

European Association for Asian Art and Archaeology

Online Panel no. 2

Representing Asia in European Visual Culture

(Tuesday, 12 October 2021; 13:00)

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Date: Tuesday, 12 October 2021

Time: 13:00 - 14:30 (CEST time, UTC+2)

Chair: Sabine Bradel

- 13:00 - 13:15 **Lianming WANG:** Chinese Plants and the Eighteenth-Century Physiocraticism
- 13:15 - 13:30 **Wenjie SU:** Learned appropriations of the pagoda motif in eighteenth-century chinoiserie art and architecture
- 13:30 – 13:45 **Lucie OLIVOVÁ:** Suzhou Export Prints: Pictures of Beauties and Infants
- 13:45 – 14:00 **Metka LOKAR:** The Touch of Chinoiserie in Slovenia: Some Preliminary Observations
- 14:00 - 14:30 *DISCUSSION*

ABSTRACTS

(in alphabetical order)

THE TOUCH OF CHINOISERIE IN SLOVENIA: SOME PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

Metka LOKAR

University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Chinoiserie as a way to reinterpret the themes and decorative techniques of the Far East, especially of China, touched European arts and crafts in the mid-to-late 17th century. Its popularity peaked in the middle of the 18th century, and until nowadays never fully went out of fashion. The interest for exoticism as well for adopting the oriental style predominantly flourished in the Western Europe. Wanting to imitate the style that matched perfectly rococo art at the time, European artists and craftsmen began producing their own takes on East Asian artefacts, and chinoiserie gradually became an integral part of the European aristocratic lifestyle.

There has been quite an interest in researching chinoiserie recently, and some researches reveal that the taste for it was not limited just to the West of Europe. After the first enchantment it spread around and, among others, also reached Slovenia. A lot has been lost or demolished, though the ongoing mapping of Chinese objects and collections could still help to reconstruct its appearance, as well as to show how and by whom it was brought to the country. The research is to be done; so far a preliminary overview shows that chinoiserie in Slovenia was not exceptional in being more or less related to the upper class, especially in its golden age, and that was mostly imported to Slovenia by noble families under the influence of a common European aristocratic taste to decorate the interiors in Chinese style.

Metka Lokar is employed by the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana as a teacher of Slovene abroad and works as a foreign expert at School of European Languages and Cultures, Beijing Foreign Studies University. Her fields of work and research are Slovene as a foreign language, literary and art history, culture and cultural history, intercultural relations, as well as ethnic and migration studies. She is currently preparing her doctoral thesis on chinoiserie in Slovenia within the programme Comparative Study of Ideas and Cultures at the Postgraduate School of the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

SUZHOU EXPORT PRINTS: PICTURES OF BEAUTIES AND INFANTS

Lucie OLIVOVÁ

Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

Based on a recent finding in a repository in the Slatiňany castle (Bohemia), this paper examines the set of 32 coloured prints featuring beautiful women, some of them with infants, engaged in play and leisure. They were executed in the refined style of the Suzhou tradition, and fall into a well-established topical category. As is evident from additional traits I shall point out, such as the depicted coiffure, clothing, and furniture, these images date from the early 18th century. They were produced for export (*waixiaohua* 外銷畫) and consequently, the like of them are not seen in China any more, but in collections abroad, including Japanese collections. In Europe, a few are still displayed in the historical setting inside various noble residences, e.g. in Eisenstadt (Austria) or Łancut (Polska), and give evidence of the different modes of their display. The presentation aims at the introduction of newly discovered works of Chinese art, as well as at the reassessment of Suzhou woodblock printing.

Lucie Olivová is graduated in Sinology at Charles University, Prague, and studied Vernacular Chinese Fiction, and History of Chinese Art at University of California, Berkeley. Her Czech monographs include *Tobacco in Chinese Society* (2005), or *Traditional Chinese Architecture* (2008). In English, she contributed to the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture* (2005), and published numerous articles, e.g. Ignaz Sichelbarth, a Jesuit painter in China (*Bohemia Jesuitica*, 2010); Maps, Landscapes and Flower Paintings: New Findings from the Náprstek Museum (*Annals of the Náprstek Museum*, 2010); Chinese Dream Captured on Paper: Drawings by Jaroslav Slovák (*Studia Orientalia Slovaca*, 2018). She is a member of the Yangzhou Club, and of the Folk-Print Research Group at Feng Jicai Institute, Tianjin.

LEARNED APPROPRIATIONS OF THE PAGODA MOTIF IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CHINOISERIE ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Wenjie SU

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Inspired by recent scholarship that re-examined chinoiserie beyond frivolous exoticism, this paper aims to investigate the iconographical tendencies of the pagoda motif as appropriated in eighteenth-century European visual and material culture. This paper argues that learned intentions to understand Chinese architecture and society could be identified in chinoiserie interpretations of the pagoda, while these attempts were shaped by intellectual traditions and urgencies in Europe.

Despite the fluidity of meanings associated with most iconic chinoiserie motifs, a re-examination of influential chinoiserie designs suggests that the pagoda-tower was often rendered as an architectural signifier of imperial authority and civic order, which was probably inspired by travelogues and Jesuit reports that emphasized the key role of pagoda-tower in the typical Chinese urban fabric and the civic regulating function of this structure (although some early modern authors seemed to confuse pagoda/tower with the civic tower/lou). Widely portrayed on various surfaces, collected as architectural models, or actually built in full-scale, the pagoda was arguably perceived as an equal and unique architectural prototype in world history. At Shugborough, the juxtaposition of a five-story pagoda (1750s) with a reconstructed Vitruvius-based Tower of Winds (1760s) surpassed a pastiche of garden follies but invited serious comparison of free-standing monumental towers from different cultures.

The formal resemblance and probable historical connection between obelisks and pagodas, proposed by Kircher as a proof of Sino-Egyptian chronological continuity, further inspired artistic creations beyond Catholic commitment. Featuring pagoda-obelisk composites carried by elephants, various eighteenth-century English clocks designed for the Chinese emperor appropriated the pagoda motif as a learned token to address the imperial audience and the theme of time.

Wenjie Su is currently a PhD Candidate at the Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, where she studies early modern European as well as Ming-Qing Chinese art and architecture. Broadly interested in the formation of knowledge involved in cross-cultural dialogues, her dissertation, supervised by Prof. Thomas Kaufmann and Prof. Cheng-hua Wang, will study the cultural history of timepieces in order to investigate the early modern Sino-European encounters in the technologies and conceptions of time. Her MA thesis (cum laude, Utrecht University, 2015) examined the intricate relationship between the history and historiography of Chinese export porcelain, which was supervised by Prof. Peter Hecht and Prof. Thijs Weststeijn. Wenjie's undergraduate education at the University of Hong Kong cultivated her research interest in historical cultural encounters (BA, First Class Honors, 2013).

CHINESE PLANTS AND THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PHYSIOCRATICISM

Lianming WANG

Institute of East Asian Art History, Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany

Why countless images of Chinese plants flooded the European publications of the eighteenth century and for which reason they were brought into being? Through a close reading of a large-sized, long forgotten affixed hanging with a great variety of Chinese plants, now kept in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, this paper aims to capture the major shift of the Sino-European exchanges of the botanical knowledge. The making of this painting, however, touches not merely the issues of possible sources and agents involved, but also the question of how the global network was established between different botanical gardens and institutions as well as the driving forces behind all these exchanges. Having identified all species of the plants and floras depicted in the painting, I will link them to a larger context of Jesuit botanical practices in Beijing, arguing Chinese garden plants were desired in the late eighteenth century, instead of herbal and other exotic plants. The botanical was in fact not the primary reason for the abundance of the images of Chinese plants. Lying behind the idea of utilizing Chinese plants was the belief of the physiocrats – they tended to propagate that the superiority of Chinese agriculture would greatly foster the economy and bring benefits for the European societies. Against this background, this paper attempts to contextualize this painting by putting into the “commercial images” ordered by Henri Bertin (1720-1792), a physiocratic and the controller general of finances of Louis XV. (r. 1759-1763), who acted as the major protagonist for the Sino-European exchanges of images and knowledge.

Lianming Wang is Assistant Professor at the Institute of East Asian Art History, Heidelberg University. He specializes in global Jesuit art and architecture, with a focus on early modern China. He is the author of *Jesuitenerbe in Peking: Sakralarchitektur und transkulturelle Räume 1600-1800* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2019). He studied art history, classical archaeology and Italian philology in Shanghai, Padova and Würzburg and received his Ph.D. (2014) in East Asian Art History from Heidelberg University. Before joining the faculty in Heidelberg, he has taught at the Institute of East Asian Cultural Studies, University of Würzburg (2009-2011).