



—Ken Coates photo

RAYMOND CHOW, BENNY LEE... coin issue

Artist, coin dealer team up to boost heritage, housing

By DER HUI-YIN

One day last summer, Vancouver-born artist Raymond Chow and coin broker Benny Lee, who came here from China at age two, decided it was about time they started to learn about their Chinese heritage.

So the two friends headed up to the University of B.C. library to read up on Chinese culture.

Out of that study session came the Chinese Dynasty Collection, a limited edition of five coins commemorating 1,800 years of Chinese history, which went on the market this week.

Chow — whose drawings and paintings have reached such internationally-recognized collections as that of the Queen Mother — used, for the first time in his career, an oriental art form in the design of the coins. Lee, with his expertise in the coin business, arranged to have them minted.

Both men then donated their work to the Vancouver Chinese Canadian Activity Centre Society, of which Lee is a director.

All profits from the sale of the coins will go toward the society's fund for the construction of a \$1.5-million senior-citizen home and activity centre complex in Chinatown.

"Raymond and I have lost much of our culture and heritage and one of the main reasons for this is that we've become further and further removed from the core community in Chinatown," Lee said in an interview Thursday. "Our thoughts have become very Western and, because of the communication gap, we unfortunately have

very few Chinese friends who have just come from the Orient."

He said they decided to help launch the activity centre project to set up a common meeting place for all Chinese people in an attempt to perpetuate the Chinese culture.

"We want a place in the complex for the older people, too," he said. "The Chinese have an old saying about respect for the elders. The young again must learn to relate to the old and this age mix will hopefully be a start."

The collection consists of five large coins depicting the great Chinese dynasties: Tang (618-906), Sung (960-1279), Yuan (1280-1368), Ming (1368-1644) and Ch'ing (1644-1912). On the reverse side of the coins are the Chinese characters representing happiness, longevity and prosperity.

The coins, made of a nickel alloy, are available at \$1 each or \$12.95 for a set of five at all major Vancouver department stores as well as shops, restaurants and banks in Chinatown.

The society guarantees that the coins can be traded in for \$1 at all participating stores until April 30, 1978. It is currently negotiating sale of the coins at supermarkets and fast-food chains throughout the Lower Mainland.

The society has also made available 1,000 sets of the coins in sterling silver at \$75 a set, 100 sets in 10K gold at \$1,000 a set and 100 in 24K gold at \$2,000 a set.

Lee said the coins will likely appreciate in value just as the Indian dollar, issued last January, has doubled in value at coin shops.

The Bay proudly presents The Chinese Dynasty Collection

The Chinese Dynasty Collection pays tribute to the oldest continuous artistic tradition existing in the world today. This unique art series honors 1800 years of ancient Oriental artistic inspiration. From five of the most recognized epochs of Chinese history, ten outstanding works of art have been compiled and reproduced by the distinguished Vancouver artist, Raymond Chow.

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