



The exchange of art, images and artistic techniques between China and Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries

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Abstract The European Age of Discovery witnessed the initiation of frequent communication between Europe and East Asia. Transported via the trade routes of trading vessels, Chinese artworks, including Chinese porcelain, textiles, furniture, popular paintings, woodblock prints and wallpaper, drew major attention from European audiences over several centuries. The imported Chinese artistic products were used as luxury house decorations and collected as personal treasures by those who came from high class families and affluent social backgrounds. The original Chinese art products in Europe contained a large number of popular artworks which were heavily influenced and informed by the texts of ancient Chinese classics, philosophies and religions. These pieces inspired European local artists who produced imitations of Asian motifs on chinoiserie designs which were firmly rooted in both Eastern and Western traditions, having a profound influence on European art taste and social culture. Among the various imported artworks from China, paintings and woodblock prints of beautiful women figures became particularly fashionable. This article takes Suzhou beauty prints and Guangzhou paintings as examples to highlight the reciprocal nature of artistic exchange between Chinese and European art. It traces the process by which popular types of Chinese art entered Europe and influenced the creative processes of local European artists. The similarities and differences between the depictions of female figures in the original Chinese works and some chinoiserie pieces demonstrate the ways in which European artists made use of Chinese models to create a unique new style. It goes on to consider those Suzhou prints and Guangzhou paintings which were influenced by European artistic techniques and examines the reception of such artworks in Europe. Pieces of art from collections located in museums and institutions in Europe will be selected

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to demonstrate the key features of interest. Examples are also drawn from similar collections of the British Museum, private collectors, and examples of wallpaper from palaces in Germany, Austria and England, which were produced during the eighteenth century.

Keywords Chinese popular art · Chinoiserie · Suzhou prints · Exported Chinese paintings · Artistic exchange

Chinese popular paintings and prints provide a fruitful object of study in understanding the transition of artistic influence between China and Europe. They also give an example of how the same objects were perceived in very different ways in different cultural contexts. Not being engaged in the culture of Chinese elite art, European merchants tended to approach Chinese art based on their own tastes rather than those of the culture in which they were produced. This meant that they were much more open than members of the Chinese elite to the whole range of art produced in China, including Suzhou prints and exported Chinese paintings from Guangzhou.

This article focuses on artworks which portray women figures as the theme can be isolated in order to focus on specific influences that Chinese techniques had on European artists, and European artists had on Chinese artists. Women figures have been selected as an example to explore for two main reasons. Firstly, they are commonly found in Chinese prints and in chinoiserie works in Europe. Secondly, they are depicted in quite distinctive ways in the different traditions which means that any areas of influence can be easily identified.

Chinese prints in Europe

The Jesuits looked somewhat down on the traditional Chinese painting of the Chinese literati. Matteo Ricci was the first successful Jesuit to gain access to the Chinese imperial court in Beijing. In commenting on the art of the Chinese literati, he noted that, “[...] especially in the making of statuary and cast images they (Chinese) have not at all acquired the skill of Europeans. They know nothing of the art of painting in oil or of the use of perspective in their pictures, with the result that their productions are lacking any vitality” (Sullivan 1989, p. 43). Approaching art from a European cultural perspective, Jesuits such as Ricci thought that Chinese painters were unable to paint using sophisticated techniques, particularly linear perspective. In addition, traditional Chinese paintings were often strongly connected to Chinese poetry and, as Michael Sullivan (1989, p. 43) has argued, most of the foreign people in China would have lacked the language and cultural knowledge to have been able to interpret these works of art in the same way as Chinese scholars.

In contrast to the elite status of Chinese traditional painting within China, woodblock prints were sold to ordinary people. Though in China, they were disregarded by the scholarly class, in Europe they found admirers from the upper echelons of society. *The China Letter Book of the East India Company* recorded that between

1699 and 1702, the East India Company ordered a quantity of Chinese “paper pictures” (*zhihua* 紙畫), which means paintings or prints on paper, for which they paid £200–£300 (Sullivan 1989, p. 99). The name of these artworks in China referred to popular prints that were depicted on unmounted, bare paper, and usually purchased by ordinary people. The first mention of *zhihua* was found in *Dongjing Meng Hua Lu* 東京夢華錄 (*The Eastern Capital: A Dream of Splendor*). This history described how *zhihua* were sold on a busy commercial street in the capital city Dongjing (modern day Kaifeng, Henan province) of the Southern Song Dynasty.¹ *Zhuhua* were also known as *huaertie*² in the Ming Dynasty and as *nianhua* 年畫³ during the Qing Dynasty, with this term referring specifically to the prints and paintings containing views of human figures of “mothers and sons”, story scenes, landscapes and depictions of flowers and birds (Gu 1991, p. 233). In addition, the artworks were generally cheap in price and widely spread among city residents and also peasants from rural regions (Gu 1980, pp. 150, 151).

From the libretto text of *Xianzhuanghui Tanci* 仙莊會彈詞 (*Ballad of Xianzhuanghui*), an opera of the Qianlong period, a Suzhou merchant sang lyrics while selling prints on the street in Yangzhou:

Opening the picture box, [...] under two sheets, another two sheets appear, (which depict) *Golden dragon silver phoenix – Four Beauties*, [...] the clothes and make-up of the beauties are fashionable and fine, [...] she has dark hair, tied up high, curved eyebrows, peach-pink cheeks, slightly seductive eyes, a nose like precious jade, a mouth in the shape of a cherry. Her ten fingers are slender, slim, and her waist sways like a weeping willow, in her hands she holds a little baby (boy). [...] the last sale before closing the business – only sixteen *wenqian*.⁴ (Cited in Zheng 2010, p. 209, trans. AXM).⁵

The price of sixteen *wenqian* quoted for the “mother and sons” print was very low. Along with the low price, the image of a singing salesman on the street demonstrates

¹ A description of the busy commercial view can be found in the original book in Chinese as follows: “Crowds of people gather in the streets of the capital city, enjoying amusing activities. Street vendors use gambling to attract customers, with the winner of the gambling getting a small mud-figure statue and a paper picture.” Meng Yuanlao (2011, p. 28, trans. AXM) Original text: “至冬日，禦街遊人嬉戲，觀者如織，賣撲土木粉捏小象兒並紙畫，看人攜歸，以為獻遺。” More early records about *zhihua* can be found in Zhou (2011, p. 140).

² The word “*huaertie* 畫兒貼” is found in the Chinese Classic *Dream of the Red Chamber* when the character Granny Liu (Liu Laolao 刘姥姥) talks about those New Year prints (known as *huaertie* during the Ming Dynasty) in general: “Many’s the time of an evening when the day’s work is done we’ve sat and looked at the (*huaertie*) picture on our wall and wished we could get inside and walk around, never imagining that such a beautiful place could really be.” (trans. David Hawkes, cit. in Lust (1996, p. 73)) See also Cao (1974, p. 485).

³ For the first mention of *nianhua*, see Li (2006, p. 65).

⁴ The original source is a hand copy of *Xianzhuanghui Tanci* of the Qianlong period. Original text: “打開畫箱，[...] 獻過裏朵兩張，還有裏朵兩張，金銀龍鳳四大美人。[...] 周身衣服橋打扮，[...] 頭發烏雲罩，眉毛灣灣交，面孔水粉桃，眼睛帶點騷。鼻子像瓊瑤，小嘴像櫻桃。十指尖尖楊柳腰，手裏抱個小寶寶，[...] 收攤生意賣本錢，只賣十六錢。”

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all omissions, emphases and entries in square brackets in all quotations are by the author.

that these artworks were the art of the common people of China rather than the elites.⁶

In contrast to the everyday nature of such artworks in China, Michael Sullivan (2014, p. 121) mentioned that the paper pictures were purchased on a large scale by English merchants and were sold to wealthy European families to decorate the lavish “Chinese rooms” of stately homes and palaces. The paper-hanging company Crompton and Spinnage recorded an account in 1763 for paper-hangings of “fine India landscapes”. The price for 29 pieces of Chinese imported paintings for wall-paper totalled £60,18 s, a large sum for the time (Bruijn et al. 2014, p. 22). Milton Hall of Borthamptonshire, a manor house which originally belonged to the Fitzwilliams, provides an example of a stately home in which such prints were hung. In 1750, under the order of Earl William III., the Chinese room was established and the wall was decorated with eighty-one Chinese “paper pictures”. Some artworks were dated between 1745 and 1750, including paintings of flowers and birds, images of antiques, and woodblock prints of women figures from Suzhou (Wang 2016, p. 29). The remaining collections of such artworks in Great Britain today are found in private hands, and the presence of such prints in the wallpaper of stately homes and palaces across the country, pay testament to the popularity of the pieces amongst the British upper classes and the luxurious connotations that such artworks had.

The popularity of Chinese prints in a traditional style as luxury products for the upper classes was not restricted to Great Britain, but a trend could be witnessed across Europe, particularly in Germany, France, and Austria. Early examples are found in the collection of Augustus II the Strong (c.1670–1733), the Elector of Saxony and King of Poland during the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries. The prints were recorded in the inventory of 1738, so that they certainly predate that time, and are now collected in the Kupferstich Kabinett of the State Art Museum (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden-SKD) in Dresden. In England, the British Museum contains similar prints from Suzhou, donated by Sir Hans Sloane in 1753. The prints of female figures usually depict the women as mothers of male offspring, or female characters from novels and operas of the Ming Dynasty. One print depicts a woman with a hairstyle and clothing of the Ming Dynasty. This particular image relates to the opera *Mudan Ting* 牡丹亭 (*Peony Pavilion*) written by Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (ca.1550–1616) in the Ming Dynasty.⁷ Another print of a “mother and child” in the collection of Sir Hans Sloane in the British Museum, depicts a mother sitting on a *taihu* rock with the appearance of a high-class woman from the Ming Dynasty.⁸ These two prints are small in size, and printed with five to six different colour wood boards. The women figures depicted are similar in appearance to those described in

⁶ According to Wang (2016, p. 33), 1000 *wenqian* equals 0.61 *liang* (i.e. a measure word for weight). 1 *liang* is 0.25 kg of silver and one *liang* of silver money in the early Qing dynasty could buy one *shi* (i.e. another measure unit) of rice. 1 *shi* equals 7.5 kg. The 16 *wenqian* price of a print is worth roughly 0.01 *liang* of silver, which could buy about 75 g of rice.

⁷ This image is in the collection of the Kupferstich-Kabinett of the State Art Collections Dresden (see Wang 2018, 116 (issue 47, Fig. 1).

⁸ The British Museum, object number 1928, 0323, 0.17.

the aforementioned libretto text but, far from being sold to ordinary people by street salesmen, in Europe the images were the preserve of affluent, upper-class families.

Influence of Chinese prints on chinoiserie

The distinctly Chinese style displayed in these prints had a great influence on the work of European artists in the chinoiserie style who produced artworks that were sometimes direct copies of the Chinese artworks, and sometimes inspired by them. The transition of artistic style did not only flow in one direction. Whilst European producers of chinoiserie were inspired by Chinese artworks, European artistic techniques, via the Jesuits and European texts, came to influence some producers of Suzhou prints who began to use techniques such as linear perspective, hatching and *chiaroscuro*.⁹ Although most of these Chinese artists continued to produce artworks featuring predominantly Chinese themes, the European artistic techniques which they employed cannot be seen in traditional Chinese prints or artwork.

Traditional Chinese prints from Suzhou are known to have been first ordered and purchased by European merchants, travellers, and Jesuits through East Indian Company vessels, and even some company staff through private trade.¹⁰ After they were transported, they were sold in Europe by European merchants at auctions in France, Italy and Amsterdam. In the first stages of chinoiserie production, exact copies of these prints were produced by European artists. Pieter Schenk the Younger (c.1693–1775) was a Dutch printmaker whose father owned a print shop in Leipzig. One of his prints was produced between 1727 and 1775 and is now held in the Rijksmuseum of Amsterdam. The print is printed with outlines and hand-painted with colour, and contains a depiction of a female figure which is an exact copy of a Chinese original. The original Chinese print, on which Schenk's copy was based, is found in the prints collection of Augustus the Strong in Dresden. Such prints were fashionable in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in both Chinese and European markets. It has been dated to the late seventeenth century and was produced in Suzhou with printed black outlines and hand-painted colour. The print, which is entitled *Two Women Playing a Card Game*, depicts two women figures with late-Ming to early-Qing hairstyles and dresses, with small shoes on their bound feet.¹¹ The women sit on stools positioned on opposite sides of a table, playing a

⁹ *Chiaroscuro* is a technical term used by artists for the use of contrasts between the light and dark areas on objects and figures, in order to achieve three-dimensional effects, also known as the “middle tone”.

¹⁰ For evidence of the private trade, see Christer von der Burg's discovery of a “Swedish chest”, and inside the lid of the chest pasted a Suzhou woodblock print of a mother and sons with European influence. The print is the same copy of a wallpaper in the “Chinese Salon” in Schloss Esterházy in Eisenstadt, Austria. The chest belonged to John Hall the Elder (1735–1802), the richest merchant and entrepreneur in Gothenburg, his father-in-law Anders Gothén (1719–1794) was employed as an officer by the owner of a merchant ship in the Swedish East India Company. Gothén made numerous travels to China and East India on the ships of the Swedish company, no less than 10 journeys between 1743 and 1780 (Von der Burg 2015a, b).

¹¹ For more information about the appearance of women figures in Chinese prints, see Wang (2018, p. 101).

Fig. 1 Chen Miaochang 陳妙常, female opera figure from *Yu Zanji* 玉簪記, late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Chinese watercolour painting on Xuan paper, mounted in album, Kupferstich-Kabinett, State Art Collections-SKD, Dresden



card game together.¹² Being an exact, reverse copy of the Chinese print, Schenk's print contained all of the elements of Chinese culture and artistic style seen in the original.¹³

Another print by Pieter Schenk the Younger, which was held in Augustus the Strong's collection, shows similarities to a Chinese painting from an album. The original painting depicts a Chinese Daoist nun, named Chen Miaochang 陳妙常, from the opera *Yuzanji* 玉簪記, *The Story of a Jade Hair Clip* by Gao Lian 高濂 (c.1537–1620). The original Chinese painting appears to be a draft painting, which has been finished quickly. Such works were possibly exported paintings done by popular art workers and only sold to the European market (Bischoff and Wang XM [manuscript, forthcoming]). The style of the clothes, the small shoes for her bound feet, and the handkerchief on her hair follow the fashion of the late-Ming period. The woman is holding a Daoist tool, a dust-sweeper, *fuchen* 拂塵, which is a symbol of the Daoist religion.¹⁴ The original opera was a love story about the love between Chen Miaochang and a young scholar. In the opera, as a Daoist nun, under the

¹² The image of the print *Two Women Playing a Card Game* is in the collection of the *Kupferstich-Kabinett* of the State Art Collections Dresden (Wang 2018, 121, Fig. 8-1).

¹³ *Two Women Playing a Card Game*, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, object number: RP-P-2013-9-14.

¹⁴ The symbolical meaning of sweeping the dust indicates the idea of sweeping away one's worries.

confinement of religious rules, Miaochang was described as a beauty with passion and eagerness to find true love. Along with the popularity of the opera for ordinary people in the late Ming period, the image of Chen Miaochang became popular in Chinese artworks, and certain depictions with her Daoist *fuchen* became symbolic of her Daoist identity.

This imagery, which was deeply connected to, and entrenched in, Chinese culture was also present in Schenk's copy, but displayed in a different way. In both the original Chinese painting and the print created by Pieter Schenk the Younger, the hairstyle, the clothing, and the body gestures are very similar, but the Daoist *fuchen* is depicted in the opposite hand. It might have been that Pieter Schenk the Younger had seen the print in Dresden or a similar artwork from China and copied it into his print. Although Schenk has included the Daoist symbolism, it is highly doubtful that either he, or prospective buyers in Europe, would have been aware of the story of Chen Miaochang or the Daoist nature of the painting.¹⁵

Whilst some of these early chinoiserie artworks were direct copies of Chinese originals, others took motifs from Chinese originals and combined them with other elements. A further artwork by Pieter Schenk the Younger, *Googhelaars (Jugglers)*, an engraving from Nieuhof dating to 1665 (Corrigan et al. 2015, p. 326), combines elements of the above mentioned Chinese original print *Two Women Playing a Card Game* with other images. The two women playing cards are the same as in the original artwork, but the background view, the private garden, the lake in the distance, and the female attendant serving food, are not from the original print. The image presents a relaxed and luxurious life style which was based on a combination of elements copied from at least one original Chinese artwork. The other elements may have been copied from other Chinese artworks or imagined by the artist himself, and this combination of elements demonstrates one way in which chinoiserie artists created completely new images of China.

The combination of copying Chinese originals and imagining something new was usually based on either misunderstanding of originals, fantasy, or a combination of the two. An example of an apparent misunderstanding can be seen in the case of an item of tin-glazed Delft earthenware, which is a copy based on an original book illustration from a copper engraving in Johan Nieuhof's travelogue (Corrigan et al. 2015, p. 326). The original image based on Nieuhof's own, first-hand observations in China, depicts a street circus performance. The performer is a man with a queue, wearing a long gown. Whilst in Nieuhof's original print, a street performer is showing his skill in making a snake go through his nose. In the European blue Delft earthenware, a similar depiction has become a woman figure with a handlebar moustache (Corrigan et al. 2015, p. 326, cat. 93). The long hair and gown of the performer in the original has resulted in the performer becoming a woman in the Delftware and the snake has become a moustache (Fig. 2).

In China, the performance of pulling a snake through the nose is a well-known, traditional performance. Having witnessed this first hand, Nieuhof has recorded the experience, but not in so much detail that it would have been clear to someone

¹⁵ Amsterdam Rijksmuseum, object number: RP-P-2013-9-16.

unfamiliar with the practice. Both of these points highlight how the knowledge of the artist had a significant impact on how he saw things and how a completely original image of China was created through this process of interpretation through the lens of a particular set of cultural experiences.

The influence of European artistic techniques on Chinese prints

The influence of Chinese art on the work of European artists producing chinoiserie was clear, but so too was the influence from Europe on China. Traditional Chinese art contained no hatching, no linear perspective and no *chiaroscuro*. European-influenced, Suzhou prints were only produced for a short period of time, roughly from the 1700s to 1760s, and their emergence and disappearance was related to Catholicism in China. In his book *Wushengshi shi* 無聲詩史 *History of Silent Poetry* (1720), Jiang Shaoshu 姜紹書 expressed a high degree of admiration for European art commenting that,

Li Madou (Matteo Ricci) brought with him an image of the Lord of Heaven in the manner of the Western countries; it is a woman bearing a child in her arms. The eyebrows and the eyes, the folds of the garments, are as clear as if they were reflected in a mirror, and they seem to move freely. It is of a majesty and elegance which the Chinese painters cannot match (Sullivan 1989, p. 43).

The technique of hatching is believed to have mainly come from book illustrations brought by Jesuits to China in books such as *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* (1572), by Georg Braun (ca. 1541–1622) and Franz Hogenberg (ca. 1535–1590), published between 1572 and 1616 and brought to China by Matteo Ricci. The cosmology and architecture in this book attracted many Chinese people, leading to Ricci requesting that more books be shipped over to China, especially the books which contained engravings of European cities and streets (Sullivan 1989, p. 46). Furthermore, Sullivan has argued that those Jesuit books and engravings possibly had the greatest impact on Chinese people, and were easily copied or adapted by Chinese woodcut artists. In 1598, the Jesuit Father Longobardi also wrote to Rome for more books to be sent to China. He wrote:

[...] it would be especially valuable if in could send me some books which represent the figures of the faith, the commandments, the mortal sins, the sacraments and so on. Here all such books are considered very artistic and subtle because they make use of shadows, which do not exist in Chinese painting (cited in Sullivan 1989, p. 46).

Copies and adaptations of Catholic images are found in Suzhou prints. In Augustus the Strong's collection, a large-sized print, partly printed and dyed with colour by hand, depicts a mother holding a boy.¹⁶ The woman is depicted with a veil covering

¹⁶ For an image of the print *Mother and Son with Flower Basket*, see (Wang 2016, p. 30).



Fig. 2 Plaque. Delf, 1670–1690. Tin-glazed earthenware. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

her hair, hanging down on her shoulder. She wears a dress of the late-Ming to early-Qing style. The red belt on her waist, the hanging jade ornament, the basket, and the flower pattern printed on the edge of her dress and sleeves, are typical Chinese clothing elements and similar depictions are also found in prints of women figures from Suzhou during the early eighteenth century.¹⁷ However, the facial structures of the woman and the boy clearly present European features, and the boy's clothes and curly hairstyle are strongly suggestive. The print combines the traditional theme of mother and son, with elements of European Catholic iconography.¹⁸ Another similar depiction with the combined motif of “mother and son” and Catholic influence is found in the collection of the Field Museum.¹⁹ Such prints contain apparent influence from Catholic motifs but also fit into the strong tradition of mothers with sons, a popular theme in Chinese prints and paintings. After the mid-eighteenth century, when Catholicism was banned for a period in China, European techniques disappeared from popular prints demonstrating the close connection between these techniques and the Jesuit presence in China.

Turning again to depictions of women, in traditional Chinese art, it was considered taboo to represent a woman's face as being dark for a number of reasons.

¹⁷ The examples can be found in Feng and Ryō (2011, pp. 66, 67, 91).

¹⁸ An example of a wood sculpture of Saint Dorothy with a basket of flowers and a young boy, dated 1510, in the collection of the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham University, UK, has similar visual elements to the print (Wang XM, forthcoming).

¹⁹ In the collection of the Chicago Field Museum, collected by Berthold Laufer (1874–1934) in Xi'an, China it is entitled as “Chinese St. Mother and Boy”.

Firstly, the beauty standards of the time placed a great deal of emphasis on women having fair skin. Secondly, some thought that shading made the facial representations look dirty. Perhaps most importantly, the concept of “*huiqi* 晦氣”, which literally means “dirty air”, is connected with bad luck, so dark representations of faces were avoided to create the impression of the presence of this “*huiqi*” (Ren 2004, pp. 45–48). Due to these perceptions, very few extant artworks show the use of dark hatching on the faces and hands of female figures. Even in those prints which show the influence of European techniques through the employment of *chiaroscuro*, it is normally restricted to the clothes and furniture. The faces of the women figures continued to be depicted with traditional Chinese methods with a style that employs lines to draw the shapes of the eyes, nose and mouth. The use of European techniques in certain parts of such prints but not in all highlights a restriction on the employment of borrowed techniques based on pre-established cultural standards, in this case, standards of beauty in the depiction of women.

In general, prints with women figures from Suzhou during the early eighteenth century present women figures with beauty features which fit the descriptions of feminine beauty appreciated and described by the Chinese literati. Chinese standards for the beauty of women were rigid, meaning that the women figures in such prints appeared with white, oval faces; crescent-moon shaped eyebrows, long and narrow eyes, and small lotus-like feet as can be seen in the chapter “Faces and Voices” (“*Shengrong Bu* 聲容部”) (Li (2009 [first 1730], pp. 77–87). The appearance of women with certain desirable features was appreciated by literary scholars in the Ming Dynasty. Prints depicting these traditional beauties were produced in large sizes, as single-sheet colour prints. The women figures were often mothers with their sons or individual beauties, and some came from opera scenes and novels. Though the depictions employed some European artistic techniques, the faces of the female figures lacked any hatching lines or dark shadows, ensuring that they fitted into the traditional Chinese standards of beauty for women. The depiction of female faces in a more traditional style in these prints, as well as the themes of family life and opera scenes, indicate that the prints were created for the Chinese domestic market. The lack of hatching or shadow on the faces of the female figures indicates that the artist had a degree of sensitivity to the market in realising that this was a more acceptable depiction for general aesthetic tastes in China.

Despite the general lack of shading seen in the depictions of women in Chinese prints, there were exceptions. A printer named Ding Yuntai 丁允泰, who worked in a print shop in Suzhou, produced a print which depicted a woman’s face with a shadow. Not only is this technique evident in the work, but so too are linear perspective and hatching, techniques which are all absent in traditional Chinese prints. Knowledge of these European techniques came to Ding Yuntai through the Jesuits. He himself was a Catholic and had personal relationships with Jesuits demonstrating a strong influence from European traditions. A pair of prints in SKD’s collection depict women figures and male children having a relaxing family time in the garden and terrace of a palace building on a lakeside. Hatching and perspective in the

architecture and in the sky demonstrate the clear influence of linear perspective and *chiaroscuro* techniques from Europe (Fig. 3).

More unusually, the women's faces are all depicted with grey shadow, a style common in European art, but not seen in any traditional Chinese portrait paintings. These are the only known extant Suzhou prints from the period with *chiaroscuro* employed on the depiction of a woman's face.

The Influence of European artistic techniques on Chinese paintings

In 1685, the Kangxi Emperor issued an edict which allowed four ports in south-east China to be opened to the ocean trade business with European countries. These four places included ports near Suzhou, Nanjing and Guangzhou. In 1684, a foreign commercial area called "Thirteen Hongs (*Shisanhang* 十三行)" formed in Guangzhou. Foreign traders, local merchants, and workshops involved in the production of artworks gathered in the area. The art studios took European business orders and only produced artworks for export to European markets. After 1757, in order to control the private trade between European merchants and local counterparts, the Qianlong Emperor made Guangzhou the only port open to foreign trade, which greatly strengthened its trading position. Indeed, around this time, in the middle of the eighteenth century, Suzhou prints gradually disappeared both from Chinese and European markets. During this time, women figures appearing in artworks produced in Guangzhou display a clear influence from European art, both in terms of techniques employed and subjects depicted. The depictions of female faces in some of these paintings clearly display the influence of the depiction of women's facial features seen in some European oil paintings. A pair of gouache coloured paintings on paper are repeatedly mounted on a folded screen collected in Esterházy Palace of Eisenstadt, Austria, depict a high-class Chinese Manchurian lady. The eye shape of the woman in the print is unlike typical Chinese depictions and more in the style seen in depictions of western women in European paintings. In Chinese paintings, the eye sockets were not depicted whereas in this painting, the eye sockets are clear (Huang 2012, p. 124). In addition, the eye is much bigger than that seen in typical Chinese depictions of women. Whereas the pupil of the eye was normally painted with lines in Chinese art, in this painting the contrast of colours seen in European portraits is used to create a more realistic image. The depicting style of the clothing and accompanying objects in the painting also signal the influence of European art. One of the female figures is accompanied by a puppy. The dog is depicted in a more realistic way than generally seen in Chinese art. The fruits in the plate – the *foshou* (佛手, "Buddha's hand") and the pomegranate show the traditional Chinese symbols. The fruit *foshou* is a homophone of *fushou* 福壽, meaning a good fortune and longevity. A split pomegranate with seeds symbolising "*liu kai bai zi* 榴開百子", the wish for the birth of many children. These exported Chinese paintings by a Chinese artist are in western manner and were only sold to traders who reached the coast in China (Fig. 4).

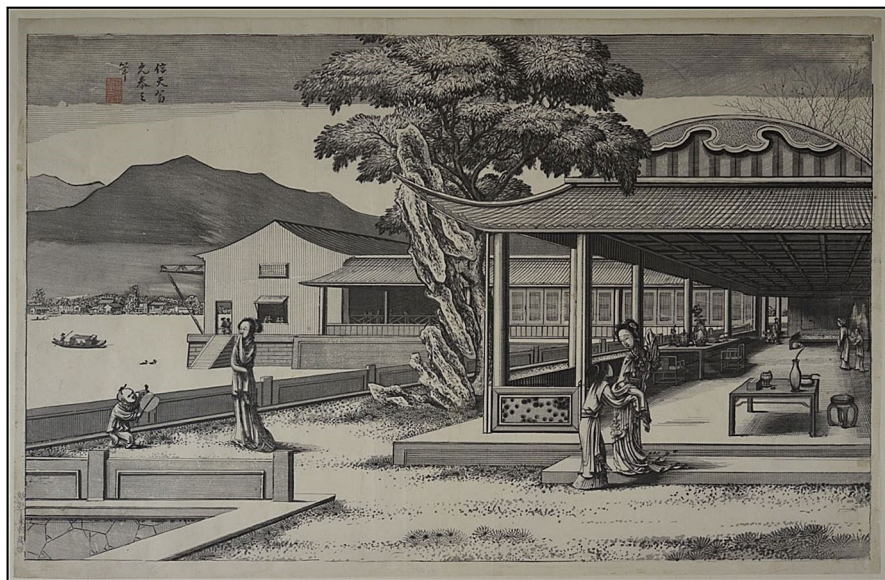


Fig. 3 *Picture of the Joys of Rural Life* (Tianyuan le tu 田園樂圖), by Ding Yuntai 丁允泰 (Tim Paulo), c.1710. Woodblock print produced with water-soluble ink on paper, inv. 1738. Kupferstich-Kabinett, State Art Collections-SKD, Dresden

European influenced Chinese prints in Europe

Larger-sized, European-influenced style prints, also drew attention from European buyers. The scale of the prints, and the images of far-eastern women figures, resulted in them being used as luxury Chinese wallpaper in the Chinese rooms of upper-class European families. An example is found in Schloss Lichtenwalde, in Germany. The Chinese room was built in 1726, and decorated with wooden frames in the Rococo style. There are thirty-four wooden panels, on each of which, a Chinese print, mostly depictions of female figures, is pasted. One of the prints depicts a woman wearing a long gown and lotus shoes, with one bound foot wearing a tiny “three-inches lotus shoe” stepping across the doorway. In her hand she holds a long tobacco pipe, with smoking being a fashionable hobby for Chinese women during the eighteenth century (Wang 2016, p. 33). The print employs the European techniques of hatching and *chiaroscuro* but the female figure’s face is presented without these techniques in a manner consistent with traditional Chinese ideals of beauty. She has an oval, white face, and narrow and fine eyebrows and eyes. The setting also connects to traditional Chinese ideals. Two sentences from a Chinese poem are written on the half-opened door. These two lines describe reading poems, drinking wine, playing musical instruments and chess.²⁰ The ideal of a romantic and elegant life is set alongside

²⁰ The two sentences are: “詩酒琴棋客 風花雪月天”; they are from *Shentongshi* 神童詩 (*Poem by Child Prodigy*) by Wang Zhu 汪洙 (active during twelfth century). (Wang, annotated by Zhang 2013).



Fig. 4 Manchurian Lady with Puppy, eighteenth century, exported Chinese water colour painting mounted on folded screen, Esterházy Palace of Eisenstadt, Austria

beautiful views of the four seasons to make a comparison between the beauty and diversity that they share.

More prints of women figure with European technique are found in the Chinese Salon in Schloss Esterházy. Each wall is divided into six panels, and a pair of prints is pasted on each panel. The prints were produced in the 1750s, and closely associated with Paul II Anton when he served as imperial ambassador to Naples 1750–1752. One pair of prints depict scenes of family life, the mothers and two boys, in the background depicts the family gardens in the back of the house doors, which show the clear use of linear perspective (von der Burg 2015a, b). The source of European artistic influence is indicated by other information on the prints. The signature on the sides of both couplets are printed with the characters *Gusu Xinde Hao* 姑蘇信德號, *Wumen Guan Ruiyu Xie* 吳門管瑞玉寫, which means that the prints were produced by Guan Ruiyu 管瑞玉 (active during the early to mid-eighteenth century) in a Xinde workshop in Wumen (another name for Suzhou). The brand of the shop Xinde is named after the owner Guan Ruiyu, who was a Catholic artist in Suzhou during the early eighteenth century. His name, Guan Xinde 管信德, appeared in the record of the Chinese Catholic legal case in Suzhou in 1747.²¹ Though the European artistic influence is clear, the image portrayed is deeply connected to traditional Chinese culture. On the two doors is a pair of couplets containing the Chinese characters: *liner jiqing xinnianrui, fengzi huanhu lesuichao* 麟兒吉慶新年瑞, 奉子歡呼樂歲朝, meaning “clever boys celebrating a prosperous New Year, happily having a new born son to welcome Lunar New Year’s day.”

The poem clearly demonstrates that the original design of the prints had a functional role, being sold for people to paste on the walls of homes to welcome the Chinese New Year. The connection to Chinese customs is reinforced in one print, in which the boys are setting off firecrackers, a typical activity to welcome the Chinese New Year. Though Spring Festival was the biggest festival in China, it was not known or celebrated in Europe so the role of similar images in different cultural contexts completely changed their significance. During the period of Spring Festival in China, Chinese people traditionally purchased special New Year prints called *nianhua*, which were products used to prepare for and celebrate the Spring Festival. These prints were purchased and displayed by ordinary people. The market provided a wide variety of New Year prints for sale. The festival was celebrated by all in China and consumers of New Year prints were diverse, including city residents from Suzhou, dealers from other places, and even peasants from the countryside. The price for the New Year prints was generally cheap, and therefore affordable for ordinary city dwellers.²²

In contrast, Chinese art of this kind in Europe was very much marketed and purchased as a luxury item. The wallpapers were used for royal or wealthy families for their interior decoration, and some were hung in “female” areas of the house, and private rooms, generally associated with the “Far East” and femininity. According to research by Emile de Bruijn of the National Trust of the UK, in the castles

²¹ Guan Xinde was mentioned as being from from Changzhouxian (same place where Ding Liangxian is from), as sb. who sells *yanghua* (indicated Western prints) for living (Han 2008, p. 219; Xu [no publishing date], pp. 71–79).

²² For a description of the busy commercial view of Suzhou see Zhou (2009, p. 54).

located in Britain, of the objects included in the National Trust's catalogue of Chinese wallpaper,

[...] about 40 percent were in bedrooms, about 35 percent in dressing rooms and about 25 percent in drawing rooms. Only one of the Chinese wallpapers in this catalogue is known to have hung in a library. It seems to have been rare, at least in Britain, for Chinese wallpaper to have been used in the 'masculine' or formal areas of a house. (Bruijn et al. 2014, p. 3).

As has been noted in the diary of John Evelyn, in Whitehall Palace in 1693, Chinese wallpaper which was described as "Indian Screens and Hangings" were used to decorate Queen Mary II's apartment (diary entry, 17 July 1693, quoted in Wappenschmidt 1989, 18). In 1742, Lady Cardigan bought eighty-eight "Indian pictures" and had them pasted all over her dining room wall (Sullivan 1989, p. 99). Elizabeth Montagu (c.1718–1800) held her intellectual gatherings for the celebration of the so-called "bluestocking" event in her "Chinese room", which she used as a dressing room at Hill Street, Mayfair, London. In 1752, the room completed the incarnation with decorated Chinese wallpaper (Bruijn et al. 2014, p. 4). The wallpaper of large scale of male and female figures hang in the Chinese Dressing Room of Saltram near Plymouth, installed for John Parker (c.1703–1768) and his heiress wife Dagey Katherine (c.1706–1768) (Bruijn et al. 2014, p. 40). In Nymphenburg Palace in Munich, Chinese wallpaper portraying Suzhou beauties was discovered in a small restroom in Badenburg pavilion built in 1722 by Joseph Effner and used for private bathing. Removed from their original context of ordinary people celebrating traditional Chinese festivals, in Europe, the same, or similar, images were found in the feminine rooms and private family places of wealthy European families, often associated with luxury and femininity.

Conclusion

Chinese prints and paintings started arriving in Europe in the early seventeenth century. In Europe, some of these original Chinese prints were directly copied, whilst some chinoiserie works borrowed elements from Chinese original art to form new and original artworks. In Suzhou and Guangzhou, some prints and paintings which employed European art techniques emerged. The Chinese woodblock prints with human figures and story scenes, rooted in popular Chinese literature, culture, and customs were popular art products in domestic markets. Some of these display the influence of European artistic techniques, but rather than being copies, the new techniques were generally used to alter or enhance the portrayal of traditional subjects. In the European market, the same and similar images found on some single-sheet prints and imported Chinese wallpaper and paintings from Suzhou and Guangzhou were used for the interior decoration of Chinese rooms in the homes of upper-class families. During the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, the communication between the East and West through ocean trade encouraged both China and Europe to learn from and incorporate elements of the two different cultures into their prints

and paintings resulting in the creation of new and unique styles of art which were produced over a relatively short period of time but have had a lasting impact on the cultures of both regions.

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