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Following Her Bliss: Mary Griggs Burke (1916–2012)

JULIA MEECH

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MARY GRIGGS BURKE was born in Saint Paul, Minnesota, on June 20, 1916, and later made her home in New York City. Although I grew up in Minneapolis and am distantly related to Mary, I did not meet her until I came East for college and graduate school. But I still remember how glamorous she appeared to us—the students attending the 1967 opening of John Rosenfield’s exhibition “Japanese Arts of the Heian Period: 794–1185” at Harvard University’s Fogg Art Museum. She was a lender, and positively glowed with joy at the beauty of the art. Her broad smile lit up the gallery. Subsequently, we formed an enduring friendship. We traveled together, looked at art together and had fun together, right up until the end. It was she who, in 1973, encouraged me to take a job as an assistant curator of Japanese art at the Metropolitan Museum. A loyal comrade, she unfailingly supported my various projects, including *Impressions*.

Her maternal grandfather was Crawford Livingston (1878–1925), scion of an old New York family. Livingston moved to Saint Paul as a young man and amassed a fortune in railroads, banking and many other enterprises (Mary Burke liked to refer to him as a robber baron). Livingston and his wife, Mary, moved to a stately Victorian mansion on fashionable Summit Avenue, Saint Paul, high on a bluff over the Mississippi. Because he loved hunting and camping, he acquired a lodge (he named it Forest Lodge) with one hundred acres of land on Lake Namakagon in Cable, Wisconsin.

Their daughter, also named Mary (d. 1967), married Theodore Griggs (d. 1934), the son of a Saint Paul merchant and lumberman. Griggs rose to the top of his family’s business; his wife had a taste for antiques and renovated their house in 1930 with rooms she imported from Europe. They had one child, another Mary Griggs—the future Mary Burke.

Mary Griggs was home schooled by her mother’s secretary through fifth grade, then attended Summit School for girls in Saint Paul. She graduated from Sarah Lawrence College in 1938, and earned an MA degree in clinical psychology from Columbia University in 1942. That training served her well later in life—she had a gift for sizing up people. Although she lived in Manhattan, she maintained ties to the Twin Cities and always summered at Forest Lodge. She attributed her deep love of nature to her early roots in the forests of northern Wisconsin (fig. 1).

< FIG. 1. Mary Burke and her father at Forest Lodge, Cable, Wisconsin. 1920s. Estate of Mary Griggs Burke



FIG. 2. Mary at Shūgakuin Imperial Villa, Kyoto. August 28, 1954. Estate of Mary Griggs Burke



FIG. 3. Mary and Jackson at their home in Hobe Sound, Florida. April 1964. Estate of Mary Griggs Burke

A LIFETIME WITH JAPANESE ART

In the 1950s, Mary became interested in Japanese art and culture, spurred by the suggestion of her architect, Benjamin Thompson of The Architects Collaborative (TAC). He urged that she visit Japan to study gardens when he was designing her house on Centre Island in Oyster Bay, Long Island, in 1954. Thompson was a disciple of Walter Gropius, who had been lecturing in Japan, and he gave Mary letters of introduction (fig. 2).

In 1955, when Mary was almost forty, she married Jackson Burke, a native of San Francisco and eight years her senior. He had moved to New York around 1949 to become the director of typographic design at Mergenthaler Linotype Company in Brooklyn, where he completed the design of the typeface Monticello and created Aurora and Primer. Burke also designed the couple's winter home in Hobe Sound, Florida. He spent much of his time there after declining health—he suffered from diabetes—forced him into early retirement (fig. 3).

In January 1956, long before her serious collecting began, Mary purchased the right half of a pair of eighteenth-century *Genji* screens at a Parke-Bernet auction in New York. The left half was sold as a separate lot, and was later acquired by Frank Lloyd Wright from a New York dealer. Mary would always favor courtly imagery from the classic novel *The Tale of Genji*, and once named a dachshund *Genji*.

The art dealer Frederick Baekeland remembers meeting the Burkes in 1960 at New York's Mi Chou Gallery, which sold old and contemporary Chinese art. Both Fred and Mary were strongly attracted to paintings by Chen Chi-kwan (1921–2007), who became head of the architecture department at Tunghai University in Taiwan. November 22, 1963, coincidentally the day of the President Kennedy assassination, marked a turning point, however; the Burkes acquired the Frank E. Hart Collection of colorful ukiyo-e paintings when it came on the market in Palm Beach, Florida. It was the nucleus of what became the Mary and Jackson Burke Collection of Japanese Art. The collection also includes a small but fine group of Korean works of art and a handful of Chinese paintings.

Around 1965, Mary sailed into Professor Miyeko Murase's graduate seminar on Japanese art at Columbia University. It obviously went well, because at the end of the semester, Mary invited Miyeko to travel with her to India and then on to Japan. Professor Murase played a central role in advising Mary and introducing her to scholars and dealers in Japan (fig. 4). She wrote the catalogues for numerous Burke exhibitions and is the lead compiler of the final, two-volume catalogue raisonné, available in 2014.

In 1966, the Burkes hired the sculptor and designer Yasuhide Kobashi—always dramatic in his black mink coat—to create a Japanese-style “mini-museum” in their New York apartment building for storage and display of the collection. It was intended not as an authentic replica of a Japanese room but as an architectural enframement in Japanese taste. That year, the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation was established for the purpose of making grants to educational institutions,

FIG. 4. Building the collection: Mary with the Hosomi family and Helmut Brinker in Osaka. 1968. Photo: Julia Meech



FIG. 5. Mary at the opening reception of “Japanese Art: Selections from the Mary and Jackson Burke Collection” at the Metropolitan Museum. September 1975. Estate of Mary Griggs Burke

favoring Sarah Lawrence, but including practitioners of the visual and performing arts, and the conservation of the natural environment. In 1972, the Burkes initiated a second foundation—the Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation—for the purpose of collecting Japanese art and displaying it to the public. Beginning in 1973, when the collection had reached substantial proportions, the Burkes employed a professional curatorial staff. Andrew Pekarik, my husband at the time, served as curator from 1973 through 1984; he was succeeded by Gratia Williams Nakahashi and Stephanie Wada.

Jackson Burke died of cancer in 1975, just a few months before the first major exhibition of the Burke Collection at the Metropolitan Museum. Mary braved it through the opening reception, looking stunning in a chiffon evening gown she had commissioned from Mori Hanae; it had a design of white plum blossoms in moonlight copied from her sensational painting by Itō Jakuchū (1716–1800) (fig. 5 and frontispiece p. 24).

In 1979, owing to the rapid expansion of the collection, Kobashi brought in Japanese carpenters from New Jersey and added a small gallery for Buddhist art and a room with three tatami mats for tea ceremony. Great Momoyama tea utensils—the Iga *mizusashi* Mary liked to call the “Burst Bag,” for example—had by then entered the collection.

When Mary and Andy Pekarik made their annual buying trip to Japan around 1982, the eminent Tokyo dealer Setsu Iwao produced what he thought would be the pièce de résistance: a Black Seto teabowl. But it was not going over. For Mary, at that point, it was just a black bowl—it made no impression. So Mr. Setsu brought in Hayashiya Seizō, the curator of ceramics at the Tokyo National Museum, to make the pitch. According to Andy, Hayashiya said:

You are starting your tea collection. You should have ten great pieces. This would be one of them, and is so very rare. It was made in a small chamber kiln in the late sixteenth century. There were only four of them in the kiln at the same time. The potter had to reach in with tongs at the peak of the firing and pull it out, plunging it into cold water. Most of them exploded. But here is this one perfect example.



FIG. 6. Mary poses with her Black Seto teabowl during the installation of her exhibition at the Tokyo National Museum. June 1985. Estate of Mary Griggs Burke



FIG. 7. Andrew Pekarik hosting a tea ceremony for Hatakeyama Hisako in the Burke mini-museum. Late 1970s. Photo: Julia Meech

Mary remained unimpressed. The pitch had no effect. So Mr. Setsu decided to host a tea ceremony for her, using the bowl. He scheduled a formal dinner at Kitchō, an elegant restaurant with its own tearoom.

As luck would have it, Sherman Lee, director of the Cleveland Museum of Art, was in town that week, so he was included in the event. He would surely bring it home for them. Sherman was seated as the first, or head, guest, considered the most important at such a gathering. Next came Mary, then Andy. Mr. Setsu himself was discreetly absent from the room. Tea was served in three bowls provided by Mr. Setsu: the black bowl for Sherman; a white Shino-ware bowl for Mary; and a nondescript bowl for Andy. The black bowl would obviously stand out as the great one. As is customary, the bowls were cleaned after use and given back to the guests for their telling comments and admiring words. Sherman picked up his black bowl, looked at it, turned it over, and said, “You know, this is just the kind of thing about the tea ceremony I have never been able to understand. I just don’t get it. What do they see in these things?”

Mary continued to resist for a while—the teabowl was more expensive than anything she had ever purchased. Somehow, Hayashiya got word to her yet again that she should acquire it, and this time, she agreed to have the Foundation buy it. It was a real struggle, but the bowl did enter her collection and soon became one of her special treasures (fig. 6). In those days, tea was a featured event at the mini-museum in New York. Andy was studying at the Urasenke Chanoyu Center on East Sixty-ninth Street, and would effortlessly host tea gatherings using Mary’s prized utensils (fig. 7). Memorable was the occasion when two guests from the director’s office at the Metropolitan Museum raised their antique Raku teabowls and clinked them together like cocktail glasses. Rich Look, a cousin on the Griggs side, remembers a visit to Mary’s Centre Island home “when Andy P. was so into tea ceremony and she indulged him, and we were all outside on bamboo mats for an impromptu ceremony, and she told me she really didn’t care



FIG. 8. David Waterhouse with Mary Burke, Gratia Williams Nakahashi, who recorded the haiku poems recited in the tearoom, Andrew Pekarik and Peter Stern. June 1984. Photo: Julia Meech



FIG. 9. Left to right, back row: Gratia Williams Nakahashi, John C. Weber, Barbara Ford; front row: Matthew McKelway, Mary Burke, Julia Meech, Stephanie Wada. New York, May 9, 2003. Estate of Mary Griggs Burke

for *matcha* and thought it would be much more fun if they served stingers instead!”

Several generations of scholars and collectors have passed through the mini-museum, an intimate gallery for viewing a few carefully selected works of art, invariably a memorable experience. In June 1984, David Waterhouse came down from Toronto to serve as the judge for a Japanese-style haiku competition held in the small tearoom (fig. 8). Afterward, guests were rewarded with sushi and sake. Waterhouse’s most vivid memory of that day is when Mary tripped over his camera case and fell to the floor. Fortunately, she was not hurt and made light of it, but he was deeply embarrassed.

More recently, Mary and her neighbor and fellow collector, John Weber (they lived on opposite sides of the same building), conducted annual mini-seminars focusing on a subject—porcelain or landscape screens, for example—represented in both of their collections. These seminars were led by a specialist such as Suzanne Valenstein, Melissa McCormick or Matthew McKelway, and always concluded with a delicious luncheon hosted by John (fig. 9).

Until 1988, Mary continued to make annual trips to Japan (because of health issues, Jackson accompanied her only once, in the 1960s). She was a real trooper, willing to go almost anywhere. In 1972, while I was living in Japan, she arrived in late March. I insisted that she and her traveling companion, Jean Archbold, should come with me to spend a night in a Shingon temple on Mount Kōya. Unfortunately, it was still bitter cold, with rather deep snow on the mountaintop, but she gamely bought a set of men’s long underwear at Takashimaya department store in Kyoto. She was surprised but gracious about the cold spinach the temple served us for breakfast at five-thirty the next morning (fig. 10). Then, as we hiked through the impressive cemetery in the Oku-no-in, she drew the notice of the amateur photography club of Osaka. Behind every important



FIG. 10. Mary Burke (right) and Jean Archbold having breakfast at the Kongō Sanmai-in on Mount Kōya. April 2, 1972. Photo: Julia Meech



FIG. 11. Arakawa Toyozō shows his Shino sherd to Louise Cort and Mary Burke. April 2, 1977. Photo: Julia Meech

tombstone, there was someone crouched with a camera, and soon they were training their lenses on the Western ladies sporting long underwear.

In 1977, Louise Cort served as our guide on an excursion to meet young potters in Kutani, Echizen and the Mino area, as well as the grand old master, Arakawa Toyozō (1894–1985), who showed us the famous sherd he excavated in 1930 at what turned out to be the earliest Shino-ware kiln site (fig. 11). Mary excavated for pottery sherds on the waste heaps of seventeenth-century kiln sites, and bought a Nabeshima dish in Arita (figs. 12, 13). In Karatsu, she visited the Minnesota potter Richard Bresnahan (b. 1953), who was then apprenticed to Nakazato Takashi (b. 1937), thanks to Mary's sponsorship. She was very interested in Bresnahan's work; today he oversees the largest wood-burning kiln in North America at Saint John's Pottery, Colleagueville, Minnesota. In Fukuoka, Mary was guest of honor at a tea ceremony hosted in the small tearoom at the home of Tanakamaru Zenshi (his late father, founder of the Fukuoka Tamaya department store, collected the finest Kyushu ceramics). We drank sake and ate the formal tea meal from Momoyama ceramics that were subsequently featured in 1979 in a small, but memorable, exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum. On her last trip to Japan, in 1996, Mary visited with members of the imperial family, and went to Hokkaido to view efforts to preserve the habitat of the Red-crowned Crane.

On June 20, 1991, for her seventy-fifth birthday party at her estate on Centre Island, she invited about a hundred guests to dress as Japanese ghosts and demons. For herself, she commissioned two clever young art students from the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn to make a grotesque mask, long white wig and lavish costume, complete with severed arm, of the demon Ibaraki, copied from her pair of screens painted by Shibata Zeshin (1807–1891) in his seventy-fifth year (figs. 14a, b). A Japanese dancer, Sachiyo Ito, performed a newly choreographed Ibaraki dance at poolside by torchlight. Later, Mary was known to surprise close friends (and a small child in the elevator of my apartment building) by dressing up in the demon costume on Halloween. She marked her eightieth birthday at the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin—that time, with a specially choreographed Japanese crane dance, again presented by Sachiyo Ito. Images of cranes form



FIG. 12. Mary excavates pottery sherds with Louise Cort and Andrew Pekarik. March 1977. Photo: Julia Meech



FIG. 13. Mary buys a Nabeshima dish from Ikeda Chūichi in Arita. March 24, 1977. Photo: Julia Meech

FIG. 14a. Mary in Ibaraki costume with her Zeshin screen for her seventy-fifth birthday. June 20, 1991. Estate of Mary Griggs Burke

FIG. 14b. Mary (far right) and guests (Julia Meech, Rhea Nichols and Stephanie Wada) at the birthday party. Estate of Mary Griggs Burke



a notable subcategory in her collection. In a lecture she gave at Sarah Lawrence in 1995, she said that

the crane symbolizes much more than something beautiful to paint. It confronts in a particularly dramatic way all of us with what we are losing and have already lost by destroying our environment—our rivers and marshes. The cranes have made an ardent conservationist and also an enthusiastic amateur ornithologist of me—giving me new ways to follow my bliss.

As a philanthropist and collector, Mary Burke did more than anyone to spur the appreciation of Japanese art not only at institutions such as Asia Society, Japan Society, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, but also among scholars, collectors and the public at large. In 1985, the Burke Collection was the first Western collection of Japanese art to be shown at the Tokyo National Museum. For her contributions to cultural exchange between the United States and Japan, Mary was awarded the Order of the Sacred Treasure, Second Level Gold and Silver Star, by the government of Japan in 1987.



FIG. 15. Mary Burke with Evan M. Maurer, then the director of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, at the opening of “Jewel Rivers: Japanese Art from The Burke Collection,” in October 1994. They stand in front of a 17th-century screen, *Barley Field*. The exhibition also traveled to Richmond’s Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in California.

FIG. 16. Philippe de Montebello pays court at the opening dinner for “Bridge of Dreams: The Mary Griggs Burke Collection of Japanese Art,” at the Metropolitan Museum. March 27, 2000. Estate of Mary Griggs Burke



As a result of her continuing interest in natural history, conservation and the visual and performing arts, Mary held board memberships in the International Crane Foundation; Asia Society, New York; the Hobe Sound Nature Center, Florida; The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Sarah Lawrence College; Japan Society, New York; and in Wisconsin, the Cable Natural History Museum.

Together, the Mary Griggs Burke Collection and the Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation comprise the largest private collection of Japanese art outside of Japan, spanning more than four thousand years, from Jōmon to contemporary, and including some nine hundred works of art—ranging from ceramics and lacquer to paintings, folding screens and sculpture. Mary decided early on to split the collection between The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, where she had been a trustee since 1976, and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, where fifteen renovated galleries for Japanese art were named for her in 2006 (figs. 15, 16). Smaller bequests go to the Morikami Museum in Delray Beach, Florida, and the Yale Art Gallery in New Haven (her Chinese paintings).

Mary was determined and focused in her love of Japanese art for nearly fifty years. Speaking of her collection in an interview with *The New York Times* in 1986, she said,

I was able to buy it not because I was wealthy, but because when I started to collect, the work was undervalued. I didn’t have Japanese collectors to compete with, as Japan was still recovering from the war.

Some people love the joy of the chase. For me, the point is not to possess a lot of objects. It’s knowing about them, the culture behind them, who made them and why. The possession is really a minor thing.

She freely shared her treasures with visitors from all over the world. In 1993, she researched and wrote the catalogue for the exhibition of her

collection at the Morikami Museum, an indication of the depth of her personal involvement with Japanese art and culture.

Mary Burke liked to quote Joseph Campbell, her college mentor, saying that by collecting art she was “following her bliss.” Her stock answer to the ongoing, annoying question, “Why do you collect Japanese art?” was: “It’s a deep neurotic need better left unanalyzed.” But she was quick to add that while the excitement of the chase and the capture cannot be denied, the activity opened innumerable other doors to her—especially the opportunity to meet and share interests with many wonderful friends of all ages.

Impressions offers a tribute to Mary Griggs Burke condensed from four personal and poignant eulogies delivered at a memorial service held at Japan Society, New York City, on May 30, 2013.

REMEMBRANCE

by Margot Bogert, Former Chair of the Board, Sarah Lawrence College

I first knew Mary Burke when I worked in the development office at Sarah Lawrence College in the mid-1980s. Although Mary had graduated many decades ago, she was a well-remembered and devoted alumna. Her particular pal was Alice Ilchman, the college’s president, who attended openings of Mary’s exhibitions of Japanese art in Minneapolis, Delray Beach and New York—and I went along as Alice’s aide. We also enjoyed the many events for alumnae hosted by Mary at her home and mini-museum in New York.

Mary Griggs Burke attended Sarah Lawrence College from 1934 to 1938, and was called “Groggs” by her classmates. She studied literature, economics, psychology, painting and the history of art—and particularly read a lot of Japanese literature with her don, Kathryn Liddell, who said of her, “Mary does not show her wares in the shop window.” She also studied with the painter Bradley Walker Tomlin (1889–1953), who was influenced by Japanese art. Mary, who loved to draw, later said that “participating yourself in the artistic process certainly gives you help in understanding what you want to collect.”

This quote from Mary, which appeared in an interview in the Sarah Lawrence College magazine in 1986, sums up the profound influence of her college experience:

I think that a Sarah Lawrence education opens up your curiosity. A lot of education doesn’t do that, and I know that I, as an only child, and sort of overprotected, felt that I had to get back at people. I did this by closing up and not learning anything. Sarah Lawrence helped me get over this block and really enabled me to learn about things and be interested in them, so in a sense, I think that I gained a great deal from my college education.

That sense of thinking that you can learn anything, do anything, is the essential link between the student and the pedagogy of Sarah Lawrence College. Mary personified that concept, and developed into a



A



B



C



D

- A. Guest house at Forest Lodge, c. 1980
- B. Mary and her mother, rose garden, Forest Lodge, 1952
- C. Mary with guide at Katsura Detached Villa, Kyoto, August 27, 1954
- D. Mary, Eleanor Briggs and guests, Chinzansō restaurant, Tokyo, 1962
- E. Mary and Jackson Burke, Oyster Bay residence, July 1966
- F. Mary with Tanaka Ichimatsu and his wife, Tokyo, March 1970



E



F

Photos: Estate of Mary Griggs Burke; Leighton Longhi; Julia Meech

G. The dealer Setsu Iwao and the proprietor of Kitchō restaurant, Tokyo, host Mary (behind Otafuku mask) and Julia Meech, 1972



G

H. Mary with John Gruber at his home in Nikkō, 1977

I. Keum Ja Kang sells a Korean stone ram, Oyster Bay, 1997

J. Mary with Professor Haruo Shirane and her curator, Andrew Pekarik, en route to Indiana University Genji Conference, August, 1982

K. Mary in Korean costume, mini-museum, 1978

L. Mary (center) posing in mini-museum tearoom, with collection curators Gratia Williams Nakahashi and Stephanie Wada, 1989

M. Leighton Longhi completes a sale, mini-museum, late 1980s

N. Mary walking her beach at Oyster Bay, 2001



H



I



J



K



L



M



N

world-renowned collector of Japanese art. She even became a Sacred Treasure of Japan! And the college recognized Mary with every award possible, which included an honorary advanced degree, the first given to an alumna.

We at Sarah Lawrence will miss Mary Griggs Burke, but her rare spirit encourages us all to learn and go and do.

FAMILY MEMORIES

by Rosemary Ripley

To me, the most shattering part of the death of someone you love is the realization that you can no longer speak with them to exchange ideas and feelings—some deep and meaningful, but others, just everyday chatter and gossip. The memories you have of the person seem to melt like ice in spring, but after the first shock of loss, if you try to put them on paper, you find as you write that you begin to remember things you had forgotten—often things from long ago when you were a child. After all, everyone in our lives who becomes close to us leaves something of themselves within us.

Those words you have just read were written by my cousin Mary at the death of my mother, her first cousin, Mary Livingston Ripley. As she wrote then, someone close leaves something of herself in all of us—and that's certainly the case with Mary Burke.

Mary's childhood was spent with her loving parents and grandmother in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Her mother doted on little Mary, her only child. At one point when Mary was still quite young and had a lingering malady, her mother carried her from room to room for days to conserve the child's limited energy. From an early age, she was feted with elaborate birthday parties, costume parties and star appearances in imaginative plays, all choreographed by her mother. From early home movies we can see the fanciful costumes and props. Many of the stories involved pirates, Indians, wild animals and other exotic characters of the time—tailored to Mary's flair for the dramatic.

As a child, she also delighted in going blueberry picking with her older cousins. After they filled their buckets, they would plop down and sit on top of their berry crop. A little mischievous, sometimes Mary would do things just to see how her grandmother—an unperturbable Buddha-like figure—would react to such childish provocations.

As Mary turned eighteen, it is a tribute to her parents that she was allowed to go off to college—unlike all of her female first cousins. And Sarah Lawrence College certainly helped open up her life. Although her mother moved to New York to be near her daughter, Mary cut the cord with her family by attending college, and delighted in the intellectual stimulation of Sarah Lawrence. Many years later, Mary told me all about her studies with Joseph Campbell, the renowned anthropologist, whom she remembered vividly and with great enthusiasm—and even sent me a collection of all his published books. After college, she continued her education, studying

FIG. 17. Mary had no children but is survived by numerous cousins who adored her, including (left to right): Julie Ripley Miller of Hamden, Connecticut, Rosemary Ripley of New York City, Sylvia Ripley Addison of Washington, DC, and Eleanor Briggs of Hancock, New Hampshire. New York, May 30, 2013. Photo: George Archibald



psychology and (much later) Japanese art at Columbia University. Looking back, she joked that her urge to collect Japanese art probably had some psychological underpinnings that were best left unexamined. She also thought that her analysis as a young woman was critical for liberating her from her overprotected upbringing.

Mary's sense of humor and her empathy are the two qualities her family cherishes most about her. She was a kind of harbor for many of us as children, and later in our lives, as we relished how much more informal and nonjudgmental she was compared to other older family members. But we all—old and young—reveled in Mary's sense of fun.

While we treasured her humor and her joy for living, I emphasize again that Cousin Mary's empathy and quiet understanding were even more important to us. She always discerned which one among us needed some special care and thought (fig. 17). At times when we felt abandoned or not understood by our parents, she would reach out and comfort us. Her gentle beacon was deeply felt and appreciated. She gave us solace by her side and in the comfort of her home. We wouldn't necessarily spend much time talking about a troublesome event, but felt healed through her presence.

And so we are grateful that "everyone in our lives who becomes close to us leaves something of themselves within us." We celebrate Mary's life and appreciate her continued presence in our lives today.

IN MEMORIAM

by Miyeko Murase, Takeo and Itsuko Atsumi Professor Emerita, Columbia University, and Former Research Curator at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Nearly fifty years ago, Mary Griggs Burke walked into my office at Columbia University to ask if she might attend my graduate seminar on



FIG. 18. Tosa School. *Asagao* (The Bluebell), Chapter 20 from *The Tale of Genji*. Japan. Edo period, 17th century. Page from a set of two albums; ink, color, silver pigment and gold leaf on paper. 14.7 x 13.1 cm. Estate of Mary Griggs Burke. Photo: John Bigelow Taylor



FIG. 19. Water Jar. Japan. Momoyama period, late 16th-early 17th century. Iga ware; stoneware with natural ash glaze. 20.6 cm. Estate of Mary Griggs Burke. Photo: Bruce Schwarz, Courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Japanese painting. As her research project, she chose to identify the painted scenes from a seventeenth-century album of *The Tale of Genji* that she had acquired only recently, in October 1964, for her own collection (fig. 18). I thought, “My gosh, this is not going to happen every day in my teaching life.” At that time, there was just one English translation of the voluminous eleventh-century novel—Arthur Waley’s beautifully written, but heavily abridged, version. To this day, I have no idea how she managed to identify not all, but almost all fifty-four illustrations in her *Genji* album. I was truly impressed by her determination, perseverance and resourcefulness. Our long relationship sprang from that very seminar, and I might add that the *Genji* album was among the first works of art in what later became one of the largest privately owned collections of illustrations of *The Tale of Genji*.

At the end of the semester, she proposed that we go to Japan together. Two days later, she called me up and said, “How about going to India before we go to Japan?” We traveled through India for about a month and a half. I learned a great deal about her, and I am sure she found out about me, too. We were still very new friends. We got to Japan and her husband, Jackson, joined us. That was the only trip he could make to Japan. We would not take him to Nikkō. He wanted to see Nikkō, but we told him it wasn’t worth it. He would never let us forget that.

Mary wanted to visit dealers with me. I started out with Yabumoto Sōshirō in Tokyo. Mary selected an early fourteenth-century image of a Shintō goddess, Seiryū Gongen. We also chose a Buddhist mandala which, unfortunately, was denied an export license. I was extremely proud of both of us when we learned, later on, that this mandala was to be registered as an Important Cultural Property. I felt that Mary’s future as a collector was on the right and bright course.

Mary's delightful modesty and gracious demeanor earned her a nickname among the Japanese dealers: "Princess." She herself merely smiled at this kind flattery. Decades later, an official of the Japanese Foreign Ministry requested my help in preparing the documents necessary for Mary to receive the award of an Imperial Medal: the Order of the Sacred Treasure. He dutifully took notes based on my comments and my explanation of Mary's contributions to the study of Japanese art in particular and Asian art in general. Her involvement covered a broad area, for she was active not only as a collector, but also as a museum trustee, a deeply committed supporter of numerous exhibitions, publications, scholars' research and students' studies in the United States and abroad. The official with whom I was working exclaimed, "In other words, she is the Mother of Japanese art in America." The neophyte princess had been transformed into a full-blown butterfly, a leading figure in the field.

Mary was endowed with an instinctive appreciation of beauty and an understanding of the aesthetic value of objects. For her, it was love at first sight in 1972 when it came to the deliberately misshapen water jar, an Iga-ware *mizusashi* used in the tea ceremony that is one of the most famous pieces in her ceramics collection (fig. 19). Mary's immediate reaction upon seeing it was, "This is mine!"

She also chose objects which could be easily incorporated into her life. Mary expected to live with these objects at her apartment in Manhattan and the "mini-museum" she and Jackson had established there. Many students, scholars and curators visited her collection there, but my fondest recollection is of the seminars at her home in Oyster Bay, Long Island, to which she invited my graduate classes for a weekend of study, good food and warm hospitality. As many as ten students were crammed into her seaside house at the end of a school year (fig. 20). Occasionally, lucky Japanese scholars and visiting curators were included: Akiyama Terukazu, a *Genji* specialist; Shinbo Tōru, a *Tenjin Engi* specialist; and Kawai Masatomo, a Muromachi ink-painting specialist, among others. Events from these intimate seminars remain in my mind as the warmest memories of my Columbia career.

FIG. 20. A pottery seminar in the pool house at Oyster Bay. June 1986. Estate of Mary Griggs Burke

FIG. 21. Mary, Hayashiya Seizō of the Tokyo National Museum and Miyeko Murase at an inn in Odawara. May 23, 1987. Estate of Mary Griggs Burke



FIG. 22. George Archibald and Mary in New York, with an anonymous crane screen purchased in 1995. c. 2000. Courtesy George Archibald



Mary and I enjoyed such a heavenly collaboration that I tended to dismiss the passage of time, feeling as though it would last forever (fig. 21). It is truly sad that she did not live to see the publication of her catalogue raisonné, just as Jackson died the eve of the opening of their collection's first Metropolitan Museum exhibition in 1975. I and all of us will miss her, terribly.

REMEMBERING MARY BURKE

by George Archibald, Cofounder of the International Crane Foundation, a Private Organization Dedicated to the Preservation of Those Birds Worldwide

On the grounds of Mary Burke's summer home, Forest Lodge, near the small town of Cable in northern Wisconsin, there is an ancient hemlock forest beside Lake Namakagon. Since childhood, this special place carpeted in ferns and moss under cathedral-like trees was Mary's "Fairyland." She developed a lifelong interest in nature. Mary and her husband, Jackson, founded the Cable Natural History Museum in 1967; supported the three-hundred-acre Dodge Nature Center in the heart of West Saint Paul, not far from Mary's childhood home on Summit Avenue; and the Hobe Sound Nature Center near the winter residence the Burkes built on Jupiter Island in Florida. Through Mary's wisdom, Forest Lodge was gifted to the Trust for Public Land (TLP) in 1999. They, in turn, sold the eight-hundred-and-seventy-acre estate to the U.S. Forest Service through a congressional appropriation. The TLP established an endowment with The Saint Paul Foundation to provide for the operation and maintenance of Forest Lodge. TLP further launched a Northwoods Initiative that encompasses the northern Great Lakes and aims to acquire at-risk land before the



FIG. 23. In the chick yard at the International Crane Foundation, George watches Princess Sayako feed a juvenile Black-necked Crane using a hand puppet. 1990s. Estate of Mary Griggs Burke

subjects of the treasures Mary collected. Once, while on business in Tokyo with her curator Andrew Pekarik, Mary was told that wild, Red-crowned Cranes could easily be seen on the northern island, Hokkaido. Soon, she met the wild cranes and was amazed by their graceful forms and movements. A bit later, at a garden club meeting in Saint Paul in 1976, Mary shared her interest in cranes with an ornithologist friend of mine, Amos Eno. She was surprised to learn that the newly established (1973) International Crane Foundation (ICF), near Baraboo in Wisconsin, maintained a diversity of captive cranes from around the world. When Mary chartered a small aircraft and flew to Baraboo—it was there we first met and began a close, lifelong friendship. Mary and her foundation, the Mary Griggs Burke and Mary Livingston Griggs Foundation (to honor her mother), became major supporters of the conservation of endangered cranes (fig. 22).

Every March, the greatest gathering of cranes on earth happens when more than a half-million Sandhill Cranes converge on the Platte River in central Nebraska, where they remain for about a month to build fat reserves that fuel their long migrations to northern breeding areas. I forewarned Mary that it would be uncomfortable, without adequate accommodations, but she wanted to see that spectacle, so—I think it was in 1998—we met up in Kearney. At four-thirty the next morning, we were in a blind beside the portion of the broad, sandy, shallow river where tens of thousands of cranes spend the night. It was extremely cold that morning, and as light flooded across the silent cranes, they stood motionless on one leg with heads tucked under their wings. The huge birds blanketed the river.

Soon, that direct sunlight softly illuminated the cranes in orange-red. A few birds stirred. Then a few started to call and dance; the roost was alive with motion. To our amazement, a thin layer of dense fog formed as a low cloud some feet above the cranes. As they departed from the roost to feed in nearby fields, they were lost from sight for several seconds, flying into the hovering mist, only to reappear highlighted again against a clear-blue sky. Mary saw what artists in Japan had observed for centuries. I never saw her more animated.

opportunity for public ownership is lost. Beyond the protection of Forest Lodge, Mary's intent was to foster and encourage a greater appreciation of the natural world.

The understated aspect of Japanese art, with its emphasis on the mystique of nature, resonated with Mary. The three species of magnificent cranes that are native to Japan have played a major role in art and literature as symbols of long life, marital fidelity and good fortune. Cranes were frequent

Princess Sayako (b. 1969), the daughter of the emperor and empress of Japan, is an ornithologist. We had met several times in Chiba Prefecture at the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology, Japan's leading organization in the study of birds. Returning from a state visit to Brazil, the princess and her entourage spent a weekend at ICF (fig. 23). A few years later, in 1996, she arranged for me to spend a few hours with her parents at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo. By chance, Mary Burke was in Tokyo at the same time, and the royal family, having known Mary for many years through her collection, was delighted when I suggested that she join me for our visit. We shared a memorable afternoon discussing cranes, conservation and several mutual friends of Mary and the imperials.

In December 2012, I sent a copy of Mary's obituary to Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko. On April 30, 2013, I received a letter from the Imperial Palace in which its chamberlain wrote:

Their Majesties, the Emperor and the Empress, have asked me to convey to you Their sincere condolences on the demise of the Emeritus Director of the International Crane Foundation, Mrs. Mary Burke, who was a major supporter of the International Crane Foundation and also known for the fabulous Burke Collection. It was kind of you for sending a letter in this regard.

In 1995, Mary and her cousin Eleanor Briggs joined me on an adventure to South Africa and Botswana to see wildlife, and especially the three species of cranes. A week in the pristine wilderness of Botswana's Okavango Delta necessitated luxury camping amid an abundance of elephants, hippos, crocodiles, lions, leopards and poisonous snakes. On the first day there, I visited Mary's tent to see how things were. She stood before an opened suitcase as if wondering what to do with the contents, a task usually performed by Hilde, her devoted German lady's maid, who had been with her, and her mother before that, for decades. Mary looked off toward the savannah and a herd of elephants and proclaimed, "All my life I promised myself I would *never* go camping. And here I am!" Although she enjoyed the early-morning and late-afternoon game drives, the heat at midday—and the thought of black mambas slithering among the trees—had Mary thinking more and more about Manhattan. The last morning before she embarked on her journey home, she appeared at breakfast decked out in large gold earrings and an elegant pantsuit. But she looked tired. When I inquired, she retorted with a sigh, "I had a terrible recurrent dream all night that this was *not* the last day!"

When I provided assurance that indeed she would soon be winging her way back to New York, Mary beamed. As she boarded the bush plane, the lady who helped manage the expedition commented, "Mrs. Burke is as close to class as I'll ever get." I feel the same. 🍀