterfeits.

Competitors who saw their pieces classified as genuine earned a gold medal and a certificate of authenticity; those who had pieces considered fake, powerlessly watched as they were decimated by blows of a hammer, in the television studio and live to 60 million spectators.

"For a long time, it was the most watched Chinese television show, right after the CCTV news," says Chak. "The tension and the suspense were very intense and this kept people glued to the television. Once we told the owner of a porcelain vase that it was not an antique piece. But he had paid a million and a half renmimbi for it and insisted on its authenticity. When we broke the vase, he had to be taken to hospital by ambulance because he did not feel well," he says, unable to disguise some embarrassment.

As a rule, however, only pieces that were grossly fake were destroyed, he hastens to add. All the others, even in the case of relatively recent objects such as those produced during the Cultural Revolution, were spared the destructive blow of the hammer.

The huge popularity of the program, broadcast throughout China between 2006 and 2013, made Chak the most recognized and respected antiquities expert in China, and one of the most powerful art dealers in the world. But to understand his enormous success in such a competitive market, we must go back to his origins - to Macau, where he was born 60 years ago.

文物古董專家負責識別工作。

節目每週吸引六千萬觀眾，被裁定是真古董的會被獲發金牌和鑒定證書。如果藏品被鑒定為贗品的話，就會在節目現場被大錘砸毀。

翟生說：“節目播映以來一直非常受歡迎，在全國的收視率僅次於中央電視台的新聞聯播。由於這個節目既緊張刺激又有懸念，每週播放時都受到觀眾熱烈追捧。記得有一次，我們鑒定了一個陶瓷花瓶並非古董，要告訴它的主人。此人堅持花瓶是他花了一百五十萬人民幣購買的，不可能不是真的。當我們真的當場砸爛花瓶時，他大受打擊，不適被送往醫院。不過，翟生補充說，不是所有的假古董都會被砸，有些甚至是在文化大革命期間出產的相對較新的物品，都會逃過錘子致命的一敲。

從2006到2013長達七年中，此電視節目一直收視高企，在中國獲得了巨大的成功。翟健民不但成為家喻戶曉的人物，更被認為權威的中國文物專家。今天的他已經被公認為世界上最著名的藝術經銷商之一。但是，要了解他的成就，我們必須回到他的起源——澳門，這個60年前他出生的地方。

翟健民的父親早期從山東移民到澳門，經營葡式的抽紗檯布生意。由於愛好收集古玩，經常流連在澳門的大街小巷，甚至在垃圾堆裡尋寶。受父親影響，翟健民自小就培養出對古董的興趣，而且親眼目睹父親每當有需要時，就會把這些物品變賣，這時小小年紀的他便知道古玩可以賣錢。



"WHEN I SAW IT FOR THE FIRST TIME, I THOUGHT TO MYSELF: I HAVE TO HAVE IT, NO MATTER WHAT PRICE. IT WILL BE TO LEAVE TO MY GRANDCHILDREN AND MY GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN."

翟健民12歲時，父親決定舉家搬往香港以圖有更大的發展機會。可惜家族生意沒落，父親更加病倒了。從澳門帶過來的古董都被變賣得七七八八了。為了幫補家計，翟健民15歲就辍學出來打工。很快他就認識了從事古董生意的黃應豪師傅，從此展開了他在這個行業的生涯。1974年，他第一次隨黃師傅去倫敦出席一個藝術博覽會，自此翟健民就經常走遍世界各地去搜羅古董。

“我喜歡展覽多於拍賣會”翟健民向我們透露。“雖然都是尋寶遊戲，但在拍賣會上，你喜歡一件物件未必意味著你能擁有他，因為你要和其他對手競爭。在展覽會上，只要你喜歡，經過討價還價之後，你就可以把物品買走。除此之外，展覽也都是一個文化交流的好地方。所以，我考慮了很長時間之後決定要把這樣的展覽帶到香港。”

舉辦香港古玩展的決定和他自己古董生意的演變息息相關。自他於1988年在荷李活道開店到香港回歸前，他的客戶中佔了60%是來自香港本地的收藏家，其餘為外國買家。今天，他公司70%的客戶來自中國大陸。這也見證了十年前當他決定舉辦這種國際性的古玩展時，市場的條件已經成熟。

“中國內地的富裕一族開始對古董感興趣，而西方人也希望可以在香港接觸到中國的買家。於是我們就起到橋樑的作用。”

每年的這場古玩展都匯集了近百個展位，展商有來自香港本地和中國大陸的古董商，也都有越來越多的外國展商參展。翟氏有限公司的“永寶齋”占據展會的正中位置，展出有宋朝皇帝的瓷器以及明清時期的玉器、竹器和瓷器等。每件都是精心從世界各地搜羅得來的稀有珍品。

古董藝術品市場近年的交易額屢創天價。早在2005年，翟健民就曾以一億一千五百四十萬港元投得一件18世紀乾隆皇御製的花瓶，當時就改寫了亞洲單件藝術品的最高成交價，同時刷新了全球清代瓷器的最高拍賣價。

A FAIR TRADE

William Chak inherited from his father, an immigrant from Shandong province, a taste for antiquities, which he invariably collected in garbage dumps, wandering through the streets of the city of Macau, then a Portuguese colony. Over the years, young William became accustomed to seeing these pieces being exchanged for money whenever the family's needs made it necessary, something that ended up marking him forever.

The family moved to Hong Kong in the late 1960s, when Chak was 12 years old. A vendor of Portuguese-style lace linen, his father planned to take advantage of the largest opportunities in the British colony to date, but the change coincided with a serious illness that prevented him from continuing to work. Chak had to leave his studies to help support the family, and, unsurprisingly, it was in an antiquary that he got one of his first jobs. In 1974, he accompanied his boss, Master Wong, to an art fair in London for the first time. And since then he has never stopped travelling around the world looking for old pieces at the best prices.

"I like fairs more than auctions," he confides. "In both cases, it's like being part of a treasure hunt. But in auctions, the fact that you like a piece does not mean that you can have it; you have to compete with other participants. At fairs, if you like a piece you can immediately leave with it, after some negotiation. And beyond that, they are venues of great cultural interchange. And that's why I thought for a long time that it would be great to bring these kinds of fairs to Hong Kong."

The evolution of his antiques business was decisive in the decision

對於古董藝術品的來源，翟健民有自己的堅持。中國在19和20世紀曾經受到西方多國的侵略和掠奪，不少在外國的中國古董是當時經此途徑流傳出去的。要清楚知道每件物品來源的合法性幾乎是不可能的事，不過在他對文物古董的不懈追求中，翟生為自己定下了準則。他和我們分享道：“我一般是不會特別去調查物品的來源地，但如果我知悉是出土文物的話，我就一定不會考慮。從我進入北京大學學習考古學的那天起，我就許下承諾，絕對不會購買出土文物。”

在他心目中，他很希望能夠把香港的古玩展延伸到澳門。他說，“澳門市場還在萌芽階段，還需要大量的研究。但我希望在未來5年能夠在澳門舉辦類似的展覽。”他也希望澳門政府加強對這個行業的支持。“澳門的博物館辦得很好，但政府需要推動對中國古代藝術的教育。如果條件允許的話，我將會很樂意在澳門舉辦古玩展，因為我依然把澳門視為我的家鄉。”

“我指的是老澳門，不是路氹城。”他笑著說。

to move on to this project. Prior to Hong Kong's Handover to China, the clientele of the store he has been keeping on Hollywood Road since 1988 - the year he launched himself at his own risk - was mostly made up of Hong Kong collectors (60 per cent), the remainder from Western countries. Today, 70 percent of the company's customers are from Mainland China. And this new reality led him to conclude, 10 years ago, that the conditions for organizing an International Antiques Fair in Hong Kong were sufficiently mature.

“The Chinese were already rich enough and beginning to take an interest in antiques,” he says. “Westerners were also interested in coming to Hong Kong to contact Chinese art dealers. And we could serve as a bridge.”

Each edition of the fair brings together close to a hundred antique trading pavilions, most of which are from local dealers and from China, but with a growing number of foreign representations. The Chak's Company Limited stand, located right in the centre of the fair, is distinguished by the rarity and high value of its pieces: Ceramics from the kingdom of the Soong emperors, jade, bamboo and porcelain of the Ming and Qing dynasties, acquired from dealers around the world.

The numbers involved in this market amount to exorbitant sums: in 2005, before the fair even existed, Chak paid HK\$115.4 million for a vase from the 18th Century reign of Emperor Qianlong, which at the time established a new maximum for art business in Asia and a world record for porcelain of the Qing Dynasty.

Chak is neither oblivious nor indifferent to the moral debate that often looms over the origin of ancient Chinese art pieces, many of which were transported to the West after being pillaged by invading armies in the many military conflicts that China saw itself forced to face throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. But he argues that it is almost always very difficult, if not impossible, to determine the legitimacy of the original acquisition, and therefore he only imposes on himself one restriction in his relentless quest for antiquities: “The origin of the pieces does not normally concern me unless they come from Archaeological excavation sites in China. The day I entered Beijing University, I promised God I would never buy pieces coming from archaeological sites. And I continue to honour that promise.”

In his current plans, is a hope to bring to Macau an extension of the antiques fair organized in Hong Kong. “The Macau market is still embryonic and requires a lot of study, but it is possible that it develops enough to make sense to organize a fair there in the next five years,” he says.

To do so, he advises the Macau SAR Government to strengthen support for the sector: “Museums do an excellent job, but the government needs to do more for disseminating knowledge of ancient Chinese art. If I put together the right conditions, I will be happy to bring the fair to Macau, because I continue to consider Macau my hometown.”

“Old Macau, not Cotai,” he concludes with a smile.

對澳門收藏家的建議 ADVICE TO MACAU COLLECTORS

小心贗品 “在網上拍賣的物品有兩成是贗品，”翟健民提醒我們。他自己每五年都會不小心買到一件贗品。

如何判斷真偽 翟生建議首先要查看物品的全身，然後再研究它的材料，胎釉、表面的圖案，繼而再看底部的印鑑還有重量。有疑問時，最好拿到化驗室做鑒證。

對於新手收藏者來說，要多去參觀博物館，多讀參考書，還有多請教專家。

投資價值 古董文物不適宜作為投資炒作，翟生說。有此心態的人應該選擇投資房地產和股票市場。但是一件價格合理的古董是永遠不會貶值的。所以翟生建議收藏者至少應把物品收藏兩至三年，期間物品一般會增值50%到60%。

WATCH OUT FOR IMITATIONS. “About 20 percent of the pieces traded online auctions are not authentic,” warns Chak. He himself is duped once every five years.

HOW TO CHECK AUTHENTICITY? Chak first undertakes an analysis of the body of the piece, then an examination of the materials and the surface pattern. Finally he observes the base, the seal and the weight. Should doubts remain, the solution is to send the piece to a laboratory. For new collectors, Chak advises many visits to museums, the reading of many specialized books and, above all, the use of the support of specialists. To avoid disappointment.

THE VALUE OF THE INVESTMENT. Antiquities are not a good investment for anyone looking for high speculative returns, says Chak. For this, it is preferable to invest in the real estate market or the stock exchange. But in antiquities, when the piece is good, its value never decreases in value. Chak therefore advises investors to keep possession of the piece for at least two or three years after purchase. Over that period of time they may already see a 50 or 60 percent profit.
