

## Silk Roads exhibition offers rich display of trading treasures

The Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto will launch the most ambitious exhibition in its 70 year history on September 10 with the opening of *Silk Roads/China Ships*, a show devoted to the trade routes from the Far East. Made possible by a grant from the American Express Foundation, the exhibit chronicles the growth of east-west trade from the first century A.D. to the days of the famous clipper ships of the nineteenth century.

Both Dr. Evelyn Nagai-Berthrong, curatorial co-ordinator of *Silk Roads/China Ships* and John E. Vollmer, associate curator of the textile department agree that the exhibition is a tribute to trade itself. "It shows the impact that trade makes, both on the East and on the West by reflecting the cross-fertilization of cultures through the ideas and goods exchanged," said Mr. Vollmer.

The exhibition includes more than 400 objects from the museum's collection, ranging from fragile fabrics to the famous tomb figures of noblemen, horses and grooms. Luxurious rugs, silks, jewellery, finely-carved furniture, tea sets, and aromatic spices create the atmosphere of an Eastern bazaar.

### Silk, the cloth of kings

Of all the goods bundled on the backs of camels or packed in the hulls of ships crossing treacherous seas, the most famed was silk "the noblest of all exotic materials, the cloth of kings". It was the Chinese who discovered, more than 4 000 years ago, a process for cultivating silk by raising silk moth larva and unwinding



*Earthenware warriors, green glaze with traces of pigment, from China (seventh century).*

their cocoons to obtain silk thread. They made silk cloth which eventually was coveted by foreigners. Soon they began to custom-make exquisite materials for export.

The exhibition includes a fragment of silk damask of the thirteenth/fourteenth century made for the Egyptian market and a dress length of yellow painted and silvered silk taffeta of the mid-eighteenth century created for the English or French market.

Cotton also made the long trek westward. India became the major supplier of raw cotton and cotton fabrics for Asia and eventually for Europe. Textile fragments illustrate the imaginative ways this

raw material was developed into both practical and beautiful clothing. One example is a finely embroidered seveneenth century coverlet from India made for the English market.

The Chinese were masters at creating delicate, yet durable ceramics, particularly porcelains. The exhibition illustrates this art effectively with plates, tea cups, bowls, jars and vases dating to the ninth century. Also on exhibit is an Indian pearl-and-citrine necklace made for the English market; snuff bottles of coral and amber, and an Indian turban clasp made of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, gold and polychrome enamel, all to which demonstrate the opulence of the trade.

The exhibition will be on display at the ROM from September 10 to January 8, 1984, before moving on to New York's American Museum of Natural History from February 15 to May 12, 1984. It will then travel to the Cincinnati Art Museum (June 4 to August 11, 1984); the Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Alberta (September 4 to November 10, 1984); the San Diego Museum of Art (December 3 to February 9, 1985); the Vancouver Art Gallery, British Columbia (March to May 1985); and the Baltimore Museum of Art (June 3 to August 10, 1985).

## High tech invades the arts

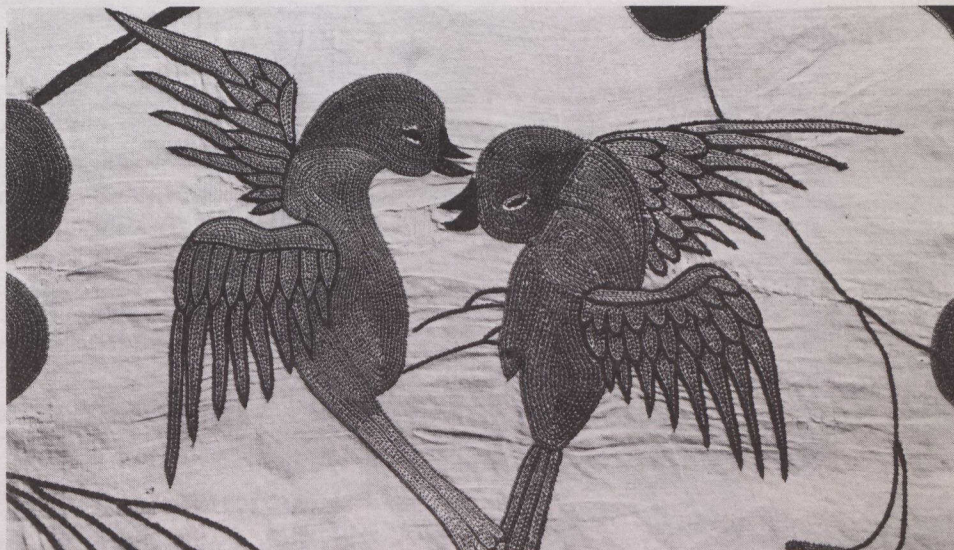
The first conference of its kind in Canada entirely devoted to the marrying of arts administration and the micro chip will take place September 9 to 11.

The Arts Management and the Computer Conference will attract arts administrators from all areas of the arts — theatre companies, galleries, publishers, orchestras, museums, dance companies — from across Canada who will spend three days looking for better ways to organize everything from subscription campaigns to art collections, tour bookings and fund-raising.

Although several arts organizations are already using computers at the management level, the use of the desk top micro, widely used in business, has not been adopted for use in the arts.

Experts in the application of computer hardware and software, plus arts administrators currently using the technology will address the delegates.

The conference is being sponsored by Arts Inter-Media, a Toronto-based non-profit arts organization.



*Finely embroidered coverlet from India made for the seventeenth century English market.*

Royal Ontario Museum photos