Thierry Audric

Chinese reverse glass painting
1720-1820
An artistic meeting between China and the West
Preface by Danielle Elisseeff

In 2007, he decided to research this art, and discovered that it was born in the Eighteenth-century in Canton, from an artistic encounter between China and the West. Eager to make this art more widely known and appreciated, he wrote this book based on the dissertation he defended in 2016 at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland.

"Displaying a talent for combining aesthetic sensibility with scientific rigor, the author has given new life to something that once excited European passions: an original, non-academic art at the forefront of the 'new technology' of the time.

For over a year I have scarcely done anything else than paint on glass. A large number of beautiful large mirrors are brought from Europe, which the mandarins of Canton buy from the merchant ships and offer to the emperor… This type of painting is all the more beautiful because, when seen from a short distance, it seems as if the figures, animals, landscapes or any other design is not painted on the mirror but reflected; one's face can be seen in the gaps left by the painting, which makes for very attractive variety. This type of painting would not find disfavour in Europe, especially if it were done in good taste.

Letter of Brother Attiret, court painter of emperor Qianlong, 1741.

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Chinese reverse glass painting
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The pages that follow will lead you into a world of dreams: a gateway to an unsettling space where upon seeing your reflection, you will not know whether you are still in the real world, standing in front of an image, or already inside one, absorbed within a virtual landscape after going through the looking glass.

Displaying a talent for combining aesthetic sensibility with scientific rigor, the author has given new life to something that once excited European passions: an original, non-academic art at the forefront of the 'new technology' of the time. For decades, aristocrats of the Old World and then American collectors (the latter at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries) spent countless sums on the purchase of these works, which were worth a fortune. These wealthy collectors of curiosities of all types were also most certainly great dreamers seeking a worthy setting for their dreams. Unbeknownst to them, their endeavours had much greater scope, creating and nourishing the conditions for a rare encounter between two worlds: a golden age of atypical collaboration, a combined adventure between China and Europe.

Then, in the nineteenth century, changes in the global balance of power accompanied by the rise of lower quality bulk production for tourists wiped out this trend, which was forgotten as quickly as it had appeared. The time of beautiful narrative mirrors was past, as was that of their incredible journey from one country and ocean to another.

Before coming to grace our beautiful homes, these remarkable pieces were subjected to unimaginable hardship. They were transported on sailing vessels, secured to the hull's wooden flanks and shaken by the rough waves of one ocean after another, having started their lives as unadorned mirrors made in Europe, notably in France, where glass makers perfected a cast moulding under Louis XIV that allowed them to produce larger glass plates.

The pieces made using this new technology were then transported to Canton, China where Chinese artisans removed part of the silvering that artists would later replace with paintings of pleasant scenes: landscapes or portraits that would come to life in the shifting of the light. Now their changing surfaces had stories to tell, and the mirrors were loaded onto other ships destined for Europe, by the grace of God! Those who had commissioned the works were waiting there to offer these items to their wealthy clientele.

From the commentary in this book on the production of works against the very vibrant backdrop of Canton, the hub of all commerce between China and the rest of the world in the eighteenth century, some unexpected and little known facts emerge: How a foreign art drew the attention and then the interest of the famous and highly-learned Emperor Qianlong (reg. 1736–1796); how this type of painting combining Chinese and European conventions as well as the solid framing used to support and protect it ended up changing the role and the place of painting in Chinese interiors; how ‘made in China’ counterfeit began as early as this period—which in turn inspired an American merchant in the late eighteenth century; and, much more profoundly, how this art of traveling merchants, rich Western aristocrats, and even at one time senior Chinese officials, gave birth to new themes of representation in both cultures.

Danielle Elisseeff
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In the late nineteenth century, the Second Opium War forced China to open itself up to foreigners, and it was then that a few sinologists, inveterate travellers and collectors began to make the ancient art of China known in Europe. In the first museums devoted to Far Eastern art, Europe discovered the ‘classical Chinese landscape,’ which meant painting by scholars. Europeans were fascinated by it, despite or perhaps because of the fact that its intellectual foundations and artistic method were so far removed from those of Western artists. The West forgot that, just a century earlier, it had been captivated by another sort of Chinese painting, namely the reverse glass painting of Canton.

The reasons for this first infatuation were very different, and even contrary to those which would predominate in the nineteenth century. When the fashion for chinoiserie was at its height and European painters were depicting a fantasy China, European high society was, for the first time, discovering paintings made in China by Chinese painters using an original medium, the mirror. Throughout the eighteenth century, Canton was the only point of contact between China and the West and it was here that, from 1720, workshops were inventing an original kind of painting, bringing China and the West together in a real artistic meeting of minds. And for almost a century, the Western aristocracy and upper middle classes would seek out, commission and pay very high prices to acquire these lavishly decorated works.

The Emperor Qianlong also fell under their spell, and in the early part of his reign (1736–1796) he created a workshop for this art in his palace, insisting that Brother Attiret, a Jesuit painter at his court, should embark on painting mirrors.

It is a forgotten genre of painting but it also seems to be an underrated genre. This means that only a few works of reverse glass painting have been studied in the context of Cantonese workmanship of the period, finding a place somewhere in between fans and porcelains. Classified, at best, under the category of ‘minor arts,’ it has, until now, never been a subject of academic study and neither has any exhibition been devoted to it.

Rectifying this omission and altering the way this art is viewed by giving it some credibility seemed to me to be laudable and necessary objectives. Contributing to these by making this art more widely known has been the reason for my research and for this book.

This study starts by examining the origins of Chinese reverse glass painting, preceded by a description of eighteenth-century Canton and the discovery of Chinese painting by Westerners at the time. I have based my research on a collection of more than 400 works from museums, private collections, galleries, salerooms, books and magazines, all of which I have been able to examine directly or through photos. In analysing them, I have pointed out the Chinese and Western elements in these paintings, divided them into categories, and studied the techniques by which they were made and framed. This detailed breakdown has formed the basis of my thinking which, in the second part, extends to the workshops and the market for such paintings in China and the West. The influence this painting had in Asia and Europe is touched upon, and a brief history of Chinese painting from 1720 to 1820 forms the conclusion of this research.

Thierry Audric
“This type of painting is all the more beautiful because, when seen from a short distance, it seems as if the figures, animals, landscape or any other design is not painted on the mirror but reflected; one’s face can be seen in the gaps left by the painting, which makes for very attractive variety”.

Brother Attiret, Jesuit painter at court of emperor Qianlong
Letter to Marquis de Broissia, 1741.
The Pearl river

Whampoa! This cry from the look-out would be met with expressions of joy from the crew on the East India Company’s ships. In the eighteenth century, reaching Whampoa, a little island in the Pearl River, meant you had arrived in China after a long and dangerous journey, twenty months of sailing during which sailors had to confront violent storms, dangerous currents, flat calms and reefs, but also cope with pirate raids from the Sunda or Malacca Straits. This was without counting strokes of bad luck, such as boardings for the purpose of inspection, provoked by foreign rivals.

Whampoa meant the prospect of putting in for several months in a sheltered spot, without pirates and with the opportunity to trade at the port of Canton, the sole point of contact with mysterious China. It also offered the prospect of purchasing exotic goods, so sought after that they would make the fortunes of those who brought them back to Europe. The Westerners could not continue in their ships beyond Whampoa to Canton, (Illustrations 1, 2, 3), but had to row up there in small boats. All the foreign ships wanting to do business with China were anchored there, so the new arrivals often discovered acquaintances, and even real friends who were employed by other East India Companies.

The tough negotiations with the Chinese, the exotic surroundings and the prospect of enrichment all created bonds between these adventurers. Officers and supercargoes happily welcomed each other on board, even if their respective companies were engaged in sharp and sometimes unipartit competition. For example, Colin Campbell, the chief supercargo of the Fredericus Rex Sueciae—the first vessel of the Swedish East India Company to go to Canton—describes his arrival at Whampoa in these words:

The (English) officer told us what ships were there & who were aboard of them... Amongst other news he surpriz’d me with the very disagreeable news of the death of an intimate friend & old acquaintance of mine whom I had a great respect for... I means Mr George Arbuthnott chief supercargo of the 4 English ships bound for China...

The wonderful spectacle of these great ships at anchor was often depicted by Cantonese painters, including reverse glass painters, as can be seen in Illustration 3. The only fear involved with being moored on the Pearl River was sickness, which did not spare these foreigners, as is evident from the cemetery on the neighbouring island, known as the ‘French cemetery’.

Once here, the captain and his officers, the sole masters on board when the ship was at sea, handed over responsibility to the company’s supercargo, who would negotiate trade deals with China over the following four months. Bargaining would then begin on various aspects of the deals, the most important of which was determining the amount of heavy duties that their company would have to pay in China in exchange for the right to do business in Canton. This sum depended on the volume of cargo that the ship could contain. Consequently, upon their arrival, the supercargos had to prepare for the shipper’s visit, which always involved elaborate ceremony. He was the general customs inspector for the Canton province, and as a top mandarin received the highest marks of respect from both officers and supercargos, with abundant exchanges of gifts. The purpose of this second negotiation was to obtain, under the best possible conditions, a warehouse on the island of Whampoa, together with victuals for the crew’s four-month stay in China and materials which the ship’s carpenter could use to refit the ship for its return journey.

Once agreement to these different requests had been obtained, the crew and cargo were authorised to proceed to Canton. The journey up the Pearl River from Whampoa to the port of Canton was far from monotonous. It has been described by several European visitors of the time, such as Father Prémare2 and the captain of the Empress of China, the first American ship to reach Canton in 1784, the year after United States independence. The journal of this newly arrived American3 recounts what he saw:

We had a full view of a pagoda nine stories high which is one of the largest in the vicinity of Canton. It is a great antiquity and stand [sic] near groves of banana, orange, peach, and lichee trees, as well as plantations of rice and sugar-cane... The surface of the river was thickly covered with vessels of different sizes, of singular forms and rigging, many of which were painted with gay and fantastical colors.

1. It can be clearly made out on the hill in Illustration 3.
3. Smith, 1844, 149.
When approaching Canton, luxurious dwellings could be seen along the sides of the little canals, belonging to rich merchants or important governors of the province and the city. Cantonese reverse glass paintings decorated the sides of the little canals, belonging to rich merchants or important governors of the province and the city. Cantonese reverse glass painting (Illustration 7a and 7b).

The canal finally broadened out and the traveller would pass two little round forts, called Dutch and French follies, before arriving in the port of Canton. To reach the quayside meant first of all slipping between the hundreds of commercial sampans that were busy on the river, then manoeuvring around the beautiful junks belonging to the local authorities and the ‘flower boats’ where rich Cantonese would dine in romantic company, before finally mooring up in the centre of the little floating town.

Canton was not one city but three. To the north, on the slope of the Pearl River’s left bank was a city surrounded by ramparts whose gates were closed at night, and which Westerners called ‘Chinese.’ It was vast and romantic, before finally mooring up in the centre of the little floating town.

The cities of Canton

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The city of Canton is larger than Paris. The houses are very low and nearly all of them are shops; the grandest neighbourhoods are rather like the streets of the Foire Saint-Germain; almost everywhere you look, there are almost as many people as there are at that fair at its busiest time; it is difficult to make your way through...

You see very few women, and most of the people teeming through the streets are poor and all burdened down.

To the south, on the quayside itself, stood the famous ‘factories’ (hongs in Chinese) which were both warehouses and offices. From being simple wooden houses in the early eighteenth century, they would gradually be replaced by fine stone buildings. They belonged to the foreign companies who traded with China, but also to the Chinese merchants who were their partners. The company buildings were of European style, notably with small glass panes in the windows (the companies were keen to show off European architectural skills and techniques)—and on the esplanade connecting them to the floating harbour, displayed on tall poles, were the flags belonging to the various countries of origin of the companies present. The view of these spectacular buildings, painted from the island of Honam on the opposite bank, is one of the most remarkable subjects of Cantonese reverse glass painting (Illustration 7b and 7b).

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Between these buildings and the city surrounded by ramparts, a small town was gradually built, entirely devoted to foreign trade. A small suburb of Canton, it was Chinese for the eight months when the climate made the sea crossing possible between Europe and China, but cosmopolitan for the four months when foreigners were present there. It was formed of three streets running down at right angles to the harbour, known by their English names of Hog Lane, Old China Street and, after 1822, New China Street. Hog Lane was, as its name indicates, the street where all the debauchery took place: bars and brothels stood side by side, frequented by sailors from every country. Fights were common, and European naval officers had to intervene and taking advantage of the situation to add fines to the already heavy taxes borne by foreigners. To reach Old China Street and New China Street, visitors coming from the harbour went through a Chinese portico before finding themselves caught up in the rapid flow of ‘porters’ who transported voluminous bundles on their backs or on the ends of a pole balanced on their shoulders. In them could be seen piles of porcelain objects, together with sacks of tea and silk fabrics. Little street traders mingled with the porters, crying out to passers-by the names of the goods they were offering. All along the streets were wooden booths, built to the same design with a ground floor given over to welcoming clients to the shop, restaurant or workshop while the upper floors were warehouses and dwellings. Naval officers, supercargoes and European visitors, followed by Americans after 1784, would stroll through these streets being constantly entreated to go and see some porcelains, silk fabrics or the numerous tea varieties but also furniture or objects made of lacquer, mother-of-pearl or ivory, silk paintings and, from 1750 onwards, reverse glass paintings. Some of these objects, such as painted porcelain, reverse glass paintings or silk clothing were made in the local workshops, often targeting the export market. It was in these streets that the officers and supercargoes did their ‘personal’ shopping for the well-known jбавelle, superior merchandise which they were able to take back to Europe in the hold space reserved for them.

And it was in these workshops that reverse glass painting originated and developed.

Finally, on the port’s opposite bank lay a residential quarter with beautiful villas belonging to the city’s top authorities and rich merchants. It was a place where sumptuous receptions were given by Chinese intermediaries (the Hongs or Compradors) for their business partners, the foreign supercargoes.

The Birth of an Art

Thierry Audric  •  Chinese reverse glass painting 1720-1820
The discovery of Chinese painting by Westerners

Unlike the trade with China, which was limited to the port of Canton, the discovery of Chinese painting by Westerners occurred both at the imperial court in Peking and in the port of Canton. In fact, there were two discoveries, each of them different in spirit, but which were to interact with one another over the course of the eighteenth century.

In Peking the Westerners were Jesuits, in particular Jesuit painters who became acquainted with the Chinese painting of the Qing court; these paintings were executed in the prestigious palace workshops or commissioned from famous artists. The European painters had to adopt the methods and techniques which would please the sovereign and they described their impressions in letters sent back to Europe. In Canton, the foreigners encountered two types of Chinese painting, which they talked about in their travel journals. One of these genres, practised by professional provincial painters, was designed for local and regional high society, and was sometimes inspired by styles which were fashionable in Peking. The other genre was inspired by popular imagery, and usually took the form of a wood engraving which stood in letters sent back to Europe. In Canton, the foreigners encountered two types of Chinese painting, which they talked about in their travel journals. One of these genres, practised by professional provincial painters, was designed for local and regional high society, and was sometimes inspired by styles which were fashionable in Peking. The other genre was inspired by popular imagery, and usually took the form of a wood engraving which stood in

The absence of perspective and shading

Although neither the material used as medium, be it silk, Korean paper nor the rolled form of presentation gave rise to any comments, judgment of these paintings by Europeans in both Peking and Canton were, on the whole, very critical: the absence of perspective, (Western, of course) and shading were considered to be notable weaknesses, in their minds delegating Chinese painting to an inferior status. Only the depiction of flowers and birds avoided admiration. Brother Attiret, the Jesuit painter whom Emperor Qianlong had asked to paint ‘in Chinese style’ was particularly well placed to give his impressions of court painting. In 1741 he wrote:

Everything painted in oil must be painted in the same taste, I mean polished, plain, without shading, white carnations like milk, draperies drawn together, pleated like organ pipes more or less in the taste of our ancestors; and along with that, expressionless heads, postures without movement, linear perspective without shading-off, and without any possibility of putting aerial perspective into practice.

The European visitors to Canton were not so restrained in their criticism. No sooner had the Italian painter Ghirardini disembarked at Canton in 1700 than he declared:

The Chinese know as much about architecture and painting as I do about Greek and Hebrew. They are, however, enchanted by a fine drawing, a vivid landscape that is carefully ordered, or a natural perspective, but knowing how to achieve this is not their business, they have a better understanding of how to weigh money and how to prepare rice. Another Jesuit, Father d’Entrecocq, weighed in with his blunt opinion in a letter to Father Orry:

None of the knowledge of these painters (on porcelain), or of Chinese painters in general, is founded on any principle, and consists only in a certain routine, aided by a rather limited taste of imagination. They know nothing of any of the rules of this art.


Two synthesizing texts that appeared in Europe in 1675 summed up these impressions. Probably having seen no more than a few Chinese paintings that had arrived in Europe, Josselin Sandrart declared in his German Academy of Painting

They (the Chinese) represent everything with extreme simplicity, reproducing only the contours without shading. They create no volume and render objects with simple layers of colour. They do not know how to give relief to objects, how to depict spatial depths, and they pay no attention to the need to follow nature when painting things. They know absolutely nothing of all these things and their images depict only profiles. Frontal portrayal is unknown to them.

The article on Chinese painting in Diderot and D’Alembert’s famous encyclopedia was still more prone to jump to conclusions, stating that the sole merit of their painting is a certain neatness & a certain simplicity, reproducing only the contours without design, nor invention, nor correction. Fortunately, there are a few exceptions to this chorus of condemnation, among them Abbé Grosse who, in 1787, wrote:

Chinese painters have long been derided in Europe. But it seems to me that in order to appreciate them properly, one should be familiar with a few of their good works and not judge them in the light of the fans and screens that we receive from Canton.

The Jesuits, anxious to introduce new knowledge into China to increase the positive impact of their evangelising mission, deemed it useful to teach linear perspective to Chinese painters

• By example: According to Du Halède, it was Father Bruglio who is supposed to have made linear perspective known in China:


We did not forget perspective. Father Bruglio gave the emperor three pictures, in which the rules of perspective were perfectly adhered to. He displayed three copies in the Jesuits’ garden in Peking. The mandarins who flacked to this great city from all parts of the empire came to see them out of curiosity and were very struck by them.

The church frescoes in Peking, painted in 1703 by Ghirardini, had also a great effect on visitors, as Father Jartoux was to note in 1704:

From the point of view of perspective, the painted sides of the neredes form a continuation of the church architecture. It is a pleasure to see the Chinese move forward to visit this part of the church, which they think is behind the altar. Once they arrive there, they move backwards slightly then forwards again and feel it with their hands to find out whether it really is a flat surface with no protrusions or indentations.

• By explaining the theory: Ever since the time of Matteo Ricci, the founding father of the Jesuit mission in China, the Jesuits were particularly appreciated by Chinese emperors for their mathematical skills. It was therefore as part of geometry and mathematical optics that linear perspective was taught at the imperial court, very probably under Kangxi’s reign. This teaching was consolidated in the 1729 publication in China of Andrea Pozzi treatise Perspective Dizionario razonato della Pittura, translated into Chinese by Nian Xiyao. In the early part of the eighteenth century, the painter Jiao Bingzhen (1723–1736) drew for the emperor the 46 views of the Yuzhi Genzhu, which were gathered together in a book on farming and weaving with engravings by Zhu Gui. Francis Macouin discerns the influence of Western perspective here, which the court painter, Jiao Bingzhen, must have learnt from his Jesuit colleague. This painter would later incorporate these rules with consummate skill into his portraits of young women in his magnificent album of ‘palace ladies’.

The Italian painter Matteo Bipa (at the court from 1710 to 1725) introduced copperplate engraving to China at the request of

Chinese painting depicts light (the yang) but not shade (the yin). When you look at it, therefore, the bodies and faces seem flat, neither concealing nor covering. In our country we paint with light and shade, and so faces are portrayed with both of these. A face which is in direct light will appear white and bright. But when the head is turned to one side, the part which is in the light will be white and on the other side, there will be shadows around the eyes, ears, nose and mouth. With this method we are able to create portraits that cannot be distinguished from living people.

Some reactions were even more critical. One even compared the Chinese with the arrival of Westerners, and more precisely with the technique of shading only appeared in China with the arrival of Westerners, and more precisely with the technique of using a paintbrush. Compasses: he judged Westerners to be ‘totally lacking in (orthodox) methods (for using) a paintbrush.’

But a few Chinese painters were inspired by the technique, among them Zeng Jing (1658-1659), and attempted to imitate shading by accumulating layers of coloured paint along the line drawn in ink. Apart from these two major differences Jesuit painters perceived between Western and Chinese painting, there were others to report, in particular regarding the conception of the portrait desired by the emperor. His requirements gave rise to conversations of great interest, often tinged with humour. One of these is mentioned in a letter from Father Benoist in 1775:

He (the Emperor Qianlong) explained how he wished to be painted. Indeed, Chinese taste requires portraits to be painted face on and not from a three-quarter view as is done in Europe. The corresponding parts of each side of the face have to appear equally in the portrait.

After a few comments on the shading, Father Benoist returns to the subject of the emperor’s recommendations: ‘His majesty also wanted the hairs of his head and eyebrows to be individually marked out so that they could be distinguished when the viewer was close to the picture’. And the most delightful remark is the one where the emperor points out that his right eyebrow is a little thin and lacks a few hairs. A very sycophantic Jesuit painter replies:

If your majesty had not told us, we would not have noticed.

Ah well, said the emperor, with a smile, then tell him (Brother Passy, the Jesuit painter commissioned to execute the painting) to paint this defect so that it cannot be seen if one has not been told, but so that if one has been told, it is possible to see it.

The Qing emperors, and particularly Qianlong, had no hesitation in commissionsing portraits of their concubines from Jesuit court painters—a man of religion painting the portrait of a concubine no doubt put them in a somewhat delicate moral predicament! But what would a Jesuit not do ‘ad maiorem dei gloriam’, for the greater glory of God, as their motto had it? Fortunately for them, it was the rules of Chinese portraiture which had to be applied, as they were for portraits of the emperor, his wife and the nobility. In addition to the actual painting technique, the model’s pose, the perspective, the shading and the very look of the female model had to conform to the rules of propriety.

Father Amyot describes the following very significant episode:

Brother Attiret, having painted some Chinese women only to be told by the emperor that they had nothing Chinese about them, asked a Chinese painter in his workshop for an explanation. The Chinese painter told him that portraits of women included some who were servants and others who were mistresses. Attiret thought he had indeed made a distinction between these social classes by means of their dress, their hairstyles and certain other exterior signs which were recognised in the Western world from which he came. Although these differences are also renowned in China, said the Chinese painter, they are not essential. It is the shape and colour of her hands, her modesty of dress (low-cut necklines being prescribed) and especially her modesty and gentleness of bearing that single out a Chinese woman of quality.

Nature painting

Fortunately, however, there was one kind of Chinese picture that was unanimously admired by Westerners. This was nature painting and, more particularly, the painting of flowers and birds. ‘What they (the Chinese) do best’, Alvarez Semedo tells us in 1642, ‘are trees, flowers and birds, which they depict realistically’. Their painters are mainly attached to the landscape; they perfectly imitate nature,’ writes Abbe Delaporte, who, thanks to French priests, had the privilege of entering Chinese cities. And Abbé Grosier tells us that.

References:
20. Amyot, Père, 1771, 496.
The very people who refuse to acknowledge they have a talent for successfully painting figures cannot deny them superiority in their rendering of flowers and animals. They treat these kinds of subjects with a great deal of truth, grace and ease, and they especially pride themselves on portraying details with an exactitude which might to us appear painstaking.

He goes on to cite famous examples of animals painted by highly talented Chinese artists, which men and animals looking at them have taken to be living beings: "They imitate flowers, birds, and insects with a degree of exactness and brilliancy to which Europeans have not yet arrived," the Englishman John Barrow tells us, and the Frenchman J. Roy adds:

The Chinese painter is able to depict butterflies, animals, flowers, fruit and fish with an exactitude that cannot be surpassed; he knows admirably well how to blend his colours and vary all the tones.

This extreme concern for detail is described humorously by Father not yet arrived, "the Englishman John Barrow tells us, and the Frenchman J. Roy adds:

The Chinese painter is able to depict butterflies, animals, flowers, fruit and fish with an exactitude that cannot be surpassed; he knows admirably well how to blend his colours and vary all the tones.

The Chinese reverse glass painters of Canton were able to take account of these Western views and adapt their style to satisfy a Western clientele without disappointing their compatriots who were also enthusiastic about their painting.

Porcelain painting

In the early eighteenth century, Chinese craftsmen were masters in the art of porcelain production, as they had been for centuries. Westerners were to discover this beautiful translucent ceramic material as soon as trade with China began, when the Portuguese arrived in the early sixteenth century. They were fascinated by it and began to import huge quantities. In the seventeenth century, it was blue and white Ming pottery that was favoured by European high society. Then, with the arrival of the Qing dynasty, polychrome porcelain made its appearance.

Items of porcelain were manufactured in centres such as Jingdezhen, where a vast number of kilns functioned. The porcelain was white after the first firing, before being painted either on site or in workshops located elsewhere. European earthenware manufacturers were determined in their efforts to discover the secret of this exquisite material and they succeeded, particularly thanks to descriptions given by the Jesuit Father d'Entrecolles, who visited the Chinese centres of porcelain production and wrote detailed accounts of the processes in his letters. I quote him here for his description of the porcelain painting workshops:

It is time to ennoble porcelain by handing it on to the painters. Thrice Hua-Pei, [...] I know nothing about the rules of this art: it must be admitted however that they paint flowers, animals and landscapes which are admired [...] the work of painting is shared in the same laboratory between a large number of workers. One has the sole task of making the first coloured circle that is seen near the edges of the porcelain; another draws the flowers, which are painted by a third; there is yet another for birds and other animals; human figures are usually the most badly painted.

D'Entrecolles subsequently sets out in detail how the sky-blue colour is manufactured and then says: "Red is made with rosacea, tsao-fan: perhaps there is something peculiar to the Chinese in this; and this is why I shall recount their method." There follows a detailed description of the technique for manufacturing blocks of red. As for green, the author of this letter writes: "I would think, from the indications I have, that it is the most pure dross of brass copper." He adds a few considerations on the composition of purple and yellow, before concluding: "All these colours applied to already fired porcelain, after being oiled, only appear green, purple, yellow and red after a second firing."

Having imported porcelains with Chinese motifs, Westerners began thereafter to order crockery with European motifs, sending examples to China in the form of engravings. This is how Chinese painting 'made to Western order' began, and it would not be long before reverse glass painting became part of this. It is interesting to note, on the dish in Illustrations 5a and 5b—which shows evidence of an amazing ability to copy from engravings around 1740—that, as for all Chinese porcelain painting at this time, the grisaille painting has been applied fresh. The many little slips and the plate's dimension compared to those of the model, engraved by Edme Jeaunat (1688–1738) after Nicolas Vigarina (1688–1737) and seen in Illustrations 5a and 5b, would show whether this was necessary.

Finally, these eighteenth-century porcelain painters used Western linear perspective, which may well have originated because the director of the large and prestigious centre for ceramics production at Jingdezhen was, from 1726 to 1736, Nian Xiyao, whose knowledge of Western linear perspective we have already seen. 28

27. D’Entrecolles, Père, Paris, 1819, 149.
Glass has been known both in the West and China since earliest antiquity, but use of the technology followed very different paths in these two regions of the world.

From very early on, the prime quality Westerners were seeking in their glass production was transparency, whether they were making a container for liquid (drinking glass, carafe or scent bottle), stained-glass windows or a mirror.

Until the seventeenth century, flat glass was produced using two different processes; the first required heating to obtain flat glass while the other process was the use of heat and vacuum. The first process involved the blowpipe method: the glass was blown into a long, closed cylindrical iron, the blowpipe. It was quickly opened along its length and the edges of the opening were extended upwards by means of heat to obtain flat glass. The other process was the ring method, which consisted in turning the pipe very rapidly while the glass still had the shape of a vase. The centrifugal force drew the glass outwards, consistent with a plane surface, until it ended up as a large circular glass plate. It was not possible to obtain a sheet of plate glass of larger size, measuring up to two metres along the sides. As it developed bevelling, which consisted in gradually reducing the glass’s thickness to create a ‘bevel’ along a slight but constant width along the edges. The English glass factory at Vauxhall, created in 1663, had become specialized in this technique to the extent that the term Vauxhall glass was often used by English people to describe a slightly coloured, bevelled mirror.

During the whole of the eighteenth century, large sheets of glass were usually adhered to create mirrors. Their production costs were high, which meant these beautiful objects were reserved for very high society and for princely gifts. The seventeenth century also witnessed the appearance of painting on these large mirrors, particularly in Germany and Holland. At first limited to a few panels, it came to occupy a more prominent place, due in particular to the influence of the painter Hans Conrad Geyer (1599–1674), of whom Joachim von Sandrart (1606–1688) said ‘The large mirrors he decorated [with oil paint] were appreciated by the King of France, the Duke of Florence and the Venetian Republic.’ These painted mirrors, worthy of European courts, were thus also becoming objects fit to be offered to the court of the Chinese emperor.

From the seventeenth century onwards, therefore, Westerners who had noticed that Chinese mirrors were made of polished metal and, as well as being small gave back very little reflection, started to offer glass mirrors as gifts to the Chinese emperors, to their court and to the mandarins. We shall see the major role these mirrors played in the birth of the Chinese reverse glass painting. It was under the warlike kingdoms that the Chinese began to take an interest in glass imported from present-day Syria, which they did not manufacture themselves. Curiously, glass production itself did not fascinate the upper echelons of this country before the Manchu sovereigns arrived in the seventeenth century and encountered Westerners.

The manufacturing technique of sand fusion with the addition of potash (of soda in Europe) had been known for over a millennium. In 1694, doublets influenced by the glass objects offered to the court by Westerners, Emperor Kangxi (1661-1722) decided to create a glass factory at the imperial palace, under the management of Kilian Stumpf (1655–1720), a German Jesuit who knew about this art. This workshop underwent remarkable development under the reign of Qianlong (1736–1796), when the Jesuits Pierre d’Incarville (1706–1757) and Gabriel Leonard de Boussard (1703–1758) were responsible for running it. It mainly produced prestigious and decorative objects which the emperor could offer as gifts either in China or abroad. There was no question of producing plate glass. These objects came from the West in the form of mirrors, and arrived in such quantities that the emperor decided to remove the silvering on some of them and use them as window glass for aristocratic or mandarins’ residences.

You ask me whether the emperor has Venetian or French mirrors. Over thirty years ago, he had such a large quantity that, not knowing where to put them, he had many of them cut down from the size they were originally in order to create window panes for his European buildings.

So wrote Father Bourgeois[29] to Monsieur Delafour. The well-known scholar Yuan Mei congratulated himself in 1766 for having had glass panes installed in his windows: he was now able to see the snow without suffering the drawbacks.[30] Emperor Qianlong noted that these window panes, although offering protection from sea spray and cold weather, created a distance between himself and nature by numbing his senses, preventing him smelling aromas or feeling the wind and heat. As we shall see, by 1727 the emperor was already having some of this glass painted.

It was in Canton that the manufacture of Chinese plate glass began. The technique had been learnt from Westerners and so was added. The first French merchant ship to arrive in Canton in 1706, in addition to carrying numerous mirrors, had 932 pounds 14 ounces of tin for the mirror industry on board. ‘It was accompanied by mirror cutters and silversmiths who may have helped start such an industry in China, or at least have set up a mirror repair workshop. This plate glass manufactured in China and intended for lamps, eyeglasses, mirrors and window panes remained of modest quality compared with glasses imported from Europe, and this continued to be the case until the end of the eighteenth century. I have not been able to find a description of a Cantonese factory in the documents to which I have had access. The Westerners who were at the origin of the Cantonese glass factory or factories did not think very highly of the product. In 1751, Father Osbeck,[31] the chaplain of the Swedish East India Company, described mirror production in the following terms: ‘The mirror-makers have some pretty full looking-glasses. And he went on: ‘I was told of a glass-house in Canton, but never had an opportunity of going to see it.’ In 1756, Emperor Qianlong refused to pay for a delivery of glass bowls from Canton as they did not appear to be of satisfactory quality.[32] In 1810, Monsieur Breton de la Martinière[33] wrote:

Canton has the only glass factory in the empire: glass for eyeglasses and mirrors is manufactured there and [the latter are] silvered using tin and mercury in the European manner; but this enterprise has proved to be a failure.

In China, Pictorial, Descriptive and Historical, published in London in 1853, the anonymous author describes the state of Chinese glass manufacturing:

A recent advance is the improvement in glass manufacture which was previously carried out by mixing and heating broken pieces of glass from the West. But for the past few years, the Chinese have been making glass themselves from flint. Although this art is still very inferior to the European art, it is steadily improving and glass mirrors are increasingly replacing polished metal mirrors.

The dawn of reverse glass painting in China

The first references

The first mention of Chinese reverse glass painting in the West appears in a letter addressed to the Marquis de Broissia in 1741 by Brother Attiret, a Jesuit painter at the court of Emperor Qianlong.

For over a year I have scarcely done anything else than paint on glass. A large number of beautiful large mirrors are brought from China, which the mandarins of Canton buy from the merchant ships and offer to the emperor. Some of these mirrors have suffered in transit and lost their silvering in a few places. Since, here, nobody would know how to re-apply them, I am cordially willing to know a way to be found to save such a precious object. I am therefore making a drawing with the outer contours exactly marked out in pencil and colour on paper that can then be transferred. This drawing has to be applied to the back of the mirror, the pencil or coloured lines remain impressed on the silverying only on the places to be painted and the rest is left as a mirror. This type of painting is all the more beautiful because, seen from a short distance, it seems as if the figures, animals, landscape or any other design is not painted on the mirror but reflected, one’s face can be seen in the gaps left by the painting, which makes for a very attractive variety. This type of painting would not find disfavour in Europe, especially if it were done in good taste; but it is in pencil and colour that can then be transferred.

There is much information to be found in this text, and Brother Attiret was eager to return the favour and improve the production of mirrors, as he states: ‘The emperor gives the following order: to have the “green bamboo” painting and the painting of “Imperial Benevolence Radiates Over All”, send them to Yuanmou Yuan, and have them stuck on [or above] some glass mirrors. As for the painting “Universal Peace in the Whole Countryside”, have it stuck on [or above] a glass mirror in the Jiuzhou Quigyan [Palace].’

Four documents, Chinese ones this time, confirm the presence of reverse glass painting at court as early as 1741—and they practised it with skill since Cibot, in the same text, had no hesitation quoting the Jesuit painters in the following words:

'...and adding ‘painting on mirrors’ has only just appeared at the palace, and in Canton has become an activity which just need workers. A close reading of these texts enables us to establish that in Canton, Chinese painters were practising painting on mirrors before 1741—and they practised it with skill since Cibot, in the same text, had no hesitation quoting the Jesuit painters in the following words:

We have often heard them say that the exceptional ease with which the Chinese succeeded in this, the boldness, the lightness of touch, the rapidity with which they sketched their picture down to the last strokes, and thus advanced backwards, were particularly admirable, and this gave them an elevated sense of their talent...'

Interpreting the expression ‘have them stuck on [or above] a glass mirror’ is a delicate matter. I would venture to say that it is not about something fixed under the glass, but the painting being stuck behind the glass because, during the course of my research, I have never found anything fixed in this way, nor even any mention of such a procedure being carried out in China. The order may therefore be to put these paintings under glass according to the Western practice of engraving being placed under glass—a practice that Jesuit painters might have introduced to the court. Apparently, then, from the 1720s, Chinese painters, at Canton and perhaps at court, had mastered the art of mirror painting, to the extent that some pieces they produced were judged to be of a quality worthy of being offered to the emperor himself.

Why paint mirrors that have come from Europe?

Brother Attiret50 spoke of the need to repair mirrors imported from Europe in order to justify Chinese mirror painting at court. This was perhaps the case for some of the many mirrors brought by the ship Amphitrite in 1700. Jean Jouand, the owner of this French vessel, was in fact a ‘Termeur de la Manufacture des Glaces’, who would have bought all the mirrors produced by this royal glass factory and had the task of selling them on to merchants. Bonnet, one of the Jesuit fathers, had no doubt assured him that China would be an excellent outlet for his product. The East India Company was jealous of this first trading expedition to China and let it be known that the factory was getting rid of unsold products. Indeed, ‘eight mirror craftsmen’ had been sent with the ship’s administrative staff,51 their presence being justified by the need to re-silver mirrors that had been spoiled or, possibly, to set up a mirror factory in Canton. Evidence of this could be found in the large cargo of tin transported by Amphitrite—no less than 532 pounds and 14 ounces of tin for the mirror industry!52". Two of the workers went to Peking while the others remained in Canton. However, even if mirror repair played a role in the emergence of mirror painting,53

References

42. These Jesuit painters included Attiret and Castiglione.
43. In mirror painting.
44. Of mirrors with flowers along the edges, a pair of glass lamps, and a pair of glass lamps with a floral decoration. According to Yang Boda, who has studied these lists, Suozi’s contains several objects imported from the West, which leads him to suppose that Suozi must have been a Canton dignitary. This list would then constitute the first known list of presents from Guangdong to an emperor.
45. The nine-year reign of Yongzheng’s reign, that is in 1735, by Mao Keming, the then superintendent of Guangdong Maritime Customs, are mentioned ‘two mirrors decorated with floral motifs.’
46. 'Palace. Miscellaneous Objects Presentation List, 1277.’
47. Idem, 43.
49. Who reigned from 1722 to 1735.
50. J. Finlay’s translator’s note.
54. Idem. 43.
55. Idem. 43.
57. Who signed from 1722 to 1730.
58. Research partner at the Centre for Research on Modern and Contemporary China at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.
60. Finlay’s translator’s note.
61. Finlay’s translator’s note.
62. Finlay’s translator’s note.
painting, it does not appear to me to be at its origin and neither could it have been responsible for its international success in China and then in Europe. Other causes have to be looked for.

First of all, some mirrors painted in Europe had already arrived in China, as gifts for the emperor or for Chinese dignitaries. For example, among the presents offered in 1664 to his imperial majesty by the ambassador of the Dutch East India Company, the famous Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (V.O.C.), were “four mirrors decorated with paint.” Furthermore, we know that painted mirrors, like other imported goods, were unloaded, sold and sometimes exhibited in Canton by the Chinese merchants who received them, which gave Canton craftsmen the opportunity to look at them and work out the technique used.

The directors of this Dutch company were, moreover, great lovers of reverse glass painting produced in their country and they readily took some of these with them to the Far East. A description of the company’s Japanese post informs us that the head of post had an office whose walls were covered with such paintings, depicting Dutch landscapes as well as portraits of company directors, and that he always carried on him a reverse glass painting of his wife’s portrait.

It is therefore not improbable that Dutch painted mirrors were circulating in Canton and Peking at the very beginning of the eighteenth century and that Chinese dignitaries found them pleasing, for a reason relating to Chinese tradition which we shall now examine.

The place of mirrors in the Chinese imagination

The Chinese have a relationship with mirrors that is surprising to us Westerners. Before the arrival of European mirrors, Chinese mirrors were bronze plates (Illustration 8) whose reflective surfaces were covered with a layer of silver. They were seen to be of interest but were also regarded with a certain uneasiness and suspicion. They were of interest because of course they enabled people to see themselves and, particularly for women, to choose their makeup, hairstyle, clothing and accessories. But they were disturbing because they seemed like a window onto a world outside one’s own, and a trap for images.

The mirrors adorning Chinese canopy bed curtains or shamans’ clothes were turned outwards in order to protect the people they surrounded from damaging influences. These could be absorbed or reflected by the mirrors and so did not reach those behind the curtain. So that others could not be victims of these traps, mirrors which were no longer used in a room were turned towards the wall or the windows. It also seemed wise and a protective measure to engrave the frame and back of the mirror with abstract, animal or floral motifs as good-luck charms (Illustration 6) which were supposed in principle to attenuate and domesticate this dangerous, even evil power of the mirror. Although these attitudes to the mirror, which endure to this day, are not far removed from the use made of certain mirrors in Europe such as vanity mirrors, the large mirrors sent to China had a completely different use in Europe. Designed for ceremonial rooms, they were turned inwards towards the room, which had the effect of enlarging it and creating impressive ‘pictures within a picture;’ they also enhanced scale, generating multiple renditions or tableaux of the activities taking place in front of these mirrors; Versailles’ gallery of mirrors is the apotheosis of this theatrical conception of the mirror.

One can only imagine the perplexity and even anxiety of the Chinese dignitaries when faced with these spectacular gifts. Decorative mirrors with reverse glass painting might well have appeared to them a remarkable way of adapting them to Chinese culture, enabling them to be used while reducing the danger and threat they represented.

One might also add that reverse glass painting, being shiny and robust as well as easy to keep bright and clean, had a certain affinity with porcelain, the major decorative art of China. There is therefore covered with a layer of silver. They were seen to be of interest but were also regarded with a certain uneasiness and suspicion. They were of interest because of course they enabled people to see themselves and, particularly for women, to choose their makeup, hairstyle, clothing and accessories. But they were disturbing because they seemed like a window onto a world outside one’s own, and a trap for images.

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In The Birth of an Art

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Thierry Audric  •  Chinese reverse glass painting  1720-1820

Porcelain painting workshops at the origin of reverse glass painting

The state of porcelain painting in early eighteenth-century Canton has been described page 22. From the years 1720-1730 onwards, sets of tableware designed for export were painted with both Chinese and European motifs, the very same ones as for reverse glass painting at its beginnings. Particularly featured were pheasants on a rock with peonies or landscapes beside water. This European contribution to porcelain painting was doubtless encouraged by the presence of Nian Xiyan on the management of the Jingdezhen porcelain factory between 1726 and 1736. He had been the author, with G. Castiglione, of the translation of Andrea di Pozzo’s treatise on perspective. The connection between Canton painters and those of the imperial court had therefore already been established, which was also one of the features of reverse glass painting. What is more, the Europeans sent them orders for sets of tableware with decorations which had to be copied from engravings dispatched to Canton by the East India Companies. We know of one engraving which was transposed on both porcelain and glass. The Cantonese porcelain painters’ community was therefore quite prepared to be given orders for reverse glass paintings by Chinese dignitaries keen to ‘sinicize’ large European mirrors, as they were to receive orders from Westerners eager for Chinese exoticism. It thus appears very likely that the community of porcelain painters gave birth to a community of reverse glass painters. Furthermore, the closeness of the Chinese motifs painted on the two mediums (Illustrations 7a and 7b), like the use of identical European engravings to paint on porcelain and under glass, prove that the workshops for these types of painting maintained close ties throughout the eighteenth century.

A European master?

Nevertheless, should we exclude the possibility of reverse glass painting being taught by a European artist or Canton craftsman in the early eighteenth century? Probably by an artist, because European visitors to Canton were relatively few in number and the presence of such a painter for a period of several months would not have failed to draw attention and be mentioned in travel writings or ships’ log books. All the painters who had arrived in China by this time were summoned by the court Jesuits and stayed for only a short time in Canton before leaving for Peking. On the other hand, it is not impossible that the French mirror craftsmen who had arrived in Canton on the Amphitrite in 1700 knew about painting ‘on mirrors’ in France, before their departure. Those of them who remained in Canton would have been able to help teach this technique to Cantonese painters.

We will probably never know whether it was a public figure who was an arts patron or a porcelain painter who first had the idea of partly replacing mirror silverying with a painted motif. What is certain, however, is that the notables of the region, in the early 1720s, considered that mirrors painted in this way were of a quality which would appeal to the court and therefore be suitable for gifts which were likely to attract the emperor’s goodwill and make him favourably disposed towards them. From the 1720s, therefore, mirrors painted in Canton were added to the list of presents that these dignitaries regularly sent to the emperor.

63. Cf. in particular Chap. II, page 52: ‘Beautiful women.’

65. Pelliot, Paul. 1929, 258.

Illustrations 7a and 7b}
Concerned with being comprehensive, I have based this section on the observation and analysis of 681 Chinese reverse glass paintings of diverse origin, whether residing in public or private collections, sale rooms, galleries, antique dealers, or appearing in book illustrations. I have personally only been able to examine 162 of them individually, and those belonged to European museums and collections. The other works were either mentioned in books or articles, with no possibility of knowing the identity of the current owners, or they were mentioned in sale room catalogues and galleries scattered across the world, where they could only be seen during the few days preceding an auction.

For these inaccessible paintings, I worked solely from photos, but these were often of very high quality thanks to current digital technology.1

To avoid repetition, or very bad quality prints and prints of unknown origin, only 410 photos were used as illustrations for this book.

1. E-catalogues and those in pdf format are able to provide quality photos from all over the world.
Analysing this corpus raised several very specific issues for me:

1. The vast majority of reverse glass paintings in the world are by anonymous painters, and this is no less the case with Chinese reverse glass painting. There is generally no mention on either the painting or frame of who painted it, or what workshop, or at what date. Even a title is absent. I have therefore paid greatest attention to the few rare works that allowed me to acquire this information.

2. Chinese reverse glass paintings are a rarity, unique, original objects. Numerous copies could be produced and sometimes offered for sale ‘in the shop’, this type of production and distribution being not dissimilar to the way engravings were handled in Europe. I therefore also devoted particular attention to the rare works that were unique, particularly portraits, and sought out the original models for paintings that had been reproduced in numerous copies.

3. The technique used for a reverse glass painting (a thin layer or opaque layers laid on top of one another) can only be determined with certainty by opening up the picture and examining the back of the glass. It is very rare for the owners of such works to have had occasion to open them to make this kind of examination, or for them to have given me permission to do so. Whenever I was in possession of a valuable information about a work, I have given it, but in any other cases I have not mentioned the technique used.

4. To find out the composition of a painting one needs to remove a small flake to make a chemical analysis of it. Very few owners of works wished this to be done, which is understandable. Consequently, I only have one single chemical analysis.

5. The frames of Chinese reverse glass paintings can be a valuable source of information for two reasons. One is that Chinese picture-frames had, and still have, a very special framing technique that is exclusive to them. If one discovers a work where this method has been used, it is certain that the frame, and therefore the painting, originate from China, since no European picture-frame has adopted this technique. The second reason is that Chinese paintings, particularly those done on European mirrors sent to China, were bought by the upper echelons of contemporary European society, who were anxious to have them framed according to the style that was in fashion. This makes it possible for the researcher to give an approximate date to the work.

6. Examination of the glass itself tells us about the process by which it was made, but this information is not very useful either for dating or discovering its origin, since these three techniques were also used in Europe at the same time, to manufacture the flat glass that was sent to China. It is possible that around the mid-nineteenth century, or at the very end of the period being studied, the Canton glass factories were capable of producing flat glass of sufficiently good quality to be painted, but only in small sizes. However, I have no proof for this assertion.

7. Only a few works have been analysed in journals, books or catalogues. No overall view or consolidation has been attempted, with the exception of the short and very incomplete offering of Jourdain and Jenyns, and no academic study of Chinese reverse glass painting has been undertaken. I therefore have no recognised vocabulary or grammar, nor any research leads to follow, for all these paintings.

After several trial runs in various directions, I finally decided to analyse the paintings by origin of the main motif depicted, distinguishing Chinese motifs from Western ones. This method had the benefit of providing an understanding of how much interpenetration there was between Western and Chinese elements—a meeting of opposites that is one of the great virtues of reverse glass painting. This approach also had the advantage of enabling a certain chronology of artistic production to be established. Although they belong to Western motifs, I was able to distinguish a category where Western paintings, engravings and miniatures had been directly transposed to reverse glass paintings because they make up a uniform group for the purposes of commissions, production and distribution. I have chosen a few representative works to study in detail and photos of these appear in the text. I have in addition created appendices for each motif, with the entire range of photos shown as illustrations.


Paintings with Chinese motifs

**Mirrors with birds and flowers**

The theme of birds and flowers is a traditional and often recurring one in Chinese painting. It is also very common in reverse glass painting, and takes a variety of forms that I have divided up in the following way:

1. Birds and flowers in a minimalist setting
2. Birds and flowers in a natural setting
3. Birds and flowers on a decorative border

All paintings on the theme of birds and flowers are shown as photo illustrations in the corpus, and numbered 1 to 60.

**Birds and flowers in a minimalist setting**

The scene most frequently depicted in this category of reverse glass painting is a pair of golden or silver pheasants, often standing on a rock, accompanied by natural-looking flowers or a garland of flowers.

**The Pheasant Mirrors at Drottningholm Palace**

These two painted mirrors, seen in its illustrations Ba and Bb, are obviously a pair. They constitute the upper part of two tall pier glasses, in the yellow and red drawing rooms respectively, of the Chinese pavilion at the Swedish royal palace of Drottningholm in Stockholm. The frames of these mirrors are in gilded wood, decorated with the scrolls and garlands popular in Sweden during the 1750s. The bevelled glass, probably produced by casting, might well be Vauxhall glass. In both these mirrors, underneath the flowering pomegranates and fluttering butterflies, a couple of pheasants, silver in the yellow drawing room and golden in the red one, are standing on blue rocks that have tortuous shapes, cavities and hollows. According to the Chinese pavilion’s inventory and the study in Chapter III, these mirrors must have been painted in China during the 1750s.

In China the birds were very well thought of in high society and often depicted on the move, in pairs, as in these pictures. Buffon called them the Tricolores huppés de la Chine (crested tricolours of China) and they were first brought to Europe (to England to be precise) in 1740.

4. Blowpipe, ring and glass casting processes that are described in Chap. 1, page 24: Glass in the West and in China.

**Paintings with Chinese motifs**

**Ba and Bb: Pheasants and Peonies. Painted overmantel mirrors, Gilded wooden frames. 80 x 60 cm. Circa 1760. Chinese pavilion in Drottningholm Palace, Stockholm.**
around the year 1740, i.e. a few years before these pictures were paint-
ed. These birds, both live and painted, had a great vogue among the
English, and later the French aristocracy. They drew the admiration of
Elie de Beaumont, a French lawyer who visited the home of the English
Prime Minister, Robert Walpole, in 1763.9

The bathhouses, the bird menagerie and particularly
the pho
cians from China are all very worthy of attention,
but I particularly admired the mirrors sent from England
to China and brought back with Chinese paintings done
on the reverse of the mirror, with as much precision
as if they had been done on the top.

The peony was the most highly prized flower in China, and the one
most often portrayed. Considered to be the queen of flowers, it sym-
bolised feminine beauty; the ancient poets called it ‘evening beauty.’ It
subsequently became a mark of distinction and finally, from the start
of the Tang dynasty, the red peony expressed wealth and nobility.10 It
is therefore not surprising to see it frequently depicted in Chinese
reverse glass painting intended for the European aristocracy. The
butterfly could have a variety of symbolic meanings in China: philo-
sophical reflection on the nature of reality,11 longevity, a homophonic
puzzle, everlasting love,12 and finally, a little Cupid when it was flying
in a garden. An old legend recounts that a young man chasing a but-
terfly entered the garden of a high-ranking government official,
cought sight of the man’s daughter and immediately fell in love with
her. He worked hard to become a high-ranking official in his turn,
in order to marry her. It is in this latter symbol of love that we see repre-
sented by the butterfly in Chinese reverse glass painting.

These types of mirrors decorated with birds and flowers were
among the first to be painted in China and to reach Europe.13 They
already show that the Canton painters had outstanding skill in apply-
ing the paint when creating reverse glass paintings.

Mirror with quails and magnolia
At the centre of this mirror, in Illustration 9, a flowering magnolia is
painted. In it are perched two titmice observing a pair of plump
quails pecking away below, near to some white Chinese orchids. The
flowers of a young camellia are entwined with those of the magnolia.
The beautiful rococo gilded frame dates from around 1765 and may
have been made by the famous cabinet-maker John Linnell14 (1729-
1796). As in the previous work, the glass sheet could only have been
produced by casting.

This splendid mirror is painted with a variety of symbols. The
camellia and magnolia flowers are of Chinese origin and were only re-
ally known and cultivated in the West from the eighteenth century on-
wards. Both the camellia and magnolia symbolise springtime, youth,
and happiness, and the two are often seen together in pairs of Chinese
reverse glass paintings. Camellias were imported from Japan in the sev-
teneth century and began to be cultivated on a wide scale in Europe
in the eighteenth; they soon came to have symbolic meaning here too,
this time of melancholic beauty, as in The Lady of the Camellia. The
delicate white orchids, which found favour with Confucius, were often
depicted in ink wash paintings and were the symbol of discreet friend-
ship, love and beauty, but also of male fertility and therefore of numer-
sus progeny. The quail is a frequent motif because its Chinese name is
a homophone of the word for peace or tranquillity, so it naturally be-
came a symbol for these. In this picture, the brushstrokes and harmony
of colour serve the symbolic meaning and from it emanates a delicate
tenderness evoking the springtime of love.

Some other birds and flowers depicted in
reverse glass paintings
The chrysanthemum was frequently to be found in reverse glass
paintings. This flower was originally introduced into Europe in 1789
by Pierre Louis Blancart15 (1741-1826), a supercargo from Marseille,
and became very widespread during the nineteenth century. In Chi-
na, it was a symbol of autumn and longevity, but also of retreat from
the world and of contemplative life. Narcissi also symbolised longe-
vity, as in the picture by John Pike.16

Several painted mirrors, including numbers 20, 21, 23, 24, 51,
96, 97, 136 and 150 in the corpus, feature a red bird with blue-green
wings and a blue-black cap. The significance of this particular bird is
analysed in Chapter III, page 144.

12. In principle, when there are two of them.
Birds and flowers in a landscape setting

These bird-and-flower motifs can also be depicted against a background landscape that usually includes a water’s edge. The pair of water’s edge landscapes with pheasants, shown in Illustrations 10 and 11, is characteristic of this motif. In the foreground, a couple of pheasants, gilded in one of the pictures and silver in the other, stand on a rock at the edge of a lake or river. To the left and right, a group of flowers, peonies, and small shrubs frame the scene. Several junks and sampans, which look like pleasure boats, are moving on the water, while some beautiful Chinese dwellings can be seen on the banks. A special study is devoted to this type of landscape.

Birds and flowers used as a decorative border

Groups of birds and flowers were often used to embellish the borders of pictures whose main themes were quite different. This was particularly the case with rural scenes and portraits. Thus, such diverse motifs as the birds on the rocks just mentioned, or country scenes and portraits of Westerners described below, are to be found with elegant garlands of birds and flowers around them.

The theme of a single flower with foliage

This theme is very rarely represented in Chinese reverse glass painting during the period being studied. Only two are present in my corpus, numbered 34 and 35. It is interesting to note that these are reverse glass paintings where only the motif is painted: the parts outside the motif are neither mirror nor painting but transparent glass. In this case, the decoration consists of a wooden panel that has been painted or covered with painted paper in a plain or sky colour, and fixed about 5mm behind the glass. These paintings are not unlike no. 4 in the corpus, which is organised in the same way.

Motifs much admired both in Europe and China

These bird and flower motifs have meaning for the Chinese both because of the symbols they represent and because they form a link with the long tradition of bird paintings (particularly pheasants), as well as of flowers and rocks. This tradition, dating back over seven hundred years, is represented by the Pair of Golden Pheasants under a Wild Peach Tree, painted by Wang Yuan in 1349. The tradition was still very much alive in the mid-eighteenth century, as is shown by Pheasants, Magnolias and Peonies, painted on silk by Tchang Ching in 1754. This motif was admired at the Qianlong court in the eighteenth century since Giuseppe Castiglione himself had used it in silk painting for the emperor. It is therefore probable that the motif of pheasants and flowers was one of those painted at the Chinese emperor’s court to adorn the mirrors offered to him by Westerners.

The Chinese style of these paintings with their elegant realism and colours and their charming exoticism was particularly appreciated in the West, where the popularity of Chinese ways of thinking and chinoiserie was at its height. There must have been a strong demand for these paintings, both among the European aristocracy and the supercargoes or managers of the East India companies who passed through Canton. The following quotation from Johan Abraham Grill (1719-1799) testifies to this. He was a commercial adviser with the Swedish East India Company who had returned to Stockholm after a journey to Canton, writing to his friend Jacob Hake on 14 November 1770:

Had the glass delivered, which was left by Ava or her brother Apou Venus on a mission in Canton, to have a painting done on it showing a white pheasant with its female, on a rock with flowers around it.

21. In the Cernuschi Museum collection, referred to in Chavannes, Edouard and Raphael Perennou, 1912 and text format 2013, 120 to 127.
24. A supercargo with the same company who had remained in Canton. 25

17. Henceforth known as “water’s edge” landscape in this study. Cf. page 74.
18. Cf. page 84.
19. Unfortunately, there are no photos.
21. In the Cernuschi Museum collection, referred to in Chavannes, Edouard and Raphael Perennou, 1912 and text format 2013, 120 to 127.
24. A supercargo with the same company who had remained in Canton.
Outdoor scenes: leisure in high society

Out of all the motifs successfully used by Chinese reverse glass painters, there is one that has been responsible for many remarkable works. This is the motif portraying members of Manchu high society—aristocrats, mandarins, warlords and concubines related to nature, usually beside a lake, in a river, or in the gardens and on the verandas of their fine houses.

I have grouped these works under the theme of outdoor scenes, including those taking place in gardens or on verandas. These paintings are often in pairs, which means a symbolic element is added to the painted motifs, with dual concepts set against one another: old age-youth, winter-summer, music-poetry, and so on. A distinction has been made between different scenes: those in which both women and men are present are dealt with in the present chapter, while those in which women are the dominant subject, men being absent or reduced to the secondary role of enhancing the female presence, are dealt with in Beautiful Women. 28 page 52.

Numbers 41 to 108 of the corpus are grouped under this title of outdoor scenes.

In nature

• Cardinal de Rohan’s mirrors

This pair of mirrors, in Illustrations 12 and 13, belong to the fine collection of Chinese objects acquired by the Cardinal de Rohan to furnish the prestigious palace he had built at Soreme, in Alcove, in 1779. The gilded frames with their glazing beads are later, probably dating from the nineteenth century, and the dimensions of the glass indicate how they were manufactured, by casting. This pair of mirrors has been described by Étienne Martin. 29

21. I prefer the term in nature, which is better suited to the Chinese context than the terms countryside or rural setting used in the West.
22. This category of Beautiful women’s painting is traditional in Chinese painting according to Emmanuel Lebeuf and Lian Jiaohong in their book Les Peintures chinoises, Paris, 2004.
24. I prefer the term in nature, which is better suited to the Chinese context than the terms countryside or rural setting used in the West.
25. I prefer the term in nature, which is better suited to the Chinese context than the terms countryside or rural setting used in the West.
26. This pair of mirrors has been described by Étienne Martin. 29

Winter Scene and Old Age (Illustration 12) A white-bearded man, wearing the official robes of a mandarin, 30 is sitting on a seat at the foot of a pine tree, at the edge of a lake lined with beautiful houses, surrounded by hills from which a pagoda emerges. A young woman, on either side of him and a child observes them with the smile. The robe and blue sash worn by the old man are the winter ceremony garments of this high-ranking mandarin, as shown by the phoenixes that decorate his ‘mandarin square’ 31 and his coral necklace. He is wearing a mandarin’s or aristocrat’s winter hat, 32 his vest are covered by muffler and he is wearing fur boots. Sitting on a rock covered with a white embroidered cloth, he is resting his arm on a table sculpted out of white marble, on which are arranged a gai (a Chinese cithara), a pot of flowers, a small perfume-burner, and a box of Chinese books.

The two young women accompanying him have their hair in Manchu style. 33 One of them wears a silk muslin dress and silk jacket, and the other an embroidered green silk dress. The latter is affectionately resting her hand on the old man’s shoulder while the other is playing with a branch of one of the flowering cherries. A child waving winter clothes observes the scene, concealing a smile behind his hand. The scene takes place beneath two intertwined pine trees, doubtfully symbolic in the Chinese pictorial tradition because pines are symbols of longevity, symbols confirmed by the two cranes perched on them, in accordance with the expression, ‘May you have perpetual springtimes like the pine and the crane’, 34 and trees that intertwine are trees of love, a pictorial symbol of lasting affection that was quite widespread in eighteenth-century China. 35

Also present in this picture are winter’s famous three friends: the pine, the bamboo, and the flowering cherry tree. Cold-resistant pines and bamboos, and the cherry blossoming while it was still snowing, 36 are depicted in Chinese painting according to Emmanuelle Lesbre and Liu Jianlong in their book Painted mirror. Gilded wooden frame. 75 x 105 cm. Cardinal de Rohan’s collection, Strasbourg City Hall. Photo © Martine Beck Coppola.

27. This embroidered silk square, covering the chest and back of a mandarin’s ceremonial robes, is decorated with an animal indicating the precise rank and the administration to which this official belongs: birds represented the civil service and martial the military administration.
28. Many mandarins and mandarinas were identical bats, with fur and silk brims in winter and red straw and silk in summer.
33. Chavannes, Edouard and Raphaël Petrucci. 1912 and text format 2013.
35. Chavannes, Edouard and Raphaël Petrucci. 1912 and text format 2013.
36. This peony is native to Eastern Asia. According to legend, it is the only tree on which the phoenix will perch. It is associated with femininity.
37. A humpback bridge.
38. This is a fresco technique consisting in painting a first layer and then, before it is dry, applying a second layer of paint, allowing it to penetrate the first.
41. Thierry Audric • Chinese reverse glass painting 19th-20th
This painting, seen in Illustration 14, shows a young, high-born aristocrat sitting on a rock at the edge of a lake, a tobacco pipe in his hand. With keen interest, he is observing a young girl playing the pipa, a form of Chinese lute. Both the young man and the girl are dressed in the greatest finery, with particularly impressive embroidery. Another young girl stands behind the musician, while a child behind the rock on which man and musician are seated is throwing seeds to a hen and cock pair. The brown hue of the foliage, behind the rock on which the man and musician are seated is an allegory of music.

Westerners looking at Chinese reverse glass paintings had already been struck by the presence of a palace in the distance, which confirms the aristocratic character of the scene. Several symbolic animals and objects are dotted around the picture. The dragon and phoenix, on the prince’s and musician’s clothes respectively, symbolise their membership of the highest aristocracy (prince and princess). The phoenix in the sky and the weeping willows (one pair behind the couple) are symbols of both love and femininity. The double gourd attached to the prince’s belt symbolises and promises longevity; the double jade fish hanging on the pipa player’s hand. With keen interest, he is observing a young girl playing the pipa in the company of his guests. This scene of a young aristocrat listening to a woman sitting beside him playing the pipa is common in Chinese reverse glass painting. Several paintings in the corpus—numbers 43, 45, 47, 49, 50, 51, 52, 54a, 58 and 108—are almost identical as regards the scene and setting, number 108 being the painting referred to by Jenyns. The Western influence in these pictures can be seen in the perspective accorded to the river, but the rural scenes, although traditionally Chinese, must have also struck a chord with Westerners seeing them at the time because of their resemblance to the rural scenes so popular in eighteenth-century Europe.

In view of the frequent association of this theme with music, studied above, there is ample justification for agreeing with Jenyns’s thesis that we are dealing with an allegory of poetry linked to the legacy of music.

An almost identical scene can be found in five paintings in the corpus, namely numbers 44, 48, 50, 60 and 61. Another scene that is an allegory of poetry and frequently appears in Chinese reverse glass painting (shown in numbers 46, 64, 65, 66 and 67) depicts an aristocrat with a small black moustache hanging from his belt, a double gourd hanging from his head. Seated in front of him on a rock is a man—presumably a warrior—wearing an orange silk dress and holding a closed fan in one hand, while he too holds a flower in the other. A child is observing the couple. As in the preceding picture, we can note the presence of a weeping willow and two phoenixes.

It is noticeable that music is often associated with a young unmarried girl, and therefore with youth, while poetry is linked to maturity and the married state.

41. Sir James Horlick (1844-1921), a pharmacist and businessman, was a collector of Chinese objects produced in Canton for export during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With his wife, he assembled one of the finest collections of Chinese reverse glass paintings, which was recently sold at Sotheby’s.
42. Perhaps a lady-in-waiting?
43. Sung-Nien, Hsu, 1932, 456-459.
44. Margouliès, Georges, 1948.
The pair of mirrors in the Rijksmuseum

One of the finest examples of these pairs of mirrors with outdoor scenes is without doubt the ones belonging to the Rijksmuseum collection, seen in Illustrations 16 and 17. They merit some attention, especially as this scene is also depicted, in identical fashion, on another beautiful pair of mirrors, number 54 of the corpus. These gilded frames are from the Louis XIV period and the size of the glass proves that it was made by casting.

Like Cardinal de Rohan’s pair, studied earlier, this pair also has the dual theme of winter-summer.

Winter Music Scene

In Illustration 16, an aristocratic couple are playing music on a terrace, at the edge of a lake containing pleasure boats and bordered by fine residences. The man with the pale, smooth baby face is a young race, at the edge of a lake containing pleasure boats and bordered by the hills surrounding the lake; and the scene is framed by garlands of many different flowers—peonies, passion flowers, convolvulus, and sweet peas. The couple and the servant are wearing summer clothes as sumptuous as their winter ones.

- The man is no longer playing the bans but is holding a little, probably a poem, while in the other hand he has a field fan.
- The woman is no longer playing the pipa but the erhu, the two-stringed Chinese violin, and the servant is no longer accompanying them on the flute but holding a bird perched on her hand.36
- The couple are no longer sitting on seats but on a flat rock where the same dish of fruit is laid out as in the winter scene. In addition to this, there is now a tobacco pipe, a book, and a bunch of flowers in a vase.
- In the small pond, which was empty in the winter scene, there are now lotuses flowering.

A European influence?

If the opposition between winter and summer is clear, that between music and poetry is less so. However, we can probably draw conclusions from the piece of paper the young man is reading.

An aristocrat’s pastime and the scene is an entertainment, perhaps even a light-hearted dalliance. These differences led me to put these works into two different categories: The Shepherds and the Falconer,53 marked by a slighter analysis reveals several elements that indicate a Western influence, the first and most significant being the perspective of the water’s edge landscape.54 The other elements confirming this influence are:

- the presence of the lory, a bird that is foreign to China. These two works are of exceptional quality. The skill shown by the painter who produced them can be compared in every respect to the skill displayed in the reverse glass paintings in the Cardinal de Rohan’s collection, referred to earlier. In these two works, however, there is also a kind of gaiety, a spontaneity and ardent joy emanating from the graceful scenes with their fresh colours that, by comparison, make the Cardinal’s paintings seem more static, more academic.

- The aristocrat, the beauty and the falcon

My corpus includes five paintings, numbered 69, 71, 72, 74 and 75, portraying identical scenes: a young man, wearing a mandarin’s or aristocrat’s summer hat and holding a falcon on his gloved left hand, addressing a young woman. The scene takes place at the edge of a vast lake lined with villas, on which a few pleasure boats are moving. This series, although it features a young woman, a man and a falcon, as in the painting of The Shepherds and the Falconer,55 is markedly different from that painting. In The Shepherds and the Falconer, the man in the gamekeeper’s habit, who must be a falconer, is hiding to watch a falconer. In the present series, The aristocrat, the beauty and the falcon, the man appears to belong to the upper echelons of society, as does the young woman he is addressing. Falconry was an aristocrat’s pastime and the scene is an entertainment, perhaps even a light-hearted dalliance. These differences led me to put these works into two different categories: The Shepherds and the Falconer in the
beautiful women series of paintings, and the aristocrat, the beauty and the falcon series in the present Chapter II of outdoor scenes, page 45. This painting, in Illustration 18, has turquoise tones for the rocks, the leaves of the trees and the distant hills, and orange for the ground and some of the tree trunks. There is a certain Western influence in the perspective, a little in the shading and in the subject itself, which appears to be a seduction scene. It is possible that this scene is taken from a classical Chinese novel or opera.

In the garden and on the veranda

The grand residences of Chinese high society included vast gardens with lakes and huge verandas in front of the house. Furthermore, those in the Canton region were situated on the banks of the many branches of the Pearl River, thereby giving these villas a superb view and the possibility of having a landing stage for pleasure sampans. Life was sweet for the aristocrats and mandarins who lived there and it was these leisure scenes that the Cantonese painters liked to depict, commissioned by notables of the Guangdong region or with the aim of selling them to Westerners, who were fond of such scenes.

The paintings from this category are numbered 82 to 100 and 104 of the corpus.

• In the garden

This beautiful mirror adorning Shugborough Hall in Staffordshire, England, can be seen in Illustration 19. It is one of a pair, its pendant describing an identical scene.

A seated mandarin is stroking his thin black beard54 and talking with a young Manchu woman standing nearby, accompanied by her servant. They are on a terrace at the edge of a lake surrounded by exquisite houses and spanned by an elegant bridge with a pavilion on it. A graceful flower garland decorates the mirror’s surround. This mirror is of particular interest because, unlike most Chinese reverse glass paintings with Chinese motifs, research has been carried out on it to ascertain its date. A recent study55 has in fact established that these paintings were probably not acquired by Lord Anson (1697-1762), the owner of Shugborough Hall, during his stay in Canton in 1743, but perhaps56 formed part of a batch of Chinese objects bought by his wife to furnish the Chinese pavilion when it was built in 1747. However, the most probable theory is that these pictures were sold as lots 80 and 81 on 10 February 1780 to a Mr. Anson for the sum of £26.50.57 Paintings numbered 85 to 94 and 105 in the corpus also show pictures of people relaxing in beautiful gardens. Scene no. 89, where a servant is bringing refreshments to an aristocratic young man, is identical to the scenes in nos. 90 and 91. The pair numbered 88 and 89 was obviously intended to be put into two frames, juxtaposed to compose a single scene, but the European framers chose a different arrangement.

• On the terrace

On a beautiful terrace overlooking a river, in Illustration 20, some children are playing with a kite, watched by their fond parents. The junk, belonging to an eminent Cantonese official, is moored on the river, while several sampans are sailing around a fort on an island in the middle of the river. The opposite bank is the port of Canton quayside where huge factories have been set up. In the distance, the fortified city of Canton can be seen, with several monuments rising above it, including the minaret of the famous Huai Sheng Si mosque. This painting is one of a batch of nineteen of identical size and style, belonging to the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden (Netherlands), which have been studied in detail by van Dongen.58 He has suggested a date between 1785 and 1790.

The beautiful residence whose terrace can be seen in this painting is situated on the island of Honan, a place that was very popular with Canton’s rich merchants and top mandarins. The mandarin Pan Qiguan, whose reverse glass portrait shown in Illustration 37 is studied in “Portraits of Chinese dignitaries,” page 72, was one of those

54. Cf. page 56: Chinese hairstyles in reverse glass painting.
55. The East India Company at Home, 1757-1857, is a three-year research project financed by the Leverhulme Trust that has been carried out at Warwick University (History Department [2011-2012] and at University College, London [2012-2014]. For three years, the staff at the centre of the project and teams from over 300 associated projects worked together to study British stately homes in their imperial and global contexts. http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/eicah/home/.
56. The research suggests this date but provides no evidence for it.
57. Email exchange with Shugborough’s curator, Mrs Gemma Roberts.
privileged to live here. The fort that is visible is probably the one named Dutch Folly by Westerners. Five paintings in the corpus, numbered 82, 83, 84, 95 and 106, also show such scenes taking place on terraces at the water’s edge.

• Romantic scene on a veranda

Manchu chivalry was not confined to the garden; the veranda was also a favourite place for courtly pursuits. On a superb veranda open to the sky, thanks to its red curtain having been drawn back (Illustration 21), a young aristocrat is standing, wearing a summer hat and clothes, and holding the hand of a young woman. He accompanies his remarks by a gesture with his closed fan, held in his right hand. A servant, behind the young woman, is presenting her with a robe. A child seated at their feet holds a pipe in his hands while, on his golden perch, a black-headed lory bird observes them. The European influence is visible from:

• the blue curtain, which is open and tied back, giving the whole scene the air of a stage set;
• the bunch of flowers in a vase; and
• the black-headed lory bird.

Another painting, no. 96 in the corpus, has an identical setting except for a few details, among which are the curtain colour and the number of stools.

This work owes its beauty, tinged with a slight air of fantasy, to the virtuosity of the composition. The small size of the figures, the pillars with no visible end to them, the absence of furniture and particularly the veranda opening on to a void, to the mirror/diyos, place us in an immense make-believe palace. Is it a dream or the heavenly abode of the immortals?

‘Beautiful women’

The subject most frequently depicted in Chinese reverse glass painting, since its beginnings in the eighteenth century up to the present day, is young and pretty women, in either indoor or outdoor scenes or simply as portraits. This subject was not an innovation brought about by reverse glass painting, but was traditional in Chinese painting. In this book, these paintings have been divided into two broad categories:

Outdoor scenes, where the man and woman or women form a couple or are engaged in a shared activity. These have been studied in “Outdoor scenes: leisure in high society,” page 40.

Beautiful women, where a young woman is shown alone, or in the company of other women but without a male character, or with a male character whose role is simply to enhance the woman’s presence. This is the subject of this chapter, where 111 paintings of ‘beautiful women’—numbers 109 to 219 in the corpus—are gathered under this heading. Studying them has led me to distinguish the following features belonging to this group and to scrutinize them more closely:

• the beautiful woman in the straw hat
• the beautiful woman in the blue veil
• the allegories
• tales and legends
• courtesans
• notable accessories

Finally, the significance of these young women’s hairstyles has been the subject of a particularly in-depth study in “Chinese hairstyles in reverse glass painting,” page 56.

59. Let us be practical: an empty space needed to be kept to serve as a mirror.
“The beautiful woman in the straw hat”

Among the very numerous “beautiful women” portraits, a sub-set that I have called “the beautiful woman in the straw hat” is of particular interest because of what it teaches us about the origin of these Chinese reverse glass paintings.

The sub-set is characterised by the presence in the picture of a young woman wearing a round straw hat, with a broad brim, decorated with flowers or feathers and sometimes edged with a little veil which is open in the centre so that it can be placed on top of the traditional Chinese chignon. This headwear cannot be Chinese since women of good society never wore such a hat: it is in fact Western.

In addition to this hat, the young woman often wears one or several of the following garments:
- A silk House with a closed collar, often red and often embroidered. It has long sleeves, from which the sleeves of a white shirt protrude.
- A white shawl covering the shoulders and tied at the front—another accessory that is not very Chinese.
- A long skirt made of voile, embroidered or not, from which a small foot sometimes emerges. The skirt appears to be held up by braces and (or) a belt, fashioned from a scarf or cord.
- A white scarf covered with a broad brim decorated with flowers or feathers and sometimes edged with a little veil.

Overall, this outfit is Chinese in its choice of materials—particularly the embroidered silk—but not so much in its design and certainly not in its stylish hat.

The young woman is usually shown with a dreamy air, her head often resting on her hand and wearing a melancholic expression. She is sitting on a rock at the foot of a tree, a pine or a wutong, with a tall handle, has been placed next to her. A water’s edge setting and frequently holds a long stick in her hand. Everything about this painting suggests that it shows a young woman with features and clothes often resembling those of the young woman with the hat.

- She is not wearing a hat but a blue veil with a floral decoration, usually of peonies.
- She may be sitting or standing in an outdoor setting quite similar to the first in the pair, including the water’s edge landscape, but she may also be inside an aristocratic house that opens on to a terrace overlooking the same water’s edge landscape. In this latter case, she is seated at a table wearing warmer, more elegant clothes than her counterpart in the other picture; she is frequently shown smoking a tobacco pipe.
- There is often a puppy playing near her.
- The portrayal of the beautiful woman is dealt with in “The Allegories,” page 66.

**La bonne bergère**
(The Good Shepherdess)

This painting, seen in Illustration 22, is part of the large Frieder Ryser collection62 and is on display in the Vitromusée at Romont in Switzerland. It is one of the most representative and gracious of the long series of portraits each featuring shepherdesses wearing straw hats.

At the foot of a rock and a pine tree, on the edge of a lake, a young woman is watching over her sheep. We can see, on the other side of the lake near a tower, a long wall with small windows cut into it at regular intervals, and in the distance some hills. There are sheep plays on the blue-coloured foliage. Two goats are grazing beside the young woman, who is wearing most of the attire previously described: a round straw hat with a wide brim decorated with flowers and, tied on the top, a red cord whose two ends hang down coquettishly. There is also a white scarf covering her shoulders and tied at the front, an orangey-red blouse fastening with a very modest high collar, a belt in the same red cord as on the hat, and a plain blue pleated skirt from which a very tiny red shoe is peeping out. She is also holding a long, thin stick in her hand. Everything about this young woman is graceful. The way her face is depicted follows the Chinese tradition: pale, without shadows, but with rose-tinted cheeks.62 The mouth is small and red, cherry-shaped according to Ryser, Frieder, 1991, 225, Illustration 257.

62. Using the reverse glass painting technique, that is to say applying a second layer while the first is not yet dry.
Chinese hairstyles in reverse glass painting

Women’s and young girls’ hairstyles in high society under the Qing dynasty

Under the Qing dynasty, the Manchu masters of China assigned the highest symbolic importance to hairstyles. They decreed that all men, both Manchu and Chinese, should wear their hair in a plait, and their wives were made to dress their hair in the typical gaoliang way. This meant that married women fashioned a chignon around a horizontal piece of wood that allowed the hair to spread out at each side. The hair was then decorated with jewels, which were often symbolic, such as the famous phoenix-shaped hairpins, and hairpins holding three pendants on each side that swung gracefully whenever the young woman moved her head. Real or artificial flowers completed this rich decoration. In this book, these hairstyles are referred to as Manchu-style.

But another hairstyle is often seen on reverse glass paintings. It is composed of a simple chignon standing up vertically on the young woman’s head. It is held in place and decorated with hairpins, and a variety of jewels and flowers. Thus, in the painting below [Ill. 15], an elegant and richly dressed young woman is putting the finishing touches to her coiffure by adding a beautiful hairpin to the fresh pionies and phoenix-shaped pin (a lucky charm) already adorning her hair.

Which women wore a simple chignon in reverse glass paintings? Were they Chinese? Or were they young Manchu women before marriage?

The pairs of portraits in Illustrations 16, 17 and 32a, 32b contain an opposition between those with Manchu-style hairstyles and those with a simple chignon. It is more probable that the contrast marked the difference between a married woman and an unmarried girl rather than between Manchu and Chinese. In the same way, the pairs numbered 179, 180 and 181, 182 in the corpus seem to link together, as equals, a woman with hair in Manchu style and another with a simple chignon, each of them wearing the same rich clothing. This argues in favour of an unmarried Manchu girl wearing a simple chignon.

However, young servant women, who were therefore probably Chinese, also wore this simple chignon, though it is less ornamented than those worn by young Manchu girls.

In this book I have made the following distinction: if a picture shows a woman with a Manchu-style hairstyle it means she is married, but, depending on the context, if she is wearing a simple chignon this indicates she is an unmarried Manchu girl or a Chinese woman.

The pilosity of male faces

In Chinese iconography of this period and reverse glass paintings, there are three ages of man, each determined by his facial hair: a young, unmarried man is defined by his absence of beard or moustache; a thin black beard characterises the married male adult face; and a white beard is the mark of an old man. •

Each hairstyle of the Qing dynasty and was therefore not prominent in Chinese painting during this particular dynasty. However, it is conspicuous here, doubtless on account of foreign art lovers, who saw in it a taste of the exotic, during this particular dynasty. However, it is conspicuous here, doubtless on account of foreign art lovers, who saw in it a taste of the exotic, with cruelty only adding to its fascination.

The Shepherdess

This pretty pair of painted mirrors, in Illustrations 23 and 28, has a shepherdess as one of its themes, which is dealt with in this section. The other theme is ‘The young woman wearing a blue veil inside her home’, which is dealt with in page 64.

At the base of a group of rugged rocks with sharp ridges, a young shepherdess, wearing a straw hat, is seated on the ground with one leg folded beneath her, gloomily resting her pretty face on her hand. Over her dress of fine white embroidered gauze, she is wearing a red jacket with a Chinese collar. A couple of sheep are lying at her feet and the scene takes place on the bank of a river that disappears towards the steep hills. The frame, in light, undecorated wood, has the shape of a flattened arch.

Once again, the picture is built around the juxtaposition of a harsh, mineral landscape achieved with large strokes of colour and a delicate young woman wearing refined clothing. The smoothness of her face and her pink cheeks are very subtly done but, unlike the Romont portrait, there are shadows shaping the face and hands.

frolicking at her foot. Along the river a Chinese house can be seen, with a square tower emerging from it.

The composition is a classic one in reverse glass painting; but here, it shows evidence of fine balance, together with very pleasing brushwork. This picture is one of a pair whose pendant, number 1:6 in the corpus, shows two young women, one of them sitting on a flat rock in a setting almost identical to the one in the shepherdess with the falcon. It includes the basket of flowers but the sheep are replaced by a pheasant. This young woman is wearing a brown silk dress and holding a flower in her hand while the second, standing behind her, is arranging her hair in a Manchu style.

The same theme can be found in a painting belonging to the fine collection at the Lady Lever Gallery in Liverpool, number 118 in the corpus.

The origin of the beautiful woman in the straw hat: A painting by Giuseppe Castiglione

Since some of the clothes the young woman is wearing cannot be Chinese, and knowing that very many Chinese reverse glass paintings were copies of European engravings or miniatures, it seemed appropriate, following the example of Udo Dammert,64 to look for the origin of this portrait in European iconography of the time. Although there is no lack of straw-hatted shepherdesses sitting at the foot of trees, I was not able to find a painting or engraving that might have served as a model for shepherdess paintings in the corpus. However, among the artworks created by Jesuit painters at the court of Emperor Qianlong is a painting depicting a young woman wearing a straw hat and clothes very like those in the reverse glass paintings described above.

Portrait of a Young Woman Dressed as a European Shepherdess.

The Beijing Palace Museum has a portrait of a young Chinese woman in European dress (Illustration 28). It is reproduced in black and white, unfortunately without dimensions, in several works65 on China under the title Portrait of a Young Woman Dressed as a European Shepherdess. This painting possesses most of the features found in reverse glass portraits of young women wearing straw hats that have been studied in the present text: the hat, of course, but also the clothes and the woman’s pose, sitting on a rock at the foot of a tree.

In her left hand, the young woman is holding a stick with a metal plate at the end in the shape of a spade. This is a shepherd’s crook, in use in Europe until the late eighteenth century, and often represented in medieval European painting up until the eighteenth century. The woman’s left hand is resting on the tall handle of a flower basket. In addition to its decorative function, in China this basket symbolised one of the Taoist Immortals, Lan Caihe.66 Cécile and Michel Beurdeley make the following comment on this artwork:

Painting attributed to Castiglione. In fact, it can be affirmed that these three portraits (which include this shepherdess) were painted by a European artist in China and there is nothing to prove that they represent Huang Fei. Huang Fei, now written as Xiang Fei in the official script of the People’s Republic of China, was the legendary concubine of Emperor Qianlong; she also went by the name of ‘fragrant concubine’. I will not list the serious historical studies67 that have attempted to discover whether this young woman really existed; for our purposes I prefer the legend, which seems to me more pertinent to her pictorial image. She was an Uyghur princess—a people of western China—and is said to have been given to Emperor Qianlong, or captured by him, following her victory over a rebellion in this region. She was taken to the harem in the palace at Peking and the emperor was able to resist neither her beauty nor the fragrance emanating from her body,68 and fell desperately in love with her. Nothing was too good for her—neither the construction in the palace grounds of an open-air theatre nor a mosque69 built quite close by; but history does not tell us how she reacted. The romance ended badly because, according to legend, the young woman was assassinated by the emperor who, so it was thought, suspected the concubine of wanting to kill the emperor to revenge her people.

If this heroine’s existence is debatable, her role in the collective memory and in Chinese art is not. Cécile and Michel Beurdeley are cautious of attributing this painting to Castiglione and of stating that it is indeed Xiang Fei, but are careful to note that the young woman is disguised as an ‘European’. However, the following factors seem to me to argue in favour of this affirmation.

In the imperial spring garden

The first of these is also a silk painting, the panel of a screen, shown at the ‘Min Shin no kaiga (Ming and Qing Dynasty Paintings)’ exhibition at the Tokyo National Museum in 1964.70 Emperor Qianlong is seated in front of the Yuan Ming Yuan Belvedere Palace watching with obvious admiration a young woman disguised as a European. The catalogue describes her as ‘Xiang Fei accompanying Emperor Qianlong at a game of ball in the Yuan Ming Yuan Belvedere Garden’, and attributes the work to Castiglione.

Two conclusions may be drawn from this work:

- The young woman is close to the emperor and, in all probability, one of his favourite concubines, the only woman with whom he would have had himself painted—and, what is more, his favourite Jesuit painter.
- The disguise, according to the Beurdeleys, is none other than a European shepherdess’s costume, with the little round straw hat that is very like the one in the Imperial Palace painting mentioned earlier. This image confirms the emperor’s taste for festivities with exotic disguises, in this instance Western. One cannot resist a smile at this symmetry: while European monarchs were organising festivities with Chinese costumes, the Chinese emperor was dressing the pretty women at his court in European disguises.

An interesting point regarding this painting’s attribution is the description by the Chinese writer when he visited the Imperial Palace in 1786:

Far away in a remote corner of the palace, he [Qianlong] built his barbarian concubine a little bath house—a tiny vaulted chamber and a paved ante-room; but in the ante-room there are two pictures on the wall, portraits of the concubine herself, painted by a Western artist in the Western manner. Father Castiglione was his name—this slim-eyed Turki bad fellow of the great king is portrayed ‘en jardinière’ upon a knoll, wearing a wide shady hat and a laced bodice, her blue over-slip disposed around her as she reclines, holding the slender shaft of a long hoe.

64. Dammert, Udo, 1980.

65. Beurdeley, Michel and Cécile. Illustration 80; Sullivan, M. 1973, fig. 42; Liu, Jiun, 2003, no. 6, 50.

66. Taoist philosophy attributes the highest importance to the search for immortality. Eight mortals have succeeded in attaining this blessed state, and they form one of the bases of popular Chinese iconography. Each of them is represented by their symbol(s):

67. I make an exception for the most documented study, which is a real landmark: Milward, James A. 1994, 427-458.

68. Hence her nickname.

69. She was a Muslim.
The metamorphoses of Xiang Fei in reverse glass painting

There are two other portraits in existence that have been said to represent Xiang Fei.

The beautiful armour-clad woman

In the Taipei (Taiwan) National Palace Museum collections, a painting on Korean paper shows a young Asian woman wearing European ceremonial armour: its shining black glints pleasingly in the light, she wears a helmet with a red plume and she is carrying a European marshal’s baton. The painting’s provenance, according to the museum, is the Peking Imperial Palace and the picture is referred to by Michel and Cécile Beurdeley. Apart from the brief mention by Quennel, I have found very little evidence to prove that the picture is of Xiang Fei. Recent research by Lina Lin, a curator at the Taipei museum, has led her to believe that the young woman is more likely to be a relative of Emperor Qianlong, and that the painter was one of the European Jesuits at the imperial court. I know of only one example of reverse glass painting dating from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, which is therefore outside the period being studied in this book.

The existence of this reverse glass painting does however confirm that there was communication between the emperor’s court and the Canton reverse glass painters.

The beautiful woman with the embroidered coat

Several reverse glass painters depict a young woman with a Manchu hairstyle wearing beautiful earrings and an embroidered cape, sitting with her elbow resting on a table. They were obviously inspired by a single model, which might well be the picture presented by the Beurdeleys,1 bearing the title Portrait of a Young Woman Wearing a Red Dress, which they describe as ‘an oil painting, attributed to Castiglione. This portrait is thought to depict Xiang Fei, who is believed to belong to Mrs Tchang Kai-Chek, Tai-Pei, Tai-Wan. ’2

The reverse glass paintings that I have been able to see of this beautiful woman with the embroidered coat are more recent than the period being studied here. I will therefore say no more than to simply point out that enthusiasts of every period, including our own, had a strong desire to discover that the woman in their pictures was the beautiful concubine. 

There is no doubt that it is the same picture, which Quennel3 thus attributes to the Jesuit painter Giuseppe Castiglione and is thought to depict the famous concubine.

The revelatory copy

I would like finally to add my own contribution to this question of attribution, by referring to the work seen in illustration 26. This painting is an exact repeat of the portrait featuring a young woman dressed as a European shepherdess, but with slightly different colours. Furthermore, and this is the most important point, in the bottom left-hand corner, the painting carries Castiglione’s Chinese seal.

The practice of copying works held by the court, especially those pleasing to the emperor, was a common custom in China, as it was in Europe at that time. It appears improbable that the copyist would have invented Castiglione’s signature. It therefore seems to me that the portrait of a young woman dressed as a European shepherdess is indeed by Castiglione and that it depicts one of Qianlong’s favourite concubines. So why would it not be Xiang Fei? I have decided to call her by this name for the remainder of what follows.


Why did this portrait have such a following among reverse glass painters? There are many reasons for the numerous repeats of this theme, among which are the following:

• It was a painting appreciated by the emperor and, on account of this, could not fail to please the whole of Chinese high society, who were keen to adopt court fashions.
• The portrait’s delicacy and the legendary romance linked to this beautiful captive,4 occasioning an artistic coming together of China and the West, was certain to charm Western high society as well as the more plebeian visitors to eighteenth-century Canton.
• The possibilities of variation on the theme of the pretty Chinese shepherdess were inexhaustible for a Westerner of the time who was a lover of chinoiseries and rural, even racy scenes.

4. ‘Listening to his guide’

Castiglione’s painting of Xiang Fei as a shepherdess repeated by reverse glass painters

Grouped side by side in the same illustration 27, two of the reverse glass paintings of a young woman in a straw hat (Illustrations 23 and 24) and Castiglione’s painting (Illustration 25) reveal many convincing similarities: it seems to me there is no doubt that the work of the Jesuit painter inspired Canton painters in their series of young women, specifically shepherdesses, with straw hats.

27. [Illustrations between the Castiglione painting (il. 23, right) and reverse glass paintings (il. 22 centre and 24 right)]
Variations on the theme of the beautiful woman in the straw hat

No. 128 in the corpus, “Group of Shepherdesses with Straw Hats,” is a painting unique in its genre. It portrays a group of four shepherdesses with two young children, surrounded by sheep on the edge of a lake. It is one of a pair, the other (No. 129) being an indoor scene showing a concert given before a young Manchu aristocrat, in opposition to the outdoor scene of the first picture. The frames are also original, geometric in shape and made from red lacquered wood. Although the general look of them resembles the paintings already referred to, there are several differences to notice. One of the seated young shepherdesses is sporting a décolleté which is very un-Chinese, and allowing her bound little foot to peep out from under her dress. One of the standing young women is shown in profile, which is unknown in traditional Chinese painting. Finally, the manner of painting is also different—there is greater volume and it is more affected.

Simple portraits

The photos of these portraits are numbered 130, 133, 134, 135, 138, 139 and 140 in the corpus. The young woman wearing the straw hat is no longer a shepherdess—only her head and shoulders are depicted or she is shown sitting at the foot of a tree with a water’s edge setting in the background. The portrait is often one of a pair and the matching one is a portrait of the beautiful woman with the blue veil; its dimensions may vary between 5 cm and 50 cm. One or two feathers may be added to the flowers on the hat, and it is occasionally edged with a fabric fringe. The frames are also varied—they may be rectangular, oval or hexagonal, but are usually plain wood, neither carved nor gilded. However, they are sometimes painted with black lacquer with gilded foliation.

The beautiful woman in the blue veil

There are eighteen paintings in my corpus of a beautiful woman whose hair is covered with a blue veil. They are often linked to the beautiful woman in the straw hat, either because of the clothing or because they are one of a pair, the matching picture being of a beautiful woman in a straw hat.

Young woman on her veranda

The painting shown in Illustration 28, of a young woman with a blue veil in an indoor setting, is a pendant to the one of the shepherdess in Illustration 23. The young woman is nonchalantly sitting on the edge of a sofa, on a veranda opening onto a river or lake with a tree in the foreground, which are visible because the curtain has been tied back. Her hair is covered with a blue veil, which is not a Chinese accessory; she is wearing a blue silk dress decorated with dragon medallions and a sumptuous ermine fur coat; and she holds a tobacco pipe in her left hand. At her feet, a small dog is trying to attract her attention. Her elbow is resting on a Chinese stool near a table on which a bowl of fruit and a bunch of flowers—chrysanthemums and cockscobs—have been placed. We can see the edge of a picture showing a sky, with a flimsy blue curtain hanging over the top of it.

Everything here speaks of wealth and elegance, but also of the dreamy melancholy of a beautiful aristocratic woman. The technique is of exceptionally high quality: one only has to look at the ermine cape to be convinced of this. We are in the presence of a masterpiece of Chinese reverse glass painting.

This picture has several binary oppositions—summer-winter, town-country—that have been well described by Cummings. However, I find it difficult to follow his reasoning when he talks of the opposition between wealth and poverty: according to him, the young shepherdess exudes gaiety, while the young woman in the rich ermine radiates sadness, from which he draws the powerful moral that wealth does not necessarily create happiness.

Portrait of a young woman in a blue veil

This painting, seen in Illustration 29, is one of a pair, its pendant depicting a young woman with flowers on her hat. Here, a young woman is standing at the foot of a tree on the bank of a river where a sampan is sailing. It is bounded by a hill in the distance, on which stands a pagoda. She wears clothes that show evidence of Western influence, and are often worn by young women in straw hats, notably by the young woman depicted on the other picture in the pair. On her shoulder, she is carrying a basket of flowers that also contains a bottle. We have already noted the association between this basket and the women in the straw hat as a symbol of the Immortal, Lan Caihe, a mythological
Chinese figure considered to be one of the eight Immortals in the Taoist pantheon, and the presence of the bottle confirms this attribution. In this picture, however, the basket is associated with the woman in the blue veil. The link between this young woman and the woman in the straw hat, whom I have suggested might represent the concubine Xiang Fei, leads me to think that this woman in the blue veil might also be a concubine. If the shepherdess’s straw hat is neither Chinese nor Manchu, the blue veil over the woman’s hair is hardly any more so. But it could be an accessory worn by Muslim women, and Xiang Fei was a Muslim. So it is very tempting to see in this young woman in the blue veil one of the many depictions of the beautiful concubine. 66

Among the eighteen works illustrating this theme, we may note the frequency of the scene—in nos. 154 to 159 and 214 in the corpus—in which the young woman is languorously stretched out in a pleasure sampan with a canopy, on a lake or a river, her head gracefully resting on her hand. In its Christmas edition, no. 28 of 1900, the English magazine Illustrated London News had no hesitation in describing this picture as a portrayal of the beautiful concubine Xiang Fei (no. 155 in the corpus). Unfortunately, it does not state the source of its information. The depiction of the woman in the blue veil, like that of the woman wearing the straw hat, seems to have remained highly popular for almost a century. This can be seen from nos. 148 and 149 in the corpus, which form part of the decoration at Saltram House in Plymouth, England, and therefore date from around 1760; and nos. 151 and 156, which date from the first half of the nineteenth century. Also of note is the frequency of the ermine cape, a symbol of winter in the pairs where the pendant shows a young married girl. Several paintings, in pairs numbered 157-158, 179-180, 181-182, 193-194 and 210-211 of the corpus, or in the same painting in nos. 165 and 170, indicate the opposition between young married woman and unmarried girl by way of their hairstyles. 79

The allegories

Like Chinese reverse glass paintings in general, those featuring beautiful women often go in pairs and frequently depict binary themes, with opposing or complementary allegories. 77 We have already seen the interior-exterior and winter-summer oppositions. But there are others, dealt with below, such as old age-youth, which is a frequent opposition in the pictures of beautiful women, as it is in the exterior scenes we saw in page 40, featuring the young married woman-unmarried married girl duality.

- Old age-youth

This pair of paintings, in Illustrations 30 and 31, belonged to the British Royal Collection; they have been described by Granville 78 and named The Voice of Age, The Voice of Youth.

In a river landscape, a young woman with a straw hat is watching an old man with a long white beard who is seated next to her holding a fishing rod in his hand. Wearing a plaited muslin dress, she is holding a flower. A few ducks are swimming on the water in the foreground. The paintings numbered 111 and 112 in the corpus show an identical scene.

The Voice of Youth: In a river landscape, a young woman is dressed like the one in The Voice of Age but is wearing her hair in Manchu style. She is listening to a child wearing a straw hat, who is sitting next to her playing the flute. Painting no. 113 of the corpus shows a similar scene but with the addition of a man, who observes the situation from behind a tree with a falcon perched on his hand. This scene of a young woman listening to a child playing the pipe is also depicted in paintings 114, 120, 167, 168 and 169 of the corpus.

The allegory of music-poetry can perhaps be added to the old age-youth allegory that is undeniably present, with music represented by the pipe player and poetry by the woman with the flower.

In these works, we also see the appearance of female clothing that is no longer as modest as in the early pictures of the beautiful Xiang Fei. The top of the silk muslin dress fits tightly around the young woman’s bust, showing evidence of a Western influence. This item of clothing was to prove very popular in nineteenth-century reverse glass paintings of courtesans, enabling the painter to depict them both dressed and partially undressed, by taking advantage of the fabric’s transparency.

- Young married woman-unmarried girl

Several paintings, in pairs numbered 157-158, 179-180, 181-182, 193-194 and 210-211 of the corpus, or in the same painting in nos. 165 and 170, indicate the opposition between young married woman and unmarried girl by way of their hairstyles. 79 One of the most striking of these is the pair in Illustration 32a and 32b.

In the first painting, a young woman with Manchu-style hair, wearing a blue silk dress with a fur-edged collar, is seated on a veranda that opens onto the outside world thanks to the undressed blue curtain. She holds a flower in her hand and a fan box is open on the table in front of her. A landscape picture is on the wall.

In the second painting, the young woman with her hair dressed like the one in The Voice of Age but wearing her hair in Manchu style, is seated at a table with a high-back chair in front of a curtain. She holds a fan and wears a fur-edged robe. A small basket is set on the table in front of her. A landscape picture is on the wall.

66. Xiang Fei was also known by this name, since her skin was said to be wonderfully fragrant.

77. Which are not unlike ‘parallel sentences’, a series of vertical characters which, in China, are hung in pairs on the walls of houses, restaurants or offices.


The setting in the second picture is almost identical. A young girl wearing a light dress and a simple chignon is sitting at a table holding a flower in her hand. Taking into account the clothes they are wearing, with a fur collar for the young woman and a picture on the wall that seems to be a winter landscape, the winter-summer opposition could perhaps be added to that of young married woman-unmarried girl.

The pair numbered 210-211, which is perhaps more recent than the period of 1720-1820 that is being studied here, has been included in the corpus because it has the particular feature of being on two separate planes—a reverse glass painting that does not cover all the glass, and has a sheet of painted paper half a centimetre behind it. This gives the whole painting a pleasing impression of relief.

Tales and legends

We have already seen that Chinese reverse glass painters were happy to take their inspiration from scenes in legends, or stories that had become legends, especially those linked to beautiful concubines. These included Xiang Fei and her European costumes, Yang Guifei and the lychees brought from the southern reaches of the empire by order of her imperial lover, Xuanzong (reigned 712-756). Illustration 33; the play of The Pipa Player; and Tales of the Butterfly.

We should also note the presence of the Taoist Immortal Lan Caihe whose symbol, the basket of flowers with a tall handle, often accompanies Xiang Fei, but not her alone. No. 147 in the corpus, one of a pair, shows her in one of her most famous adventures, crossing the sea on a raft. Her basket and bottle are on the front of the raft. Although there is no doubt about the meaning of this particular scene, I have not been able to establish the meaning of its pendant, no. 146 in the corpus, which shows a young woman fishing on a riverbank. This is all the more regrettable since two other paintings in the corpus, nos. 148 and 149, represent the same scene of a young woman standing, with her weight on one leg, holding a fishing rod on a riverbank.

Although there must have been a substantial number of these works, gaining access to them today is somewhat difficult because of their relatively private nature: collectors rarely offer them for sale and museums are wary of buying them. Consequently, my corpus includes only a few photos of works—nos. 206 to 209—which are more risqué than outright erotic. This is the case with the pair featuring a young woman mounting a horse in the first painting and a buffalo in the second (pairs 141-142 and 143-144 of the corpus). Certainly, in one of the two paintings, a young man with a pipa in his case is near her, whereas in the second it is an old man who speaks to her, leading me to think that the pair symbolizes old age-youth. As for the animals, the buffalo is traditionally ridden by the sage Laozi, who is a man, and the horsewoman is slightly reminiscent of the art of painting as it was practised in the long period, echoing an eighth-century painting by Zhang Xuan (713-755).

Courtesans

The theme of racy or erotic paintings was commonplace in the eighteenth century, in China as well as in the West. And Chinese reverse glass painting certainly did not neglect this genre, as can be seen from the strong condemnations by Jesuits: ‘The Chinese have succeeded only too well in following the examples they were given, and painting cynical and loathsome filth on both large and small mirrors.’ So wrote Pierre-Martial Cibot, a missionary in Peking.

Moreover, this type of painting was quite well suited to the buying public, which was largely composed of sailors who were out for a good time. Although there must have been a substantial number of these works, gaining access to them today is somewhat difficult because of their relatively private nature: collectors rarely offer them for sale and museums are wary of buying them. Consequently, my corpus includes only a few photos of works—nos. 206 to 209—which are more risqué than outright erotic. The main interest of these paintings is the play on transparency in some of them—the transparency of net curtains and the different layers of the young women’s dresses show evidence of great virtuosity on the part of the Chinese painters. They must in fact have painted these layers using very thin coats of paint and ‘standing back,’ since the final picture is looked at through the glass.

The paintings in Illustrations 34a and 34b are good examples of this category of paintings and of the skill they show in the rendering of transparency. In Illustration 34a, a young woman in a light dress of blue muslin, cut low under the arms, is lying on a bed with her arms resting on a stool. Beside her, a wide window with a climbing vine creeping across it lets in the light and gives bright backlighting to the scene, which we see through a pink voile curtain. Beside

80. E-mail conversation with D. Elisseeff.
The Artworks

There is a fan, which is also transparent. A bell of resounding stone in the shape of a fish occupies the right foreground. The second painting, in Illustration 34b, also belongs to the series of four paintings of courtisans in the Lady Lever Gallery. It too depicts a courtisan in her bedroom but the play on transparency focuses only on the contours of her pretty little breasts.

The frames of these paintings are Chinese and both are identical, made of gilded wood with a series of symbols. In addition to the Chinese character shòu, meaning longevity, and the bat, which is a homonym of the word Fu for happiness, we can make out the attributes of Taoist immortals: Cao Guojiu’s bamboo castanets, Han Xiangzi’s flute, Li Tieguai’s gourd and Lan Caihe’s basket of flowers. So even in their most realistic paintings with the most lightweight subject matter, Chinese painters did not miss the opportunity to portray their beloved symbols and to show abundant evidence of their technical skill.

Notable accessories

- The four arts of the scholar?

The depiction of the scholar, whose four arts were music (the cithara), games (the game of Go), literary culture (books), and painting or calligraphy (the brush), is commonplace in Chinese pictorial tradition. It is rather remarkable to see that reverse glass painting associates these arts with women. Thus we see young women engaged in activities related to music, in nos. 119, 129, 166 and 180 of the corpus, without counting the pipa players previously mentioned in the chapter dealing with outdoor scenes; books, in nos. 160, 161, 162, 163 and 207 of the same corpus; and calligraphy, in no. 199 of the same corpus.

In a painting belonging to the fine series at Saltram House, seen in Illustration 35, two young women are seated on a rock at the foot of a tree on a riverbank in a rocky landscape. One is holding an open book in front of them, while a golden pheasant is pecking away by their feet and a couple of ducks are swimming on the water in the midst of lotuses. This scene is reproduced almost identically in the paintings numbered 160 and 162 in the corpus.

The painting in Illustration 36a is a very typical example of the calligrapher’s activity. In a room with an open window, an elegantly dressed young girl is standing before a table with a brush in her hand. Her calligraphy tools are spread out on the table while, at her feet, a —
pair of pigeons are pecking one other. This painting’s composition and the young woman’s pose are not unlike one of the twelve beauties in Yongzheng’s Seven of Twelve Beauties (Illustration 36a), paintings that the Emperor Yongzheng (1723–1736) commissioned in 1709 while he was still crown prince.

Contrary to what the objects surrounding these young women might lead us to think, they by no means signify that they are scholars in the Chinese sense of the word. There is no way in which these paintings recall those portraying historical or legendary poetesses, which were painted up until the Song dynasty. Neither do they show that women had attained the status of scholar. This is the eighteenth century, and these objects mean only that the beautiful woman portrayed is not an acknowledged wife, who would have other activities, more serious and virtuous than attending to such ‘cultural’ occupations. Sometimes, the most scholarly (of these beautiful women who live in beautiful houses) had their books and old paintings brought to them, or gave themselves over to the abstract pleasures of calligraphy. In reverse glass painting, these objects probably did not even mean the

82. Guangming Daily website: GMW Guangming online.
84. Elisseeff, Danielle, 1988, 345.
85. Cf. no. 207, page 194 in the corpus.
86. Benedict, Carol, 2011.
87. The study of these objects is outside the scope of this book, although some of them are made of painted glass.

Pipe smoking
There are many reverse glass paintings in the corpus where we see a young aristocratic woman holding a long pipe in her hand. Contrary to what is often written in the West, its shape reveals that it is a tobacco pipe and not an opium pipe. The presence of a pipe, even a tobacco pipe, in the hand of a pretty young woman was probably considered exotic by eighteenth-century Europeans. Tobacco smoking in long pipes was a very widespread practice in all social classes of the Chinese population in the eighteenth century, and those in high society were only distinguished from the common people by the quality, price and varieties of pipes and tobaccos they consumed. Showing a pipe in a painting intended for the Chinese or European aristocracy was therefore not a sign that its holder belonged to this elite. Furthermore, eighteenth-century Chinese fashion was gradually moving towards snuff-taking, thus producing the delightful snuff boxes that were to prove very popular among Chinese high society and subsequently among collectors throughout the world. Tobacco consumption in China did, however, have a distinctive feature that perhaps explains why women were to be seen holding pipes in reverse glass paintings: in this respect women were the equals of men, a fact that could not have failed to strike Westerners passing through Canton. Perhaps for this reason, the European clients of Cantonese reverse glass painters were attracted to this exotic element in women, and wished to see it depicted in the reverse glass paintings they were buying.

Portraits of Chinese dignitaries
Portraits of Westerners are by far the most frequent of Western subjects. However, portraits of Chinese people are rare in my corpus of reverse glass paintings with Chinese themes, lagging far behind birds and flowers, outdoor scenes or beautiful women.
two possible explanations for this: since the paintings in my corpus were collected in the West, this type of portrait was not much appreciated in the Western market. Such portraits were perhaps more frequent in the Chinese market but have since disappeared with the upheavals in China. Another, perhaps more likely reason, is that there was little demand for this type of work by Chinese dignitaries. Some portraits were painted without any décor, as is the case with nos. 220, 221, 222, 233 and 234 of the corpus; others—nos. 223, 224, 225, 226 and 229 of the corpus—have a veranda setting, and two—nos. 234 and 235—a water’s edge setting. Some of them form one of a pair, the other half being a portrait of a woman who is probably the man’s wife. No. 235 shows the one and only portrait of a soldier, a cavalry officer.

The mandarin depicted in the painting in Illustration 37 is Pan Qi-guan88 (1714-1788), one of the senior civil servants in Canton’s imperial administration, who was responsible for overseeing trade with the West. He was highly regarded as a negociant by the Swedish East India Company89 and gave this portrait to Nils Sahlgren (1701-1776), one of the founders of the company and its director from 1733 to 1768. It was said90 that Pan Qi-guan stayed in Sweden at Sahlgren’s invitation, but recent research91 disputes this assertion. He had a beautiful villa on Honam Island92 on the bank of the Pearl River, where he entertained foreigners passing through in grand style.93 It is not impossible that no. 221 in the corpus may also be a portrait of Pan when he was older.

Apart from the fact that the portrait is on a mirror and in a European frame, it is perfectly Chinese as regards the character’s pose, seated as he is in an official chair. He is wearing a mandarin’s winter coat, fur-lined with muff. His mandarin square showing a silver pheasant proves him to be a fifth-rank mandarin. His winter hat and coral necklace also testify to his rank. To my knowledge, this portrait is the only one representing a Chinese dignitary of known name and rank.

### Landscapes

Apart from the paintings of Canton quaysides and a few reworked Western engravings, landscapes are rarely the sole subject of Chinese reverse glass paintings. They are usually the setting for outdoor scenes or the view from the veranda of a beautiful villa. However, the reverse glass landscapes in the Beijing Imperial Palace Museum are a case apart.

### Views from the port of Canton and Whampoa anchorage

#### Canton port

Cantonese painters enjoyed making reverse glass paintings of Canton port seen from the bank of the Pearl River opposite the factories, just as they liked painting this view using gouache on paper or oil on canvas. In Illustration 38, the painting’s foreground shows the Pearl River covered with an abundant variety of ships: in addition to the commercial sampans that shuttled between Whampoa anchorage and the port, we can see the junk of important Chinese dignitaries, notably the one belonging to the Hoppo,94 and flower boats, which were pleasure crafts upon which rich Chinese came to dine in romantic company. In the middle ground are the celebrated factories, those hangars and offices of Western companies which, from being modest huts in the early eighteenth century, gradually changed into vast and comfortable buildings, the first evidence of Western architecture in China.

Looking at the national flags flying in front of the different countries’ factories normally allows paintings to be dated fairly accurately, because historians are well aware of the periods when each of these countries was present in Canton, and the designs of their flags varied over the course of the period of 1720-1860.

Thus

• Until 1789, the French flew the monarchy’s white flag; then, until 1803–1804, the flag bore a small tricoloured rectangle at the top near the mast. The flag disappeared during the revolution and the empire as France could no longer trade with China, and it was the tricolour flag that returned to Canton in 1833;

• The British flag bore the English and Scottish crosses from 1720 until 1801, the date when Ireland joined the United Kingdom and St. Patrick’s Cross was incorporated into the Union Jack;

• Sweden sent its first trading ships to the Royal Swedish Company bass in 1732;

• The Germanic Roman Empire was present from 1722 to 1731, through the intermediary of the Ostend Company, and then from 1779 to 1787;

• Denmark was present from 1772 onwards;

• The United States arrived in Canton in 1783;

• The Netherlands (United Provinces, Kingdom of the Netherlands) were present until 1830;

• Spain was not authorised to trade with China, which was a Portuguese-reserved area, but Portugal’s decline enabled the Spanish to gain a hold in Canton in the eighteenth century, via their company in the Philippines.

By linking the dates of these flags to the evolution of the factoy buildings, Carl Crossman drew up a first chronology of port views, followed by a very complete chronology by Van Dyke and Kar-Wing Mok.

• Whampoa anchorage

Western ships were obliged to stop at the entrance to the Pearl River delta, both for the reason alleged, which was the water draught, and for real, political reasons, as the Chinese government did not wish to see these heavily armed foreign ships coming too close to the city of Canton. The reverse glass paintings in Illustration 3 and nos. 241 and 242 of the corpus are views of the anchorage from the ‘French’ island to the west of the island of Whampoa. The nine-storey pagoda so often portrayed in reverse glass water’s edge landscapes is clearly visible in these, as, in the foreground, are the tombs of the many Westerners who succumbed to local diseases.

Water’s edge landscapes

Whatever their motifs, be they birds and flowers, outdoor scenes, beautiful women, or portraits of Westerners, a large percentage of the Chinese reverse glass paintings in the corpus have a setting composed of a stretch of water surrounded by hills and most often bordered by beautiful houses. In all the preceding chapters, I have given the generic name of water’s edge landscape to this setting. Chinese boats and sampans can usually be seen, but sometimes a junk or a Western boat too. The sampans depicted are pleasure boats and not commercial boats, as shown by paintings 154 to 159 in the corpus, where a young woman is gracefully lounging on one of the boats anchored at the water’s edge.

• Views of the Pearl River?

From Canton to the sea, the Pearl River between Whampoa anchorage and Canton Port has been described previously. There are many grounds for thinking that the water’s edge landscapes in reverse glass painting were largely inspired by this Pearl River delta, the following two reasons being particularly important: the similarity between the known views and descriptions of this delta and these painted landscapes; the handwritten text at the back of Mrs and Miss Revell’s portrait in Illustration 56, which says: ‘View of the river at Canton China, with portraits of Frances Revell, wife of Henri Revell, China Civil Service (for nineteen years head super-cargo to the honourable East India Company) and her eldest daughter Frances; painted about 1765.’

The depiction of the beautiful houses at the water’s edge is realistic, but probably also contains an element of fantasy. They were realistic because the rich Cantonese, particularly those trading with the West who were commissioning reverse glass paintings, did in deed possess beautiful residences, some of which were by the water. Besides this, well-known pictures of this estuary often appear, showing forts, ramparts and pagodas like those of the reverse glass painting in Illustration 20, where the background is a realistic depiction of the port of Canton.

97. Mostly of Chinese architecture but some of them can look slightly Western, particularly because of their roofs.


100. Granville Fell, H., 1933, 368.

But there is also a fantasy element, because we cannot fail to notice the similarity between these water's edge landscapes and the depictions of imperial country houses with numerous waterside pavilions, where the rulers came to relax and escape the stifling heat of the Peking summer.

Among all these water's edge landscapes forming a background, it is possible to distinguish several categories whose differences are due to the period in which they were painted as well as to the picture's main subject and the painter's technique.

Rudimentary depictions
When the subject is a close-up portrait of a Westerner or a Chinese person, the background landscape is merely complementary: it is more modest, and depicted in a fairly rudimentary way. This is the case with most portraits of Westerners, like for example the one of John Pike in Illustration 44, where the landscape is nothing more than a simple narrow water channel bordered by trees with two buildings in the distance, one of which might be a fort, or those by the painter Spoilum, who appears to have had two exemplars of water's edge landscapes that he used at will, or probably according to the will of the person commissioning the painting. These were a stretch of water with a hill topped by the nine-storey pagoda in the background—nos. 286 to 290 in the corpus—or a river seen from above with a Western or Chinese ship on it—nos. 293 to 299 in the corpus. In the backgrounds of some portraits of Western naval officers, the water's edge landscape looks as if it has a canal with a Western ship sailing on it, whose flag allows us to determine the officer's nationality and sometimes the period when the picture was painted. When the figures or animals are not painted close up, with a décor behind them, but are instead an integral part of a setting in which the landscape is an important element, the landscapes themselves are much more elaborate.

More elaborate depictions
More elaborate water's edge landscapes are to be found in the large mirrors of the 1780s, as backgrounds to outdoor scenes with a few pictures of birds, as in Illustration 39. Two vertical garlands of flowers and birds are often seen climbing up each side of the landscape. There also appear to be certain associations between the scene taking place in the foreground and the background landscape. The clearest of these associations is in the paintings of outdoor scenes with an allegory of music,102 where a young woman is playing the pipa for a prince seated at her side, while the landscape depicts palaces in a hill setting, as, for example, in nos. 43, 47 and 49 of the corpus.

The use of Western perspective
Although the subjects of water's edge landscapes in reverse glass paintings are Chinese, the painting methods frequently include the Western convention of linear perspective, which may be more or less well executed and more or less linked to Chinese conventions of landscape representation. Western perspective was introduced into China by Jesuit painters and reached Canton by means of several different routes, such, for example, as the translation into Chinese of the manual Perspective Pictorum et Architectorum by Andrea Pozzo, or copies of Court pictures that used this convention, or, again, the porcelain painting practised at Jingdezhen. In the early eighteenth century, around 1713, the Jesuit Matteo Ripa (1682-1746)103 introduced copper engraving to China, and Emperor Kangxi entrusted him with engraving the views from his summer palace at Jehol. As well as the copper, which was a new medium for engraving in China, one of the distinctive features of these images was the use of Western perspective, not applied fully but cleverly combined by Ripa with Chinese methods of portraying distance. The emperor liked these works so much that he had them printed in large numbers, and some of these prints reached Canton, where they were able to influence the reverse glass painters working in that city. Like Matteo Ripa, they were happy to use a clever combination of Western perspective, with a vanishing point in front of the viewer, together with Chinese conventions like a downward view seen from a high point rather than from ground level.

Dream landscapes
At the very end of the 18th century (dating from the frame) appear very particular and beautiful landscapes, which I call "dream landscapes". Illustrations 40 and no 247 of the corpus. The very refined blue gradients in the distance, and the delicate reflections in the water could be reminiscent of traditional Chinese paintings in India ink. When they are the background of a portrait, they could call to mind aerial perspective in landscapes paintings of the Renaissance.

103. New visions at the Ch'ing Court, undated, 30.
Reverse glass paintings of landscapes in the Imperial Palace collection

There are only two pairs of reverse glass paintings in the Beijing Imperial Palace collection that I have been able to examine as photos. One shows two European country houses surrounded by water and has no Chinese element in it apart from its frame, which is a Chinese table screen. Its flag indicates that the small boat in the foreground belonged to the British East India Company. According to the author of the exhibition catalogue written when these works were shown abroad for the first time, it was the presence of the mirror in reverse glass paintings that is thought to have attracted the emperor, because it allowed him, through his reflection in the mirror, to enter into this exotic landscape and thus satisfy his fondness for illusion. The other painting shows two landscapes with a combination of both Chinese and European elements. The setting of steep rocky hills along a river is Chinese, as, on the whole, is the perspective. The buildings are European with the exception of a pagoda. The ships are flying the flag of the British East India Company while the figures include merchants and sailors from the company, but also Chinese porters with their baskets on poles. This pair is thought to have been among the works offered to the imperial court by a dignitary from the province of Guangdong. Because of their references to the British East India Company, as well as their motifs, these paintings could not have been among the works painted at court by Jesuits or Chinese artists in the imperial reverse glass painting workshop. They were painted in Canton and probably given to the court. They are nevertheless of interest because they allow us to appreciate the court’s taste at this time for a certain type of reverse glass painting that was not produced in its workshops.

Finally, the magnificent work in Illustration 41, which impresses due to its size but especially due to the fascinating expertise shown in the reverse glass painting technique, may have belonged to a prominent court dignitary and perhaps been painted in the court workshop. It depicts an estuary bordered by Western-type houses, on which several fine-looking Western ships are sailing. One of them, which displays a French royal flag (white) with the city of Marseille’s coat of arms, is sending a cannon salute. A few Westerners are watching the spectacle from the bank, while a couple seated on the grass are talking to each other.

Some other landscapes

This section includes four landscapes that more or less skillfully combine Chinese and European elements: nos. 244, 245, 246 and 247 in the corpus.

Other Chinese motifs

This chapter includes themes that occupy a minor place in my corpus, and deal with life in Chinese society: ceremonies and feasts, agriculture and craftsmanship, musicians and still lifes.

Ceremonies and feasts

The Audience with the Emperor, in Illustration 42, is the largest known Chinese reverse glass painting (115.6 x 190.5 cm). It shows the imperial Chinese custom that Westerners had the utmost difficulty in accepting: strangers had to greet the emperor by falling to their knees and bowing. This is the largest reverse glass painting that I have been able to examine as a photo.

104. Berlin, Nancy, plate 52, 175.
106. The British flag on the ships only enables us to date these works to sometime before 1800.
knees with their forehead touching the ground, which was known as 'kowtowing.' Although visitors who were merchants or representa-
tives of foreign companies had no hesitation in observing this mark of respect, Western ambassadors, especially the British ambassador, Ma-
cartney, refused to perform the action and thereby make their country appear like a vassal of China. This painting was commissioned by Ri-
chard Hall (1764-1834), an British East India Company supercargo who was in post at Canton from 1785 to 1802. Soon after his return to
England, in 1803, he sent two large panes of glass to Canton to be painted with a court scene, one showing the emperor and the other the empress. This pair remained in his London residence until his death in 1834. It was bequeathed to the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1836 by his great-grandchildren, Amy and John Hall.

Paintings 256, 257 and 258 in the corpus describe other impe-
rial occasions, while nos. 259 to 263 have ceremonies and feasts as their subject.

Agriculture and craftsmanship

In order to ‘see’ China and make it known elsewhere, Western visitors to the Middle Kingdom commissioned Chinese artists to depict as-
pects of life in this society, particularly crafts linked to the products of which Europe was so fond (tea, silk, and so on). Most of these pictures were gouaches on paper known as ‘rice paper,’ but some of them were reverse glass paintings, such as nos. 264 to 267 in the cor-
pus, where the breeding of silkworms and silk spinning are depicted. Illustration 43, as well as tea-growing and pottery. William Cham-
bers (1726-1796), who was then a supercargo with the Swedish East India Company, commissioned a series of reverse glass paintings de-
picting Chinese costumes from a Cantonese painter.107

Young musicians

In several reverse glass paintings, including a beautiful series of twelve in the Drottningholm Chinese pavilion, a young woman is
playing a musical instrument. The scene is without décor and there is a different instrument in each painting; it is rather like an elegant encyclopedia of Chinese instruments for a Western public (nos. 268, 269 and 270).

Still lifes

This type of painting, nos. 271, 272 and some parts of nos. 273, 274
and 276 in the corpus, is quite rare in traditional Chinese painting, as it is in reverse glass painting.

Multiple mirrors

Overmantel mirrors

In Sweden, in the years 1750-1770, and in Great Britain in the period 1760-1785, overmantel mirrors with rococo frames were very fashion-
able ornamentalizations for elegant aristocratic houses. They were in fact composed of several mirrors, some of them painted in China. My corpus contains four of these—nos. 273 to 276—on which the painted motifs are all Chinese.

As these multiple mirrors played an important part in establish-
ning workshops in Canton, there is a detailed study of them page 117.

Glass-fronted wardrobe with multiple mirrors

Amongst the beautiful wardrobes made of padauk108 in eighteenth-
century Canton, some had glass doors composed of several painted mirrors. No. 277 in the corpus is especially remarkable for the refinement and elegance of its paintings. On it are the Chinese motifs already described within Chapter II, pages 35-82, including birds and flowers, water’s edge landscapes—including a view of one of the forts (probably the one called French Folly on the Pearl River in front of Canton)—, and two portraits of a pair of dignitaries in the centre of the windows.


108. Its scientific name is Pterocarpus. It is a dark red wood.
Portraits of Westerners

This chapter is devoted to studying reverse glass portraits of Westerners, with the exception of portraits that are merely transpositions of Western engravings. These are analysed within pages 98-102.

This category of Chinese reverse glass paintings covers a vast period and contains the greatest number of works that can be dated to those of her husband's portrait.

We can learn several things from studying this pair of paintings:

— Drawing

The test at the back of John Pike's picture is sufficiently precise about its successive owners for us to have no doubt about its origin and the fact that it is indeed John Pike, one of the Swedish East India Company's first supercargoes, and the accompanying portrait is of his wife. He was the second supercargo of the Fridericus Rex Sueciae, the first ship of this company to go to China in 1727.110 He made three other voyages as a supercargo from 1727 to 1745, and died in 1751. These portraits were most probably painted during one of his stays in Canton, which means around 1740. A close examination of the frame enables us to deduce that its rectangular part was made in China because it is fixed with bolts, whereas the pediment was added in Europe. This type of pediment, an English shape of the George II period,111 was eagerly adopted by mid-eighteenth century Scandinavians craftsmen, thus confirming its date.

Painted around 1740, this portrait is therefore the oldest Chinese reverse glass painting in the corpus that can be dated with certainty.

— Western influence

The figure: John Pike's pose is completely Western. A Chinese painter of the Qing period would usually have captured the model full-face, seated if he was a dignitary and, if he was standing, he would certainly not have had one leg in front of the other; this position was characteristic of eighteenth-century European portraits showing a person standing. The face is slightly turned to one side, which is not very Chinese, and the few shadows on it are evidence of a Western influence. As for Mrs Pike, her diadème and her hair, which is partly falling loose, are a world apart from the traditional depiction of Chinese women, who had to be covered up to their necks and with their hair carefully arranged, usually in a chignon. The face and body have therefore neither been painted in the Chinese style nor from life, since Mrs Pike never went to China. These pictures were painted from Western models, probably using a miniature for the face and an etching or miniature for the body. This technique was not original; the Chinese painters of Canton who worked on porcelain were also familiar with reproductions of Western paintings and engravings. It is not out of the question that the clothes may have been shown on the advice of John Pike himself, when he was in Canton. We can see on Mrs Pike's portrait that the painting of the gaze, the lace and the fan, although it does not reach the astounding levels of artistry of 1770-1880, is nevertheless amazing for painters who had probably been practicing this skill for only a short time.

— The setting

In the setting of these portraits we can distinguish:

— The flower-filled foreground with the little dog for John Pike; phoebus and little dog for Mrs Pike

— A middle ground with a table and objects placed on it for both paintings and, for Mrs Pike, a curious décor showing a marble portico with a curtain hanging over one side of it, and blue and white tiles below;

— A third ground with a flowering tree and birds perched on it in both pictures;

— The background composed of a mirror evoking the sky in both pictures, and a water's edge landscape in John Pike's picture.

— The foreground

The white flowers in the foreground of John Pike's picture are probably narcissi, symbols of happiness and longevity. The birds are golden phœbes, but the small dogs with the brown coat in John Pike's picture and white coat in Mrs Pike's are not the little Pekineses seen in so many nineteenth-century Chinese reverse glass paintings. These dogs could well be continental toy spaniels, a breed that was very much in favour with Western gentlemen who wanted the dogs to accompany them in their portraits, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, small dogs as accompaniments to individuals are not totally absent from Chinese painting112, notably in the tenth century. Finally, since the brown dog bears some similarity to the one painted in 1727 by the Jesuit painter Giuseppe Castiglione at the Chinese emperor's court,113 it could be a Manchu breed. This little animal brings up a point raised several times in the course of this study, namely the relationship between the emperor's court painting, particularly that of the European Jesuit painters, and the reverse glass paintings that developed in mid-eighteenth century Canton.

— The middle ground

A carved white marble table, whose shape and motifs are Chinese, is present in both paintings. In John Pike's there are books on it, with bindings testifying that they are European, and also a dish of fruit. Among the fruits are several Buddha's hands, a Chinese fruit symbolizing prosperity. There are grapes too, and what could be pears, a fruit symbolizing longevity. In Mrs Pike's picture, the table is adorned with a basket of fruit and a bouquet of flowers. The fruits are Chinese: we can see a pomegranate and a pears. The flowers are pomegranates, a favoured flower in China, which is present in all aspects of the country's iconography. The vase, however, has a European shape, although it could have been made in China and intended for export.

The portico occupying the right-hand side of Mrs Pike's portrait is rather strange and perhaps clumsy. It is made of the same stone and has the same type of decoration as the table. At its base is some blue and white tiling reminiscent of seventeenth-century Delft tiles or the Portuguese ceramic tiles called azulejos, which were no doubt to be found in Macao. We can make out a box and two large bowls resting on the portico's frame, revealing that it is not flat but deep. It is an eighteenth-century stone decorated with tiles, like those made in Northern Europe, particularly Sweden, in the early eighteenth century? A blue curtain covers the right-hand side of the picture, as was common in European seventeenth- and eighteenth-century portraits.

— The third ground

Two flowering trees, apparently of the same variety, are near the sitters, one on the right of John Pike and the other on Mrs Pike's left. The flowers are those of a fragrant olive, a southern Chinese tree that often accompanies the scholar and whose beautiful autumn blossom is associated with the moon, according to Taoist legend. The foliage is much less realistic, looking more like the leaves of a pine, 111. Elisseef, D, 2010, 302 and 303 and E. Lesbre, La Peinture chinoise 107, 108, 112 and 117.

113. New work at the Clovis Court, untitled.

Swedish portraits

• Portraits of Mr and Mrs John Pike

The portrait in Illustration 44 shows a three-quarter view of a man standing near a Chinese table in front of a waterside landscape. He is wearing a long wig, a fashion that was abandoned in Europe around the end of the seventeenth century. This type of wig is rather strange and perhaps clumsy. It is made of the same stone as the Chinese emperor's court,115 it could be a Manchu breed. This little animal brings up a point raised several times in the course of this study, namely the relationship between the emperor's court painting, particularly that of the European Jesuit painters, and the reverse glass paintings that developed in mid-eighteenth century Canton.

The figures:

The glass is bevelled and the frame, in black lacquered wood with gold leaf decoration, is rather strange and perhaps clumsy. It is made of the same stone and has the same type of decoration as the table. At its base is some blue and white tiling reminiscent of seventeenth-century Delft tiles or the Portuguese ceramic tiles called azulejos, which were no doubt to be found in Macao. We can make out a box and two large bowls resting on the portico's frame, revealing that it is not flat but deep. It is an eighteenth-century stone decorated with tiles, like those made in Northern Europe, particularly Sweden, in the early eighteenth century?

A blue curtain covers the right-hand side of the picture, as was common in European seventeenth- and eighteenth-century portraits.

— The flower-filled foreground with the little dog for John Pike; phoebus and little dog for Mrs Pike

— A middle ground with a table and objects placed on it for both paintings and, for Mrs Pike, a curious décor showing a marble portico with a curtain hanging over one side of it, and blue and white tiles below;

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— The background composed of a mirror evoking the sky in both pictures, and a water's edge landscape in John Pike's picture.

— The foreground

The white flowers in the foreground of John Pike's picture are probably narcissi, symbols of happiness and longevity. The birds are golden phœbes, but the small dogs with the brown coat in John Pike's picture and white coat in Mrs Pike's are not the little Pekineses seen in so many nineteenth-century Chinese reverse glass paintings. These dogs could well be continental toy spaniels, a breed that was very much in favour with Western gentlemen who wanted the dogs to accompany them in their portraits, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, small dogs as accompaniments to individuals are not totally absent from Chinese painting,112 notably in the tenth century. Finally, since the brown dog bears some similarity to the one painted in 1727 by the Jesuit painter Giuseppe Castiglione at the Chinese emperor's court,113 it could be a Manchu breed. This little animal brings up a point raised several times in the course of this study, namely the relationship between the emperor's court painting, particularly that of the European Jesuit painters, and the reverse glass paintings that developed in mid-eighteenth century Canton.
the tree most often seen in Chinese reverse glass painting. I have not been able to explain the curious height of the branch at the level of John Pike’s face. There are several bird varieties visible in these trees: as well as pheasants, we can make out doves and a lory bird.

— The background.

In the background is a lake surrounded by trees, and on its right-hand edge we can see two, apparently fortified, square towers in the distance. They are reminiscent of European fortified castles or Chinese forts like those on the Great Wall. As previously indicated, the water’s edge landscape is specifically dealt with in pages 74-80.

— In conclusion

In around 1740, then, the supercargo John Pike commissioned his reverse glass portrait from a Chinese painter in Canton. The painter based his figure on the miniatures or engravings that Pike passed to him and the advice he gave him, and then, using his own inspiration, invented a Chinese setting, embracing both realistic and symbolic. John Pike thus became a high-ranking scholar to whom was wished long life and prosperity.

• The Beyer family portraits

Gothenburg city museum has in its collections a reverse glass portrait of the supercargo Gabriel Fredrik Beyer (1705-1782), which can be seen in Illustration 48. A study of his life has been made by Lars-Olof Lööf.118 It seems likely that the portrait was painted during one of the supercargo’s stays in Canton, between 1745 and 1765.119 It differs considerably from the portrait of John Pike, who was his predecessor in the office of supercargo for the Swedish East India Company. Beyer is painted head-and-shoulders rather than as a full standing portrait, the only decor being a mirror, and he is wearing the simple working clothes of a supercargo. Since his first two voyages were as a second supercargo and the three subsequent ones as a first, this portrait probably dates from his period as a second, otherwise he would not doubt, like John Pike, have chosen a more flattering outfit. If this hypothesis is sound, the picture would date from 1745 or 1746. The frame is Swedish.

In the same museum is a pair of portraits, nos. 281 and 282 in the corpus, depicting the supercargo Anders Gadd (1721-1767) and his wife Magdalena (1734-1803), who is none other than Beyer’s daughter. From 1746 to 1759, Anders Gadd went several times to China as well as supercargo and founder of the Swedish East India Company, he was very well liked by the king, who bestowed the kingdom’s highest titles and decorations upon him. He was also admired by the queen, and we know that she gave him a snuff box as a token of friendship. Colin Campbell died in 1757. As for the portraits of Beyer and Gadd, the royal couple did not choose to have their portraits painted in a Chinese or Sino-Swedish setting.

• Portraits of the Swedish royal family

The Stockholm Nordiska Museet has in its collections two large reverse glass paintings depicting King Adolf Fredrik (1710-1771), seen in Illustration 47, and his wife Queen Lovisa Ulrika (1720-1782), No. 104 in the corpus. The king is wearing shining black armour with, across his chest, the sash of the Order of the Seraphim. We can also see a fur cape hanging from the small of his back. The frame is made of gilded wood with a garland, with the royal crown sitting on top of it. According to Wirgin120 the frame is by Carl Harleman and the Chinese painter took a portrait of Lorenz Pasch the Younger as his model. Wirgin adds that this portrait was probably painted shortly after Adolf Fredrik became king in 1751. ‘I have searched for this model, but without success.’

Lovisa Ulrika’s portrait is the same size, with exactly the same kind of frame, but the glass is unfortunately broken. The queen appears in ceremonial dress and, like her husband, on a mirror background. Wirgin says: “There was a portrait of Queen Lovisa Ulrika, painted after a portrait of Antoine Pesne. I have in fact been able to trace this original portrait showing Lovisa Ulrika in what may be her wedding dress, in 1744.” It is tricky to date these paintings if we are to accept Wirgin’s two assertions that the frame is by Carl Harleman and the paintings were executed shortly after the king was crowned, in 1751. Harleman died in 1753, which was two years after the coronation. This would mean that Pesne’s portraits would have to have been painted after 1751, their copies made and then sent to China, where they would have been transposed on to mirrors, returned to Europe and finally put in a frame made by Harleman. Knowing that a return journey on board the company’s ships lasted a year and a half, this would mean that Pasch, born in 1733, would have to have painted his picture at the age of seventeen.

In an attempt to resolve these contradictions, I would add two factors:

— Who might have suggested that the king and his wife have their reverse glass portraits painted if not a supercargo who was very familiar with this type of painting and close to the royal couple? Colin Campbell was probably this intermediary. A supercargo and founder of the Swedish East India Company, he was very well liked by the king, who bestowed the kingdom’s highest titles and decorations upon him. He was also admired by the queen, and we know that she gave him a small box as a token of friendship. Colin Campbell died in 1757.

— Two of the company ships bore the names of the royal couple: the Kronprinses Lovisa Ulrika, whose first voyage to China was in 1748, and Kronprins Adolf Fredrik, which made its first journey there in mid-1749. To me, it makes sense that, on Campbell’s instructions, it was one of these vessels that transported two beautiful mirrors and copies of the crown prince’s and his wife’s portraits, in order to have them painted in China. All these facts point to the reasonable deduction that these two magnificent portraits were executed between 1748 and 1757, and the frames made to measure by Harleman before the reverse glass paintings returned from Canton.

As for the portraits of Beyer and Gadd, the royal couple did not choose to have their portraits painted in a Chinese or Sino-Swedish setting.

118. Idem, 178 to 180.
120. Lööf, Lars-Olof, 2000, 144 to 149.
115. Lööf, Lars-Olof, 2000, 144 to 149.
• Colin Campbell’s portrait?

We know that in Richard Milhender’s collection there is a portrait, in Illustration 48, which Crossman described for the first time120 under the title Undifferentiated Englishman in a Landscape. He dates the wig and clothing from the years 1749 to 1750, and identifies them as belonging to an English dignitary. We note the bowl of fruit, the bouquet of flowers in a vase and the water’s edge landscape, which are similar to those in the Pike couple’s portraits. In fact the dimensions of the glass are identical. By contrast, the chair, table and frame are Western, not Chinese. But the veranda setting with a red pillar and a curtain hooked up by a cord with a tassel is frequent in Chinese reverse glass paintings. Since Swedish supercargos were the first to commission their reverse glass portraits in Canton, it seems possible that this painting is of a Swedish supercargo. The hypothesis is not negated by the English attire worn by this dignitary, because many of the Swedish company’s first supercargos came from the British Isles, having been recruited when the Ostend Company that employed them had to close its doors. We should also note this English dignitary’s resemblance to Colin Campbell—the most famous of the Swedish supercargos and one of the Swedish company’s founders—in the portrait of him by Johan Joacim Sträng, painted in 1756 (Illustration 49): there is the same elongated face, the same rather long straight nose, the same delicate mouth, the same rather long straight nose, the same delicate mouth, the same little round, prominent chin and, what is more, the same wig, the same scarf around the neck and the same red jacket.

I therefore suggest that Crossman’s Undifferentiated Englishman is Colin Campbell, one of the great eighteenth-century heroes of Sino-European relations.

Portraits by the painter Spoilum

In Europe, the vast majority of eighteenth-century reverse glass paintings were anonymous, but the few known exceptions are often of remarkable quality. The new reverse glass painting that appeared in China at this time was no exception to the rule and, among the reverse glass paintings whose names have come down to us, the most famous is the one known to Westerners as Spoilum. The reverse glass paintings in this corpus that may have been executed by Spoilum are studied in detail in “The painter Spoilum’s workshop,” page 127.

Portraits of the Van Braam family

Andreas Everardus van Braam Houckgeest (1739–1801) was a notable eighteenth-century European trader with China. A supercargo with the Dutch East India Company, the famous VOC, he had many long stays in China between 1758 and 1773, before returning to the Netherlands, having made his fortune. Fascinated by the newly independent United States, he decided to emigrate there in 1783 and adopt American nationality. But, being unsuccessful in business and affected by the deaths of several of his children, he had to return to Canton in 1790 as a VOC representative and be part of the embassy to the Chinese emperor’s court in 1794, of which he provided a very full description in his journal.121 He returned to the USA in 1797, but still having little flair for business, he was forced to sell his magnificent collection of Chinese objects at Christie’s in 1799. Among the artefacts were numerous reverse glass paintings. He died ruined and forgotten in 1801. The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam was able to acquire several of these reverse glass paintings, among which were two portraits, of Andreas van Braam’s wife and daughter. Jan van Campen, a curator at the museum, has analysed these in detail, and this chapter is based on his articles.122

These two portraits are of special interest for the study of reverse glass painting because they enable us to gain a better understanding of how Chinese painters used miniatures and engravings.

• The portrait of Catharina van Braam, wife of Andreas van Braam, and of his daughter Françoise

We know the identity of the two people shown on the painting in Illustration 50, because of the words written on the back of the picture when Everarda, the elder of Andreas van Braam’s daughters, bequeathed it: “To Maria the picture containing the likeness of my mother and my sister. Seated at the foot of a tree is a woman in a long blue dress with a deep V neckline and a white shawl over her shoulders. She is holding the hand of a little girl standing by her side, who is wearing a white dress with a pink sash and holding up a flower garland with both hands. In the distance is a hilly landscape. Apart from the two faces, the rest of the painting is forgotten, etc.” The portrait of Catharina van Braam, wife of Andreas van Braam, and of her daughter Françoise

We know the identity of the two people shown on the painting in Illustration 50, because of the words written on the back of the picture when Everarda, the elder of Andreas van Braam’s daughters, bequeathed it: “To Maria the picture containing the likeness of my mother and my sister. Seated at the foot of a tree is a woman in a long blue dress with a deep V neckline and a white shawl over her shoulders. She is holding the hand of a little girl standing by her side, who is wearing a white dress with a pink sash and holding up a flower garland with both hands. In the distance is a hilly landscape. Apart from the two faces, the

121. Van Braam Houckgeest, Andreas Everardus, 1798.
122. Van Campen, Jan, 2005, and a conversation I was able to have with this curator when he allowed me access to the museum’s reserve collection to admire the Chinese reverse glass paintings.
picture has been directly transposed from a 1784 engraving by Thomas Burke (1749-1815), Lady Rushout and Her Daughter, in illustration 51. This was itself copied from the eponymous picture of 1773 by the German painter Angelika Kaufmann (1741-1807).

Both the paintings’ general composition and the clothes are like those in the engraving. But the frames are different—oval for the engraving and rectangular for the painting—as are the colours and faces. Another major difference is the size, with the reverse glass painting larger than the engraving. This shows that it was executed freehand and not by directly placing the glass over the engraving. This is also confirmed by the many small differences of detail. As for the woman’s face, there is no doubt that it belongs to Mrs van Braam; it was very probably painted from a miniature, which was perhaps itself a reverse glass painting, since VOC directors were in the habit of taking reverse glass portraits of their families with them to Asia.122

On the other hand, it seems less certain that the little girl’s portrait is a copy of a miniature of van Braam’s daughter, Françoise. This is for two reasons, one being that the face is hardly any different from the one on the engraving, and the other because van Braam could not have had on his portrait of his daughter aged four, because she was born in 1785 and van Braam left her in 1789 to go to China. And the little girl in the picture appears to be much older than four. We may well ask a final question: why did van Braam choose this engraving for his family portrait? The answer is very probably because it depicts the woman’s face, and we know how keen this man was to show that he belonged to his country’s elite.123

**Catharina van Braam’s portrait**

At the centre of the painting in illustration 52, a young woman in the form of an allegory is shown presenting a medallion, in which is a head-and-shoulders portrait of Mrs van Braam leaning with her elbows on a table, holding a letter in her hands. She is wearing a white tulle dress fastened with a black bow at the front, and a thin black ribbon around her neck. Her hair is done in a plait that is wound around the back of her head. A rich fabric, on which are placed a gold ribbon around her neck, and a thin black bow on a table, holding a letter in her hands. She is wearing a white head-and-shoulders portrait of Mrs van Braam leaning with her elbows on a table, holding a letter in her hands. She is wearing a white tulle dress fastened with a black bow at the front, and a thin black ribbon around her neck. Her hair is done in a plait that is wound around the back of her head. A rich fabric, on which are placed a gold ribbon around her neck, and a thin black bow on a table, holding a letter in her hands. She is wearing a white head-and-shoulders portrait of Mrs van Braam leaning with her elbows on a table, holding a letter in her hands. She is wearing a white tulle dress fastened with a black bow at the front, and a thin black ribbon around her neck, and a thin black bow on a table, holding a letter in her hands. She is wearing a white head-and-shoulders portrait of Mrs van Braam leaning with her elbows on a table, holding a letter in her hands. She is wearing a white head-and-shoulders portrait of Mrs van Braam leaning with her elbows on a table, holding a letter in her hands.

The part with the young woman holding the medallion is inspired by a Dutch engraving by Jacobus Houbraken, after a picture by Jan Wandelaar that depicted, in the medallion, Mr Lieve Geelvinck, the mayor of Amsterdam and director of the VOC. The allegory in this engraving is of Vigilance, which, in the reverse glass painting, is turned into an allegory of Hope, through the placing of other attributes—the anchor and censer—next to it. The portrait of this high-ranking Dutch personage was reproduced on porcelain plates and bowls, testifying to the close relationship at this period between reverse glass painters and porcelain painters in Canton. Van Campen was not able to find the engraving that the painter used as inspiration for the farewell scene: he suggests it might be Dido watching the departure of Aeneas.

Finally, he thinks that, in the medallion, only the face is painted from a miniature of Mrs van Braam, the bust being based on an engraving. In support of this theory, he mentions the existence of a Chinese reverse glass portrait in a medallion, containing an identical bust and also holding a letter, but with a different face: this is no. 316 in the corpus.

This type of composition from engravings is not unique. A piece of rosewood furniture, made in Canton during this period, is decorated inside with a mirror, whose description by Sotheby’s when it was sold leaves no room for doubt: it is the same composition, executed from engravings, but there is a mirror in place of Mrs van Braam’s portrait. According to van Campen, it is probable that the first composition, painted under glass, was done under the direction of Andreas van Braam. Subsequently, it must have been reproduced several times by the workshop which had produced the first composition.

Was that the workshop of Spoolum, as Crossman suggests? There is nothing to confirm this, and I am more inclined to favour another workshop, taking into account:

- The date it was produced (1794-1795), at a time when Spoolum appears to have chosen to paint portraits using oil on canvas.
- The fact that it was a composition from engravings and not a portrait from life.

Unfortunately for France, the business was not concluded, as the Directory government presumably refused to accept the high price of this gift.128

Other portraits of westerners
Other portraits of Westerners129 in the corpus are numbered 288 to 289, 302 to 313 and 314 to 316. We can see among them portraits of supercargos and officers who spent time in China, but also women's portraits. Unlike the men's portraits, these were not able to include elements painted from life, as women could not stay in eighteenth-century Canton. The first woman to go there, in 1804 according to H. B. Morse's chronicles,130 was Mrs Page, the wife of Captain Page. These portraits were therefore commissioned from Cantonese painters by residents or visitors, to be painted from miniatures, or perhaps engravings; they then had the pleasure in store of offering this artistic gift to the person depicted. The Chinese painters only had an image to work from of the face or head and shoulders, and they reproduced these on a mirror or added a Chinese setting, according to the commissioner's instructions. These paintings often have amazing stories attached to them, on a par with the adventure that a voyage to China represented at that time.

The portrait of Captain Joseph Huddart, no. 302 in the corpus, is one of the finest of these portraits and the one that fetched one of the highest prices at a recent auction sale. Captain Huddart (1741-1816) was a recognized geographer and invented various improvements to naval techniques. This portrait has no Chinese element other than the person who painted it who, through this work, demonstrated his remarkable mastery of Western painting methods.

The three portraits, numbered 303, 304 and 305 in the corpus, form a series that has been dispersed but which I have been able to piece together as photographs (illustrations 53, 54, 55). They tell a sad but charming story. According to family lore, Mr Lennox of Lennox Castle is said to have commissioned his portrait during one of his stays in China, around 1785. Very much in love with Miss Elizabeth Graham (1764-1820) he is thought to have commissioned her portrait too, as well as that of her twin sister, Christiane (1764-1847). 129. Which are not pure and simple transpositions of Western engravings or miniatures. 130. Mirror, Hissu R., 1926-1929.
The British East India Company archives confirm that a Henry Revell made many journeys to Canton between 1757 and 1787 and stayed there as chief supercargo from 1768 to 1787. William Hickey, who arrived in Canton in 1769, mentions Henry Revell’s presence there in his memoirs. Hickey was introduced to him and dined at his home in the company of many other guests.

Other Western motifs

Few Western motifs other than portraits and transposed engravings were painted on glass in Canton. The corpus contains a few outdoor scenes and religious themes.

Outdoor scenes

The paintings numbered 317 and 318 in the corpus reveal young women day-dreaming or playing music in front of a house and in a Sinoc-European landscape. A rather similar picture in a table screen is one of the rare reverse glass paintings in the Beijing Imperial Palace collection.133

Western paintings with religious motifs

Although the Jesuits brought numerous religious engravings to China134 and themselves painted several of these scenes in their churches, my corpus of reverse glass paintings includes only a few Christian religious scenes. It is possible that very few of these works were commissioned from Chinese reverse glass painters, since the missionaries were only in Canton temporarily. But it is equally possible that these paintings, being intended for the Chinese rather than the European market, remained in China and subsequently disappeared.

Only two religious themes are present in my corpus: the Madonna, nos. 319 and 320, and the Crucifixion, nos. 321 and 322. The Madonna in Illustration 57 is a fine example of the convergence between Western and Chinese painting. Her white dress and blue veil, her gently inclined head and hair falling loose, together with the theatrical curtain open above her, are all of European inspiration. However, her face is Chinese, her clasped hands resemble a Buddhist gesture, and in no. 320 of the corpus she is in front of a table with a bowl of fruit reminiscent of traditional Buddhist offerings. Finally, the Asian-style face appears to be very smooth, with only a hint of shadow, whereas shading is used for the folds of her clothing.

134. By way of example, in 1700 the French vessel Amphitryon brought the following etchings to Canton: Poussin’s The Seven Sacraments; Lebrun’s Battle of Alexander; Januarius; The Judgment of Solomon; The Finding of Moses and the Brazen Serpent; an Annunciation and a Saint Cecilia by Mignard; The Marriage of Moses, Moses defending the Daughters of Jethro, a figure of Christ and four different landscapes by Poussin, and a portrait of the King. According to the Dictionnaire universel du Commerce by Savary des Brûlons. Paris, 1750. Volume IV: 258.
We have seen in the preceding chapters that Chinese reverse glass painters frequently used Western engravings or miniatures, especially for portraits of Westerners. They worked by transposing on to glass the faces and/or bodies of the figures in the engravings or miniatures. They then completed the figure or figures and added a setting, often a water’s edge landscape,133 using the unpainted part of the mirror if they decided to do this.

There is another, far larger, category of reverse glass paintings. This consists of Western art works—engravings, miniatures or pictures—directly transposed on to glass without the design being altered, at least not deliberately, since slips and errors cannot be ruled out. The painter’s sole contribution, besides his technique, was the choice of colours when the original engraving was uncoloured.

The corpus contains 110 paintings belonging to this category, nos. 323 to 432.

**Rural and mythological scenes**

Late eighteenth-century Chinese reverse glass painting was marked by the popularity of scenes from Greek mythology, which gave it licence to depict charming female nudes and rural scenes in which delightful young country girls, preferably shepherdesses, gracefully accepted tributes from young men. In portraying such scenes, the Cantonese painters were merely transposing on to glass the pictures that had been so successful in Europe and the United States, and reproduced in engravings for wider distribution.

Among the Western painters recognised for this genre, the one most frequently transposed on to glass was unquestionably François Boucher (1730-1791), through the intermediary of engravings by René Guillard (1719-1770) and Louis Simon Lemperreur (1728-1807). L’agréable leçon [58], was engraved by Guillard from Boucher’s painting. A large apprêtement à un berger à jouer de la flûte.134 It was Boucher’s most frequently transposed work, and the Chinese painter’s very soft, satin-smooth technique was perfect for rendering the way the artist depicted women’s skin. These paintings were often combined with another of Boucher’s works to make a pair: nos. 323-324, 327-333 and 329-330 in the corpus (the last pair being part of the van Braam collection135) can be dated to around 1780-1800.

In the mythological scenes, the Chinese show proof of their ability to adapt to styles as different as Boucher (nos. 322 to 332 and 329 to 333 in the corpus), Paolo Pagnani (1665-1746) in no. 346, Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), no. 338, and Richard Winstall (1766-1836), nos. 345 and 346. Some of these pictures are signed by the painter Fatqua.136

134. A painting shown at the 1770 Salon under this title.

**Novels and the theatre**

The Romantic period in Europe brought about a wealth of illustrations for novels and dramas for the theatre. Cantonese reverse glass painting followed this movement, and we therefore find painters particularly inspired by the novel Sorrows of Young Werther by Goethe (1749-1832), nos. 347 to 352 in the corpus. I have been able to find the original engravings for three of these paintings, nos. 349, 350 and 352. They were made by English engravers, inspired by English paintings, and can be dated to the 1780s. It was probably these reverse glass paintings that Goethe alluded to when he wrote in one of his Venetian Epigrams137:

...das auch vor der Chinesen Muget, mit angeigt der Hand, Werther und Lotten auf Glas?138

Paul de Vigne—a painting of the characters from Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s (1737-1814) novel of the same name—, no. 353, was signed Fawara no. 2/3 while, at the same time, illustrations of Shakespeare’s (1564-1616) plays were coming back into fashion (nos. 354 to 356). The painters Jean-Frédéric Schall (1752-1825), Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), George Romney (1734-1802) and William Hamilton (1725-1850) also saw their works transposed on to glass.

**Portraits**

The portrait was one of the most appreciated and commonly practised genres in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, especially in England. They were done both using oil on canvas and as engravings. It is therefore not surprising to see portrait engravings so frequently transposed on to glass, the overwhelming majority being portraits of women. Several of these female portraits show young women wearing large hats with broad brims, nos. 358 and 359 in the corpus, which were very fashionable in England at the time.

137. I am grateful to Ruperto Mayer for having pointed out these verses to me.
138. Translation: ‘... even the Chinese Paint, with anxious hand, Werther and Lotten on glass’.

**Georges Washington’s portrait**

Two male portraits and one female portrait deserve special attention: the one of George Augustus, Prince of Wales and the future George IV, the portrait of George Washington, and the one of Madame Récamier.

This painting of the crown prince, the future George IV, in the regalia of a Masonic Grand Master (no. 375 in the corpus) has two inscriptions on the back of the frame. The first, ‘Portrait du Conte’ indicates the Chinese painter who painted it, together with the place in which it was painted. The second states the name of the person who commissioned it, and who it was intended for:

Portraité de Monsieur le Prince de Galles.

In 1796, the American painter Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828) painted a portrait of George Washington (1732-1799), at that time first president of the United States. The painting’s success led him to make several copies for different institutions and collectors.
One of these paintings was bought by John E. Swords, the captain of a ship trading with China. He decided to take his picture to Canton, where he had many copies of it made on to glass, before selling them on his return to the United States (Illustration 59). Stuart was outraged by this behaviour, which caused him to lose one of his main sources of revenue, and in 1801 he issued a summons for Swords to appear before the Eastern Pennsylvania District Court, demanding that these ‘copies’ be withdrawn from sale. A year later, the court acceded to his request, but the reverse glass paintings had all been sold already. To my knowledge, this was the first trial for a forgery ‘Made in China,’ which meant that reverse glass painting became part of the history of economic relations between China and the United States.

But that was not the end of the affair. In 2009, one of these reverse glass portraits of George Washington was about to be donated to an American museum, and it set off a lively debate. Was it a work of art? Was it American? Did it have a place in a museum? It was then found that several of these ‘copies’ were already in other American museums and so the controversy ceased. The painter of these Chinese portraits may have been Fatqua.

Madame Recamier’s portrait

In a book describing his voyage around the world, Adelbert von Chamisso speaks of the dinner he had as Captain Clark’s guest on 4 July 1816 in St Peter and Paul harbour (Siberia). In Clark’s cabin, he was able to view a Chinese reverse glass painting of Madame Récamier, whom he had met in Europe at the home of Madame de Staël. He mentions that these portraits were frequently seen on American ships.

As there is no reverse glass portrait in the corpus upon which Madame Récamier’s name appears, I have searched among European engravings depicting this celebrated young woman, which might have reached China and been transposed on to glass, and I have compared them with reverse glass portraits of young women wearing clothes of the Directoire period. This was how I discovered that Richard Cosway’s (1742-1821) engraving, depicting Madame Récamier during her stay in London in 1801, is without any doubt the origin of the portrait painted by Fatqua (no. 365 in the corpus).

Courtesans

Reverse glass portraits of Western courtesans painted in China were as well liked in the West as those of Chinese courtesans. The portrait of one of these beautiful women, Illustration 60, has three copies in the corpus, nos. 379a, 379b and 379c. A young woman with an extravagantly tall headdress, a diaphanous negligée and a seductive décolleté is sitting on a sofa. On her left is her book of appointments, which takes the form of a hanging display containing the visiting cards of her next gallants.

142. The figure of 100 has been quoted.
143. Esterow, Milton, Website Artnews, 2009
Chinese painters adapted to the market for reverse glass painting which, by the late eighteenth century, was no longer solely for the Western upper classes as it had originally been, but now included the numerous visitors and sailors who loved to have “souvenirs.” Those most in demand were scenes of a sailor leaving his girlfriend to go off to distant climes (nos. 394 to 397 in the corpus). As we shall see, the great artist Spoilum did not consider it beneath him to produce such paintings, or to have them painted by his workshop.

Landscapes and seascapes

Trade with China was the business of seamen, officers and supercargo. There was naturally, therefore, a market for beautiful seascapes, among which transpositions of engravings from paintings by Joseph Vernet figured prominently. Chinese reverse glass painters excelled at these transpositions, as we can see from nos. 402 to 407 in the corpus. Engravings of English country houses were also well liked.

One of these landscapes, Vue d’Europe (View of Europe), ill. 61, is one of the rare examples of painting on several superimposed sheets of glass. The Animals and shepherd in the foreground. The second sheet shows the ruins—a place for trysts—as well as the bridge over the river and the village. The third gives us the distant view of a hill, with a river running at its foot. The picture is completed by paper of a plain, pale shade, giving luminosity to the sky. The relief effect obtained by this process is striking.

Although the model was certainly a European engraving divided into sections in this way, there remains a question mark over the two trees on the right, seen to be “embracing” —a familiar and symbolic pairing in traditional Chinese painting, which is often seen in reverse glass paintings.

Miscellaneous

Apart from the categories studied above, the corpus contains several works, numbered 411 to 432, which contain a variety of motifs. They include:

• United States history scenes;
• English cartoons;
• Genre painting;
• and the transposition on to glass of Fuseli’s Nightmare (Illus- 
  • 62). The sombre, dramatic shapes and colours of the original have become more amenable in this pale blue world.

147. Which is somewhat reminiscent of the Chinese ghost world, seen particularly in Chinese B movies.
Holding the brush and use of materials

Those who, like me, carry out research into eighteenth-century Chinese reverse glass painting, are very fortunate to have two gouaches on paper at their disposal. As can be seen in Illustration 63, the gouache is like an actual ‘photo’ of the Chinese artist at work on his painting.

The painter is transposing a black and white Western engraving on to glass. The engraving has been placed on a vertical piece of wood and shows a young woman with naked breasts. The painted glass is in its frame and upon it is a small board on which the painter can rest his hand without risk of breaking the glass or damaging the painting, which is not yet dry. The brush, with its bamboo handle, is held slightly at an angle, and his materials are set out in Western style, notably including a palette of colours; the little pieces of paper on the painter’s left are used for drying the brush. These gouaches are invaluable but they only tell us about the technique used by the Chinese painter to transpose a gouache on to glass.

The painter seems to be at the stage of applying the colour and the image does not enable us to see whether the drawing was reproduced in the same way, or if it has been done at a previous stage, by laying the glass on top of the engraving. An examination of the paintings gives us the answer to this: in several cases, I have noticed that the painting’s dimensions are not the same as those of the original engraving and that the act of transposing it introduced several differences. Furthermore, porcelain painters reproduced European engravings freehand and it is therefore probable that both methods were used for reverse glass painting: freehand and direct copying by placing the glass over the engraving.

It is noticeable that this picture is somewhat different from the descriptions given by visitors to the Lamqua workshop who observed that ‘it is a very simple room where eight to ten artists work, their sleeves rolled up and their long pigtails tied around their heads to prevent them getting in the way of this delicate work.’

Finally, this gouache, which can be dated to around 1800 and shows a painter transposing an engraving, gives us no information about the method of producing paintings with Chinese, or partly Chinese motifs.

Picture-making techniques

Studying the techniques used in reverse glass painting means studying the application and nature of the paint layers, which are many and varied. The most accurate and thorough description can be found in the book Reflets enchantés148 which distinguishes no fewer than seventeen techniques (named A to S).

The two main ones to mention with regard to Chinese reverse glass painting are:

• Several successive covering layers, painted ‘backwards’ (techniques A and B in the book referred to);
• One or several thin layers (techniques C, D and E).

To these should be added a technique (technique L) that may be additional to the preceding ones, and is described as follows: ‘The first layer is of tin, which is then scratched so that these areas can be decorated with other materials.’

At the time they were being produced, there were numerous descriptions of Chinese reverse glass painting techniques, but they were not all as accurate as those in the text referred to above. Among the serious descriptions is the one by Brother Attiret152 in 1740:

I make a drawing and mark the outer contours clearly with a pencil and colour, which can then be traced; this drawing is applied to the back of the mirror. The pencilled or coloured lines remain marked on the tin; the tin is then neatly lifted off but only in the places to be painted, the rest remaining as a mirror.

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148. As well as the one seen in Illustration 63, there is another, almost identical one in the Victoria and Albert Museum.
150. Forgues, Émile Daurand (Old Nick), 36 to 38; Downing, C. Toogood, 90 to 108.
This is a description of the technique referred to as L above.

The following comment is a little more surprising. It is by a French enthusiast153 who, on examining a Chinese reverse glass painting that had arrived in France in 1745, declared he had understood the Chinese method of reverse glass painting. According to him, the painter applied the paint on to a tin sheet which he then fixed under the glass.

The third mention of the Chinese reverse glass painting technique is by Cibot,154 who aimed to be exhaustive:

To paint on mirrors, you begin by drawing your subject in order to remove the tin that you do not wish to leave on. Then you paint with oil colours, sketching out your picture with the last strokes of ordinary paint, & always advancing backwards, as we have said: this way of working does not advance the task quickly enough for workers. Some Canton workers have taken it into their heads to first paint with oil on paper, moistening it with spirits of hot wine: all of which demands only art and attentiveness. Others prepare their colour with varnish, paint their picture, then apply it to the mirror, after cutting out the picture from the thin paper or linen on which it has been painted, & which they do not fail to bury under a thick layer of colour. There are some who first paint with ordinary distemper, apply their painting to the mirror when it is very damp with alum water and glue to finish with, then put fine warm varnish behind to make it stick to the mirror better, and they only silver the mirror afterwards.

However, with complete honesty he adds: “We only have hearsay as a guarantee of these processes, but they do not surprise us,” before concluding sarcastically: “As soon as Chinese industry sees profits to hope for, inventions increase dramatically.”

De Guignes’155, who, unlike Cibot, himself observed reverse glass painters at work during his journeys to Canton between 1784 and 1801, is more specific:

Contrary to what these authors say, the Chinese do not begin by applying light tones and neither do they finish with darker ones; they paint on glass as they would on canvas; they only take the precaution of using more highly-coloured hues, applying a single, very thin layer and blending the shades well; they turn the glass when ever the paint is dry and put a blackened little board on top of it, which is fixed to the edges of the frame.

All the reverse glass paintings from the 1720-1820 period for which I have been able to see the underside of the glass confirm De Guignes’ description.

Illustration 64 shows a ‘strapped-down version’ of a reverse glass painting which is very representative of the kind of direct transpositions described in pages 98–102. The technique of the thin layer has been used, because when you look at the back of the glass, you see practically the same scene as when you look at the front, apart from the shine due to the glass itself. I have come to the same opinion from examining Mrs von Bnam’s portrait, in Illustration 52.

Sometimes, a few layers have been superposed when the artist has started by underpainting some details he wanted to highlight. This is the case with some of the golds or embroideries on the clothes, small figures within a setting, or jewels. This thin layer technique considerably simplified the painter’s work in comparison with the technique of covering layers, because it allowed corrections to be made during the course of the work. This advantage did, however, have the drawback of being transparent. It meant that, if nothing was done to remedy it, the viewer of such a painting would see straight through the painted glass to the board of the frame behind it, and its colour and design would interfere with his perception of the painting itself. The Chinese painters found an elegant solution to this problem, by placing a matt black surface behind the glass, as shown in Illustration 64. This surface could be made of paper but, most often, it was the board of the frame itself that was painted black on covered with soot.

This technique had a dual advantage: it both resolved the problem of transparency and gave more depth to the layer of paint itself. The best effect was obtained if the black surface was not in contact with the painting, but separated by a few millimetres. In order to do this, the Chinese framer used small wedges or, more elegantly, as in Illustration 64, a thin bamboo stick bent to the shape of the glass.

It would, however, be too sweeping to deduce, from these few paintings whose undersides can be seen, that all Chinese reverse glass paintings of this time used the same technique. We should, indeed, take note of a case where the painter wished to give relief to the painted object by placing behind it a light-painted sheet of paper. The motif painted on the glass then stands out, even projecting a shadow on to the paper, and is thus thrown into striking relief. For this, the paint does not have to be applied in a thin, transparent layer but, on the contrary, in one or several opaque layers. The technique of superimposing glass plates (Illustration 81) stems from the same principle and the same quest to achieve a relief effect.

Finally, almost all the paintings whose undersides can be seen have been transposed from engravings and are not part of the first phase of Chinese reverse glass painting, featuring Chinese motifs and portraits. It is possible that in this early period, the Chinese reverse glass painters, and Brother Attiret himself, used the covering layers technique. A statement about reverse glass painting by Father Cibot might lead us to think so:

The exceptional ability that the Chinese had in order to succeed, the daring, lightness and rapidity with which they sketched out their pictures down to the last marks, and thus advanced backwards, were all extremely admirable.

However, I have no other proof of this. In 2007, Chiming Ho stated:

The style of commercial reverse glass paintings (those of Canton) was elegant but different from the style of court paintings. The layer of paint tended to be thin, easy to correct and less shiny than in examples from the court.

But he gives no reference in support of this affirmation. On the other hand, at the time when it became exclusively a popular Chinese art form, a period not dealt with in this book, Chinese reverse glass painters all adopted the technique of using covering, opaque layers of paint.

153 Dictionnaire portatif de commerce tome 3, 1770, 175.
The Artworks

Chinese reverse glass painting 1720-1820

Thierry Audric

• Ceruse,159 uno-jien, which ‘the Chinese painters used as a white colour. They never paint flesh without first putting on a layer of pinkish ceruse’;
• Chia-houng,160 which ‘is the name of a yellow stone that is probably lead chromate. Ground into a powder, it is used in painting’;
• Malachite,166 tsielook, which ‘is also used in painting and, if so, it is combined with ceruse’;
• Orpiment,167 hong-houong, a native arsenic sulphide, ‘used as colouring material, rarely as a dyeing substance’;
• Vermilion,168 yin-thou. In Canton, they only use the beautiful bright purplish red cinnamon, sublimated into fine needles and very friable. It is a very rich, vivid red colour, better than that of Germany and Illyria.’ It was the red ink pigment used by the Chinese for their seals.

Holden ends, however, by saying:

One has to say, in concluding this article, that the majority of good Cantonese painters had a poor opinion of most Chinese colours, and far preferred European colours. However, they recognised the superiority of their vermilion, their orpiment yellow and their lapis lazuli. They knew how to prepare them very well and to obtain tones that were both rich and solid.

One might, however, question Holded’s definition of ‘good painters.’ To my knowledge, the only chemical analysis of a Chinese reverse glass painting whose results have been published169 relates to a painting of the years 1805-1810 in the Winterthur Museum collection, no. 418 in the corpus. A little fragment of paint from the blue inner painting of the years 1805-1810 in the Winterthur Museum collection, no. 418 in the corpus. A little fragment of paint from the blue inner painting, made in Sweden and inspired by the English George II style. The mirrors were put into frames designed by top cabinet-makers, and the styles of these changed several times over the course of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries170 (Illustrations 44 and 85). Illustration 44 pag 96 is a Chinese-Swedish frame in two parts. A rectangular black and gold one made in Canton. Above a black and gold pediment, made in Sweden and inspired by the English George II style.

Sixty mirrors,171 made it possible to manufacture large mirrors. Their cost made them great luxury objects, worthy of kings, and gifts that were much appreciated in the royal courts of Europe, particularly after the spectacular Hall of Mirrors was created at Versailles. The mirrors were received with equal amazement by Chinese aristocrats who were only familiar with paintings fastened on to rollers, with flexible frames, or papers printed with popular imagery and fixed directly to the wall. It is certain that the first reverse glass paintings were done on framed mirrors and that the first to return to Europe did so in their original, and therefore European frames.

The discovery in France, in 1688, of the method of glassmaking called glass casting made it possible to manufacture large mirrors. Their cost made them great luxury objects, worthy of kings, and gifts that were much appreciated in the royal courts of Europe, particularly after the spectacular Hall of Mirrors was created at Versailles. The mirrors were put into frames designed by top cabinet-makers, and the styles of these changed several times over the course of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Illustrations 44 and 85). Illustration 44 pag 96 is a Chinese-Swedish frame in two parts. A rectangular black and gold one made in Canton. Above a black and gold pediment, made in Sweden and inspired by the English George II style.

Chemical composition of the paint

All references from the period that talk about the composition of the paint used for Chinese reverse glass painting specify that it is usually oil. Brother Attie157 makes a clear distinction:

…in this way, I have been occupied for three-quarters of the time only with painting, either in oil on mirrors, or with water on silk…

Cibot is also clear:

…then we paint with oil colours…

Finally, according to Guignes,158

They159 paint on glass with gum and oil, but the latter is more usual.

Isidore Hedde160 specifies that in 1830, the oil used was from a Jatropha trader who was keen to import them into Europe. The fullest of these is the one by Isidore Hedde. In it, we learn that, in the early nineteenth century, Chinese painters made use of:

• Azure,161 lapu-lanu, a turquoise, a double silicate of alumina and soda, which existed in several forms used in reverse glass painting in Canton;
• Prussian blue,162 yang-bin, of which Hedde states there were four sorts, and explains their preparation and use in detail. ‘The Canton painters used it frequently for their watercolours;

159. Chinese reverse glass painters.
161. In all references to Hedde’s text, the Chinese names that are in italics here were the names in use at the time in the port of Canton, and have been transcribed phonetically by Hedde.
162. Idem, 80.
163. Idem, 80.
164. Idem, 82.
165. Idem, 82.
166. Idem, 120.
167. Idem, 80.
170. By the infrared spectroscopy method with Fourier Transform.
Second period: European frames and ‘utilitarian’ Chinese frames

The Europeans commissioning these paintings quickly realised that it was more economical, and above all took up less space in company vessels, to send only the glass sheet to be painted in Canton. But for the return journey, since the painted sheet had to be provided with a black background a few millimetres behind it ([Illustration 65]), it then required a frame. So the Chinese workshops put together simple, rectangular frames, without any carving, using an original system ([Illustrations 66] for fixing in place the wooden board that formed the back. This board was fastened by bolts that slid over the board and slotted into mortises hollowed out of the frame’s uprights. The bolts allowed the board to be completely fastened, or else partially so that an entire side of it was secured in place by dotting it into a groove of the frame’s upright. Once it had arrived in Europe, the Chinese frame was usually removed and replaced by a gilded wooden frame, of the style that was in fashion.

In Great Britain, mirrors painted in China were very sought-after during the reigns of George II (1727-1760) and George III (1760-1820) when rococo-style frames were all the rage, made by famous cabinet-makers such as Thomas Chippendale (1718-1779) or John Linnell (1729-1796). This type of framing culminated in flamboyant overmantels with multiple mirrors. The rococo was sometimes given a Chinese flavour ([Illustration 65]) by the addition of European carvings with Chinese motifs: pagodas, pavilions, ho-hos,176 and so on.

In France, it was under the reign of Louis XV (1723-1774), then of Louis XVI (1774-1791), that reverse glass paintings came into fashion, and their framing reflected the styles of these two periods.

In Sweden, where the European fashion for Chinese reverse glass paintings probably started, Adolf Fredrik, a great lover of Chinese objects,177 reigned from 1751 to 1771. He was followed by Gustav III (1771-1792) and Gustav IV Adolf (1792-1809). In two works of my corpus, the portraits of John Pike and his wife, seen in Illustrations 44 and 48, the Swedish cabinet-maker was content to complete the Chinese frame with a European pediment, inspired by the English George II style. The decoration of the Chinese frame probably had to be commissioned to allow this adaptation.

Finally, Catherine II of Russia bought a reverse glass painting for her collections which she had framed in her court style (no. 63 of the corpus). The framing of Chinese reverse glass paintings by these great European cabinet-makers whose work was very expensive testifies to the value that art-lovers assigned to this Cantonese painting and the eminent place it occupied in their homes. It should, however, be pointed out that the value of these paintings was as much due to the rich and fashionable frame as to the painted mirror.

Third period: decorative Chinese frames

From the seventeenth century onwards, lacquered objects made in China were imported into Europe, where they were known as ‘Japanese work’ and the lacquering technique as ‘japanning’. It was in fact through the Dutch East India Company, based in Japan, that these first lacquered objects were imported into Europe. The method of decorating frames with black lacquer and gilded foliation was then adopted by Chinese craftsmen, as fitting surrounds for the mirrors being sent to Europe ([Illustration 67]). These frames were much appreciated in Europe as they suited the contemporary fashion for chinoiserie and fitted in with the highly sought-after lacquered furniture with its gilded motifs. Furthermore, they did not have to be removed and replaced with European frames.

Better still, this style was copied by European cabinet-makers who had succeeded in mastering the black- or aubergine-coloured lacquering technique with gilded motifs. These frames differed little from the original Chinese models, but included more geometrical motifs, with lattice- or diamond-shaped patterns, and they had considerable success in Europe until the late nineteenth century.178

Black lacquered frames with gilded foliation

175. Cf. page 83. Multiple mirrors.
176. More or less inspired by the phoenix.
177. Cf. page 84. Portraits of Workemans.
178. The French Second Empire was passionate about them.
Carved and gilded wood frames with Chinese motifs

Chinese frames of a different style were also held on to after their arrival in Europe; these were made of gilded wood and carved with Chinese lucky charm motifs (Illustration 68), such as the characters for ‘happiness’ or ‘longevity’, the attributes of Taoist Immortals, Buddhist symbols, and so on.

Frames known as Chinese Chippendale

In the 1820s, a frame appeared made of black-painted carved wood with gilded ornamentation (Illustration 69) that had an abundance of swirled effects. Curiously, the English named this style ‘Chinese Chippendale’.179

Copies of European frames

During the final decades of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, when Western engravings were being directly transposed on to glass, Chinese workshops would copy frames of the style then fashionable in the West. These frames were simpler, less ornate than those of the preceding rococo period. Out of all the motifs used in the West, the Chinese singled out flat frames without any motif, whether gilded or ungilded—but most often rectangular or oval frames of gilded wood that included a row of carved ‘pearls’.180 along the glass, with a plant motif on the outer border (Illustration 70). These Chinese frames were not always elegantly made, but they suited the mass public which was becomingly increasingly attracted to these transpositions of engravings.

The Chinese painters, anxious to offer their Western clients a frame that was, as much as possible, in tune with current fashion, went as far as to paint plain navy blue- or black-coloured inner frames on the glass, as seen in Illustration 70. Sometimes these were dotted with stars or even imitated a spectacular red and gold eglomisé frame, in which the back of the glass sheet was gilded.

Emergence of a popular Chinese frame

It is interesting to note that the so-called ‘pearl’ frame would become increasingly widespread in China when reverse glass painting became a popular Chinese art, around the mid-nineteenth century. The frame chosen to present these paintings was an ungilded ‘pearled’ frame, which became known by the Chinese name of ‘abacus frame’, seen in Illustration 71. For almost two centuries, the frames that held glass paintings were the only rigid frames present in Chinese houses. By introducing permanent rigid frames to China, reverse glass painting therefore changed the place occupied by paintings in Chinese interiors.

180. Style known in France as Louis XVI.
III

From the Cantonese Workshop to Foreign Markets
The following painters’ names have come to us through documents from the period. They are classified below by date of citation, from 1749 to 1820.

Siou-Sin-Saang
The first mention of a Chinese reverse glass painter (and therefore of a workshop) by name is in the writing of William Chambers (1726-1796), a Scottish architect who went to Canton in 1749 as supercargo of the Swedish East India Company. In the book he wrote on China when he returned,1 he mentioned the name of Siou-Sin-Saang, a famous Chinese painter who had done some reverse glass painting for him.2

Spoilum
The second painter to be mentioned, in terms of date, is the portraitist Spoilum. Some of his works are signed3 and, what is more, he is named in two documents of the period.4

Puqua, Cinqua, Punqua
The third mention is of lists of products bought in China by John Green, captain of the Empress of China,5 the first United States ship to go to China in 1783, and then again in 1786. Fortunately, these lists have been preserved, and they give us valuable information about reverse glass paintings and their painters. The following names are mentioned:

In 1784 Puqua, who is described as a painter on glass & ca & ca;

In 1786 Cinqua, described as a limner (illuminator?);6

In 1786 Punqua, simply described as a painter. The reverse glass paintings bought from him represent ‘Empress at Nobels’ (?) or perhaps ‘Empress and Nobels’.

Tonqua, Tonqua Junior, Foeiqua, Fatqua and Lamqua.
The fourth mention involves a series of names of Cantonese painters that has reached us thanks to the list compiled by Robert Waln Junior of Philadelphia, who was in Canton from September 1819 to March 1820.7 For each painter, his list includes the name, status (according to Waln’s estimation), character8 (in the sense of behaviour, measured from good to average), the main occupation and the workshop’s address. The painters mentioned are Tonqua, Tonqua Junior and Foeiqua on Old China Street, and Fatqua and Lamqua on New China Street.

The ‘qua’ ending on these artists’ names was granted by the Chinese government to all Chinese merchants and artists authorised to trade with foreigners. All except one of the painters cited were therefore registered. The exception was Spoilum, and perhaps Spoilum was the name by which he was known to foreigners.

Although works on canvas are known to have been painted by Tonqua, Tonqua Junior, Foeiqua, Fatqua and Lamqua, my corpus contains signed reverse glass paintings by only one of them, and that is Fatqua. In Waln’s list he is classified as No. 1, the creator of Paintings and described as painter and miniaturist.

Relations between these artists, and especially their family ties, have been studied by Crossman9 and Patrick Conner.10 These authors appear to agree on the fact that the Chinese name Spoilum refers to Guan Zuolin and that Lamqua, the great nineteenth-century Cantonese oil painter, was one of his descendants.

Several other later lists were drawn up in the years after 1815, but they only concern painters on canvas or paper.

1. As architect to the King of England, he played an essential role in introducing Chinese gardens, and Chinese fashion more generally, to Europe.
4. Meares, J., 130, and Diary of Ralph Haskins of Roxbury, Massachusetts, cited by C. Crossman, 49.
7. A surprising omission, perhaps added to help Waln’s readers in their negotiations with the painter.
From the Cantonese Workshop to Foreign Markets

Thierry Audric • Chinese reverse glass painting 1720–1820

The Swedish Supercargoes’ workshop

We know of the Swedish supercargoes whose portraits were painted on glass. The dates of when they stayed in Canton make it possible to date these works fairly precisely. In fact, four other supercargoes are involved in the history of Chinese reverse glass painting in Sweden: these are Colin Campbell, William Chambers, Jacob Halir and Johan Abraham Grill. The dates of their stays in Canton are summarized in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supercargo’s name</th>
<th>Year(s) of stay in Canton and rank ( ) among supercargoes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Pike</td>
<td>1732 (4), 1736 (2), 1742 (2), 1745 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel Beyer</td>
<td>1744 (3), 1747 (2), 1750 (1), 1753 (1), 1760 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anders Gadd</td>
<td>1744 (3), 1747 (2), 1750 (1), 1758 (2), 1760 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colin Campbell</td>
<td>1732 (1), 1738 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Chambers</td>
<td>1748 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob Halir</td>
<td>1759 (4), 1763 (3), 1769 à 1775 à Canton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Abraham Hill</td>
<td>1760 (3), 1766 (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The workshop or workshops that produced these portraits were therefore definitely active between:

• 1732 and 1745 for John Pike, but taking into account the clothes he was wearing in the portrait (those of a high-ranking supercargo who wants his rank to be known), the period in question is likely to be the one when he was a second-rank supercargo, that is between 1736 and 1745;
• 1744 and 1760 for Gabriel Beyer;
• 1747 and 1764 for Anders Gadd.

The first Cantonese workshops, 1740–1760, and the Swedish ‘network’

The reverse glass paintings now in the Chinese pavilion at Drottningholm Palace and in a few Swedish museums possess several features that allow suggestions to be made regarding their attribution to different workshops.

The Swedish Supercargoes’ workshop

A study of the portraits of King Adolf Fredrik and his wife Lovisa Ulrika has resulted in the period 1748–1757 being estimated as the date when they were painted.

As stated previously, one portrait appears to be of Colin Campbell. Since this supercargo was in Canton twice, in 1732 and 1738, it is possible that this portrait was painted from an engraving sent to Canton, like those of King Adolf Fredrik and his wife.

The frames of these works are all original, and they confirm the various datings suggested.

Taking into account the concordance of dates and the fact that the Swedish supercargoes must have told one another the address of this excellent reverse glass portraitist, I propose to attribute these portraits to a single workshop that I shall name the Swedish supercargoes’ workshop. It was active between 1740 and 1760, at least. I attribute to it the paintings seen in Illustration 72.

The workshop or workshops that produced these portraits were therefore definitely active between:

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• 1744 and 1760 for Gabriel Beyer;
• 1747 and 1764 for Anders Gadd.

12. Cf. the remark on Beyer’s rank, page 84.
Drottningholm Chinese pavilion workshops

The Chinese pavilion given by King Adolf Fredrik to his wife Lovisa Ulrika for her birthday in 1753 was rebuilt as a permanent structure in 1763. We have no documentation to prove that the framed reverse glass paintings now in the library of the oval room were in the first pavilion or in the present one when it was inaugurated, or whether they were added later. We can, however, affirm that the overmantels with multiple mirrors over the fireplaces in the red, yellow and south drawing rooms were put there during the construction of the second pavilion; they are in fact part and parcel of the pavilion’s interior architecture. These paintings were executed in Canton before 1761, taking account of the time taken for their transport and the building of the palace.

Do these paintings have common features that would allow them to be attributed to one or several workshops?

The paintings to be examined include those on the overmantel in the south drawing room, seen in Illustration 73 (largest view page 10):

- The outdoor scene at the base of the south drawing room overmantel;
- The five pairs on each side of the south drawing room overmantel;
- The two paintings of pheasants at the top of the yellow and red drawing room mirrors.

The Music-Poetry workshop

The outdoor scene at the base of the south drawing room overmantel symbolises poetry.15 It is one of a music-poetry pair, the painting on the theme of music being in the library of the same pavilion. 16 This Drottningholm pair is identical to the pairs numbered 43-44 and 47-48 in the corpus, even down to the frames.

The musical component in these pairs is also linked to another poetry element, with the couple sitting on a seat in the music-poetry pair numbered 101-106 in the corpus. We can deduce that these pairs, with all their symbolic elements, probably come from the same workshop, which was active at least between 1750 and 1770. It therefore seems possible to attribute to this workshop, which I am calling the music-poetry workshop, the related music-poetry paintings in the corpus, i.e. nos. 43, 44, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 101 and 106, as well as the music-poetry pair at Drottningholm.

The corresponding photos in the corpus are grouped together in Illustration 74.

Siou-Sin-Saang’s workshop

The five pairs in the south drawing room overmantel are, from top to bottom and right to left:

• Pair 1: Young Manchu women on their veranda, one with a small red parrot, the other with a black and white dog, while a curtain raised to the ceiling opens up the veranda to the sky;
• Pair 2: Young girl on a veranda and young woman near a tree;
• Pair 3: Entertainment in the pavilion, game of Go and music;
• Pair 4: Mandarin wearing winter clothes with a falcon on his hand at a lakeside, young mandarin in summer clothes on his veranda, a small black and white dog adds animation to the first scene;
• Pair 5: Young girl and little black and white dog, young girl day-dreaming, both sitting in the open air.

The pairs of paintings numbered 1 and 5, depicting young women seated, are similar to several paintings in the corpus: nos. 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196 and 197. However, there is one notable difference: the other pairs of young women in the corpus usually mark a contrast between the young unmarried girl and the young married woman, in that the first wears a simple chignon while the second wears her hair in Manchu style. I am therefore tempted to think that the Swedish framers who arranged the mirrors did not do it in the order that the Chinese painter may have stipulated. In my opinion, the original pairs may well have featured a young woman in Pair 1 and a young girl in Pair 5, with this arrangement adding an indoor-outdoor contrast.

Pair 2 in the overmantel observes the indoor-outdoor contrast and the young woman-young girl pairing is identical to the one in pair no. 181-182 of the corpus, which is also in a Swedish museum. In addition to the painting quality of the embroidered silk clothing, we might note the ‘flat’ depiction of the peonies.

Pair 3 in the overmantel, showing young girls and young women enjoying themselves in elegant pavilions, seems to be painted rather differently and is reminiscent of nos. 176 and 177 in the corpus.

Pair 4 in the overmantel has winter summer and old age-youth contrasts. The rendering of the folds of embroidered silk and the little black and white dog is as remarkable as it is in pairs 1 and 5. Painting no. 234 in the corpus is very close to it, given the mandarin’s pose, the falcon in his hand and the little black and white dog. The similarity is all the more interesting for the fact that this painting no. 234 dates from around 1757-1760, to the knowledge of its first owner, Lord Clive,17 making it contemporaneous with Chambers’ reference.

The very fine, elegant depiction of the gold-embroidered silk fabrics, the shaded folds of the draperies, the drawing of the faces, and also the very ‘flat’ representation of the flowers are characteristics shared by pairs 1, 2, 4 and 5 in the overmantel, as is the presence of the little black and white dog in pairs 1, 4 and 5. It therefore seems possible to attribute pairs 1, 2, 4 and 5 of the large Drottningholm overmantel to a single workshop, which was active from at least 1755 to 1760. Paintings numbered 181, 182, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197 and 234 might also have been produced in this workshop, which I am provisionally naming the great Drottningholm overmantel workshop.

Should we then attribute the portraits in Illustration 72, of supercargoes and Swedish sovereigns, to the same workshop? Perhaps for the portraits of John Pike and his wife, which share some common features with the paintings previously attributed to this workshop: among these are the landscape, the skilful drawing of the clothes, and the little dogs. Nothing enables us to link the other Swedish portraits to this workshop, apart from the fact it appears quite probable that Swedish East India Company agents would have gone to the painter whose first portraits—those of the Pike couple—they had the opportunity to admire.

Should we, finally, link the great Drottningholm overmantel workshop to the workshop mentioned by Chambers under the name of the painter Siou-Sin-Saang?

Chambers’ text reads as follows:

Plates XIX, XX, XXI represent various Chinese garments. Some of the drawings have been done from life, and others are copies from pictures by Siou-Sin-Saang, a famous Chinese painter whom I employed during my stay in Canton to make reverse mirror paintings of all the Chinese costumes.

A study of these plates leaves a strong impression that the figures have not been drawn by a Chinese artist but by a Westerner—very probably Chambers himself, who would have relied upon his memories, as he did for other drawings. The existence of this Chinese reverse glass painter is therefore open to doubt. However, Jan Wirgin18

17. Cf. the caption on no. 234 of the corpus.
notes that in 1749, an auction sale of the cargo of three ships returning from China took place in Gothenburg. Among these was the Hoppet, the ship on which Chambers was a supercargo, and among the objects for sale were ‘10 painted mirrors depicting Chinese costumes.’ These were very probably the reverse glass paintings that Chambers said he had commissioned. Swedish supercargoes were indeed obliged to put any objects bought in China up for auction, to comply with the regulations of the Swedish Customs authorities.

It should be noted that the paintings surrounding the south drawing room mirror feature Chinese men and women whose costumes are portrayed with the utmost care. And, finally, that two drawings on plate XX, Summer Apparel and Merchants and People of Distinction in Winter, form a winter-summer, old age-youth pairing, an opposition which, as we have seen, is very characteristic of Chinese painters’ work. These drawings may have inspired Chambers because of his memory of the fourth pair of paintings on the south drawing room overmantel. All these factors lead me to think that the painter Siou-Sin-Saang very probably existed, and that the Drottningholm great overmantel workshop was his. I am therefore from now on calling it the Siou-Sin-Saang workshop. And why would some of the overmantel paintings, pairs 1, 2 and 5 for example, not be among those sold at auction by Chambers in 1749? Photos of the paintings thus attributed to the Siou-Sin-Saang workshop appear together in Illustration 75a and 75b.

These three workshops, the Swedish supercargoes’, music-poetry and Siou-Sin-Saang’s, were active during the same period and all had Swedish supercargoes as their clients. Whether they were linked together or were simply all one workshop, I do not have sufficient evidence to say.
Signed portraits

Among the works signed by Spillem I have documented two portraits, one of which is on glass, and a sailor’s farewell scene also on glass. The portrait of Thomas Fry, in Illustration 76, presented for the first time by Conner,22 shows a young man standing, turned slightly towards his left looking at the painter. He has short hair, without a wig, and is wearing a shirt with a jabot, over which is a long yellow waistcoat with pockets near the base. On top of this is a long, open, sky-blue jacket with buttons set close together. His blue culottes are gathered under the knee, he wears white silk stockings and dark shoes with buckles. His left hand is resting on his hip, while his right hand appears to be in the pocket of his culottes. Thomas Fry is posing against an austere interior: we see a simple wall, but no furniture. A terrace opens on to a few trees in the foreground of a water’s-edge landscape, where we can see a white, nine-storey pagoda on top of an island and a pleasure sampan on the lake.

The sky is a mirror, while in the upper part of the picture a red curtain with a gold fringe is held open by cords with golden tassels.

The following words are written on the back of the picture:
‘Drawn October the… at Canton in China/Spillem in the year 1774.’

This is considered to be the painter’s first signature, Spillem being one of the many ways of writing his name. The most frequent version, and the one that would be adopted by Westerners, was Spillem. A considerable number of works would be attributed to this artist, several of them reverse glass paintings. Very little is known about his life, but he may share the same identity as the Chinese painter Guan Zuolin, who was said to be a master of the portrait and was admired by Westerners.24

Another of Spillem’s portraits, in oil on canvas, is also dated and signed, with the following words on the back of the picture:
‘Spillem/Pinxt/Canton/ Decr. 1st 1786’.

On the basis of these two signed works, a series of reverse glass paintings and oils on canvas have been attributed to this painter, notably by Crossman26 and Conner,27 the two best connoisseurs of this artist’s work.

Spillem’s celebrity stemmed from his portraits of Western naval officers and merchants painted from life. He painted on both glass and canvas. The reverse glass paintings possibly executed by Spillem, and brought together in this corpus, are studied in the present chapter and classified into five series.

Series 1, five portraits

The Portrait of Thomas Fry, in Illustration 76, is the only ‘signed’ portrait.

The Portrait of an English Gentleman, in Illustration 77, differs by virtue of the model’s three-quarter pose; his clothes of rich materials—silk and gold embroideries; his hand that is slipped horizontally.

21. Or, to be more precise, portraits where the artist is named in an accompanying, handwritten text.
22. As it has been transposed, this picture is dealt with in Chap. II, page 102.
The portrait mentioned by Crossman, 28 with the description ‘the man, standing with a cane, appears beside a Chinese river with a junk’ is the same one, and he attributes it to Spoilum. The presence of flowers in the foreground, together with the pheasant and the picture’s considerable size (70 x 57.5 cm), link it to the early ‘Swedish’ productions described in Chapter II, page 84. The water’s edge setting with a mirror for the sky is not very different from the portrait of Thomas Fry. For these reasons, it could be dated to the 1770-1780 period.

The Portrait of a Naval Officer, Illustration 83, belongs to the fine Lady Lever Gallery collection in Liverpool. It shows a British naval officer from a three-quarter view, wearing a long navy-blue jacket with buttons set close together, over a white waistcoat with large pockets near the base. His left hand is on his hip while his right hand is slipped horizontally into the waistcoat. This pose is very similar to those in portraits of the first series, particularly the one of Captain Cranston, Illustration 79. The setting, too, is very like those in the two-portraits of merchants previously described. These many resemblances enable me (for the first time in this book) to attribute the Lady Lever Gallery portrait to Spoilum and also to date it to 1770-1780.

The Portrait of an Englishman, Illustration 84, is comparable to the previous one in its general composition, the pose and the naval officer’s uniform, and the fact of the sky being a mirror. It therefore also appears to be attributable to Spoilum.

Series 3, two portraits

Captain John Corner, in Illustration 85, and The Ship-Owner Auditor, in Illustration 86, both have a clear resemblance to the pictures...
in series 1 and 2, particularly in the model’s pose, clothing and the care taken over the face. The difference, however, is that they are not reverse glass paintings.

The Portrait of Captain John Corner (Illustration 85). Some words on the back of the frame state that this is a portrait of John Corner, captain of the Carnatic. This information is important for dating it, since the Carnatic, a vessel of the English East India Company, only went to Canton twice, in 1798 and 1791. Corner attributes this portrait to Spoloum.

Portrait of the Ship-Owner Audibert (Illustration 86). This portrait has the distinctive features of being oval and of having a very simple, natural setting of foliage beyond a terrace, unlike other portraits of the period whose settings feature a water’s-edge landscape. On a piece of paper on the back of the frame, we can just make out the following words: “Mr Audibert / portrait fait à / Guadaloppe (?) / père…” Conner attributes this portrait to Spoloum. The text, conducted in French, caught my attention because it indicates that the model is French. It would then be the only example I know of a Chinese reverse glass painting representing a Frenchman. I therefore conducted some research into the name Audibert.

This person was very probably one of the members of the Audibert family, who were ship-owners in Marseille, and owned ships travelling to India and Canton. They were among those Marseille’s ship-owners who, after the French East India Company’s monopoly ended in 1769, fitted out ships and created the lucrative four-way trade, adding voyages to the West Indies to those going to the Indies and China. The word Guadaloppe in the text just quoted is probably connected to this original maritime route. Private ship-owners could only operate in the absence of the monopoly granted to the French East India Company, which therefore means between 1769 and 1791. And it was during this period that the portrait was painted. However, I have not unearthed any evidence to determine whether a member of this family went to Canton or if the portrait was executed from a miniature, which might explain the unusual setting. Another interesting fact is that the captain of one of the Audibert ships was Jean Blansard, who brought the first chrysanthemum plants back from China. The task of describing them, and how to cultivate them, was given to the family’s celebrated botanist, Canon d’Audibert de Ramatuelle.

Series 4, two portraits

This series comprises the Portrait of a Young Englishman, Illustration 87, and the Portrait of a Western Gentleman, Illustration 88. The men in both of these paintings can be seen standing, from a three-quarters angle and turned slightly towards their right looking at the painter. Superintendents or captains, they are wearing identical clothes, right down to the embroidery on their waistcoats. They both have a hand on their hip, but one has his other hand in his waistcoat while the other man’s is hanging down beside his body. A red curtain is suspended over the upper part of these portraits. The poses and depiction of the faces link them to the previous series.

However, there are three major differences:

• They are not painted mirrors;
• A room with plain, unadorned walls forms the background.
• The water’s-edge landscape is absent: a lattice window looks out on to the sky, which is no longer a mirror.

These portraits were attributed to Spoloum, one by Crossman and the other by Conner.

The almost abstract character of these compositions is a subject of intrigue:

• Do they signal a return to the more traditional Chinese portrait from which all setting was absent, with the model standing out against a plain background?
• Is this the décor of a room inside one of the factories? Two works cited by Conner might lead us to think so, and several paintings of the port of Canton confirm the look of these windows;
• Would we see in these pictures the influence of a Western painter? In his benchmark article on Spoloum, Conner notes the resemblance between these paintings and those of the English artist Arthur David (1712-1787), particularly with regard to the pose adopted, the austerity of the décor and the lattice window in the background.

32. Cf. no. 287 in the corpus.
is not impossible that some of this artist's engravings may have in-
spired Spoilum, but it seems more probable that this almost abstract
decor simply represents one of the rustic rooms in a factory.14

Series 5, less certain attributions:

The Portrait of a Western Merchant (3), Illustration 89, no. 299 in the
corpus, has been claimed as the work of Spoilum. The plugging view
of the water's edge setting and the model's pose, which only lacks the
cane to complete the resemblance to the Series 2 portraits, both argue
in favour of this attribution. On the other hand, the painting's format,
the river opening (towards the sea) and the middling quality of how
the face is depicted are unusual for this artist. I would tend to attri-
bute it rather to one of the assistants in Spoilum's workshop.

Spoilum's art

From studying these portraits, a few characteristics emerge that
are peculiar to this painter. Conner17 summarises them as follows:

His models, whether Western or Chinese, are seen face on
but slightly turned towards the right; their faces are smooth,
with light but quite visible shadows, and they often have the
hint of a smile. Behind them is a plain setting that
nonetheless has a paler area above one shoulder.

Crossman18 adds to this what he calls 'Spoilum's characteristic of not
painting both eyes at the same level.' My own contribution would be to point to the shading, which
we know to be one of the differences between traditional Chinese
painting and Western painting. In all these portraits attributed to
Spoilum, with the exception of Thomas Fry's, the figure is on the right
of the picture and the light comes from the right. Spoilum therefore
naturally places a shadow over the left part of the face, but mainly
the area between the eye and the base of the chin. On the other hand, he
does not usually put shading on the clothes and neither does he paint
any shadows cast by the models themselves.

However, two portraits present an exception to this last rule
the one of Thomas Fry, where the shadow cast on the ground makes
us think the light is coming from the window, whereas neither the
face nor body have any shadows; and the one of Mr Audibert, which
has a single shadow on the ground.

Although Conner and Crossman do not say so explicitly, their
analyses can only lead to the conclusion that Spoilum painted from
life, at least where the faces and clothing were concerned. This hy-
pothesis is confirmed by two passages from travel journals. One is
the journal of John Meares19 in his ship, the Félice, travelling from Can-
ton towards the United States in 1788, he was returning a Polynesian
prince, by the name of Tiana, to the Hawaiian island from whence
he had come. In Canton, Tiana had bought many objects:

But all of the objects among his riches, Meares tells us, the
one that appealed most to his imagination was a portrait of
himself painted by the famous Chinese artist, Spoilum, who
was perhaps the only one of his kind in the whole of this vast
empire. The painter had faithfully expressed all the features
of his physiognomy, but had surpassed himself in the talent
with which he rendered the grace pervading the Indian's
face . . . it seemed as if the face changed its expression with
each brush stroke.

The other revealing quotation is in the journal belonging to Ralph
Haskins of Roxbury, who describes his session spent sitting for Spo-

While nothing else could be done, I went to Spoilum and sat
for two hours to have my portrait taken. He was $10 each
and does a great deal of business in that line. I was
surprised to see how expert he was in doing it.

On the other hand, it is not impossible, and is even probable, that Spo-

lum was inspired by Western engravings in positioning his models,
and that the setting was sometimes chosen by the person commiss-
ioning the painting from among a number of settings proposed by the
artist.

Having reviewed all the certain and probable datings of Spoilum's
portraits, both on reverse glass and on canvas, it would seem that he
started with reverse glass portraits before proceeding to paint on
canvas. From among the reverse glass portraits, two periods emerge,
such as have already been seen for Swedish portraits and that can in fact
be found in all reverse glass painting. The first period, around
1770 to 1780, is when Spoilum was painting reverse mirror portraits,
with the mirror representing the sky. It was also the time when he was
painting larger portraits. Series 1 and 2 are linked to this period,
containing portraits similar to those of Mr and Mrs John Pike.20 The
second period, which starts around 1780, and extends until around
1790-1800, is when the painting covers the whole of the glass: this
therefore includes Series 3 and 4. Within this period, I would surmise
that Series 4 is older than Series 5. These distinctions are by no means
exclusive, as periods of covering the glass very probably existed out-
side them, in accordance with the wishes of those commissioning
them. If we add the analysis of the reverse glass paintings carried out
here to those which Conner and Crossman have done for paintings
on canvas, we see a real personality emerging, of an artist who tends,
through his own style and economy of means, to depict his models'
most essential traits. No other Chinese reverse glass painter in Can-
ton was to achieve such acuity of perception in his art. It will come as
no surprise that John Meares put Spoilum in top place among 'the
painters of the Empire' and that his work is still sought-after today.

Only one reverse glass painting signed by Spoilum that is not a
portrait is present in my corpus: no. 429, George Harrison and the
Crew of the Alliance. The following words appear on the back of the
frame of the picture:

George Harrison and the
Crew of the Alliance. The
following words appear on the back of the
frame of the picture:

This is the only reverse glass portrait not a
portrait in 18th-century China. The reverse glass portrait signed by
Spoilum among the Series 5 portraits.

# PORTRAIT OF A WESTERN MERCHANT (3)

Painted mirror. Vanished wooden frame. 48.3 x 45.7 cm. circa 1780. Courtesy Southfield/ArtDigital Studio/Paris Rights Reserved.

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Painters and their Workshops

The painter Spoilum's workshop

133
The painter Fatqua’s workshop

Since the transcription of Chinese names into Latin characters was not systematised in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Canton, a painter’s name could have several Latin spellings, as we have seen in the case of Spoilum.

The corpus includes eight paintings whose signatures are quite similar:

• Mary, Joseph and the Baby Jesus, no. 341 in the corpus: Fatqua Canton pinxit;
• Snake in the Grass, no. 342 in the corpus, which, on the back of the frame, contains a veritable CV of the painter, in which he presents himself thus: ‘Fatqua, painter in oil and water colours, and on glass, China Street, Canton.’ And he adds: ‘Prepares boxes of assorted colours for drawing, on the lowest terms.’ Finally, on a little box is written the word ‘Fatqua.’

Around this, Fatqua has laid out a European palette, pots of colours, a box of colours and two interesting objects giving further information about the painter:
• A canvas depicting a Western ship, thus pointing out that he is a marine painter;
• Two painted vases: are these intended to show that he also paints on porcelain?

It is noticeable that on this ‘business card’ he himself uses two spellings for his name: Fatqua and Fatqua.

• Hebe and Jupiter, no. 343 in the corpus, Illustration 91: Fatqua Canton pinxit;
• Madame Récamier, no. 365 in the corpus: Fatqua pinxit;
• Virginia in the Grove, no. 353 in the corpus: Fatqua no. 2;
• Portrait of Humphrey Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester, 374b in the corpus: Fatqua Canton pinxit;
• Portrait of George Augustus, Prince of Wales, no. 375 in the corpus: Fatqua Canton.

These signed paintings have the following features:

• They are all directly transposed from engravings. In the case of three of them—nos. 341, 342 and 365 in the corpus—we know the picture from which the engraving was made. Note that, in no. 342, Venus’s breast is modestly covered by a chemisette, whereas this is not the case either in Reynolds’ original painting or in the engravings known to have been made from this picture;44

43. R. Waln Junior specifies (page 117) that the workshop was likely to be in New China Street.
44. Cf. caption of no. 342 in the corpus.
Six out of seven of them are surrounded by an inner frame painted on the glass, with a red and gold floral decoration in Illustration 91 and nos. 341, 365 and 366, or with a gold border in nos. 353 and 375 of the corpus.

The draperies are of two kinds: those made of quite heavy silk or satin fabrics, which Fatqua treats in a sculptural fashion, using brilliant colours such as an electric blue. This is the case with Hebe’s robe, in Illustration 91, Venus’s robe in no. 342 of the corpus, Virginia’s robe in no. 335 and the Virgin Mary’s in no. 341—the painter creates a contrast between the strong draperies and the soft aikn of the women portrayed; those made of light voile, all soft and transparent, that are used to cover the young women in paintings numbered 365 and 366.

The women’s smiles come from mouths that are pinched at the edges but whose lips are full and fleshy in the centre. The chins are round with their upper part marked by a shadow under the lip.

Fatqua’s ‘business card’, in Illustration 90, is illustrated by the engraving of a Western ship. He wished to show by this that he was able to paint maritime scenes. We also have a gouache on paper of a landscape signed by Fatqua.45

From this information, it seems possible to attribute the following paintings to Fatqua’s workshop:

• Young Woman, no. 366 in the corpus for its resemblance to no. 365, with which it makes a pair;
• Venus and Cupid, no. 343 in the corpus, for the drapery and the inner frame;
• The Apotheosis of Washington, nos. 411 and 412, for the drapery;
• Liberty, no. 414 in the corpus, for the face and the robe.

All the paintings signed by Fatqua or attributed to him here are grouped together in Illustration 92, entitled Fatqua’s workshop.

Analysis of some of these works has enabled some dates to be suggested:

• The portrait of George Augustus, Prince of Wales and the future George IV, shows him in the regalia of Grand Master of the Ancient Honourable Society of Freemasons. His Royal Highness remained Grand Master from 1790 to 1813.
• As Reynolds’ Snake in the Grass was painted in 1785, the reverse glass painting could have been executed after 1785.

Since the novel Paul et Virginie was published in 1789, Augustin Legrand’s engraving could not have been produced until 1790, nor the reverse glass painting until 1791.

Finally, Coyney’s portrait of Madame Récamier was painted in 1802, and could not have reached Canton until 1803. We are therefore able to establish that Fatqua’s workshop was active at least during the period 1785-1803.

46. Taking into account the length of journeys to China.
A study of the overmantel in Illustration 93 contributes some interesting information for determining workshops. The frame was made in England and specialists attribute it to the Lindell Brothers’ workshop, dating it to 1765. It contains twenty-three mirrors, of which nine are painted, from top to bottom and from left to right:

• Still life with vase and bowl of lychees;


• Pair 1: Birds and flowers, pheasants and peonies, water’s-edge landscape on the left; and, on the right, red parrot, peonies and water’s-edge landscape;

• Pair 2: Still life, white and coral vase on the left; and, on the right, a vase of peonies and periwinkles;

• Pair 3: A shepherdess with her sheep in a water’s-edge landscape on the left and, on the right, a young woman in an identical landscape watching a pair of ducks on the water.
The Pair 3 workshop:

- The motif in the first painting of this pair, on the left of the overmantel, belongs to the series of "Beautiful Women in Straw Hats", a series that has received detailed study in Chap. II, page 55. The painting in this overmantel is composed of the following elements, which are shared with nos. 114, 115, 118, 120a and 120b (Illustration 94) in the corpus:
  - The shepherdess, her clothing, her hair and her pose, sitting on a rock with one hand on a basket of flowers with a tall handle, and the other holding a stick;
  - The sheep, a pair and a single one, identical but with their positions reversed from left to right;
  - The tranquil landscape with a river bordered by trees and beautiful villas.

However, it is different in that it is narrower, and includes neither the parts depicting a falconer watching a shepherdess, nor the one with a child playing the flute at the feet of the shepherdess.

These four shepherdesses were painted in the same workshop; no. 118 is in its original Chinese frame, while the other three have been put into English frames.

The motif in the second picture of Pair 3 in the overmantel, on the right, shows a young woman seated, with her hands on a basket of flowers. It is identical to the one in no. 119 of the corpus (which forms a pair with no. 118) and also to no. 167, but narrower, and includes neither the second young woman shown in nos. 119 and 167, nor the child playing the flute, who we see in no. 167. This scene of the child playing the flute at the feet of the young woman is identical in nos. 110 and 113 of the corpus.

Proceeding on the principle that pairs of paintings were the work of a single person, it is possible to attribute the following paintings to the same workshop: nos. 109 (paired with no. 110), 116 (paired with no. 115), 109 (paired with no. 110) and 111 and 112 (close to no. 109).

It is interesting to note, in these shepherdess scenes, that the composition is based on the same elements—the shepherdess herself, the landscape, the flute player, the falconer and the little black and white dog—but put together differently. It therefore seems possible to attribute the Pair 3 paintings in this overmantel, and nos. 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 118, 119, 120 and 167 in the corpus, to a single workshop, which I am naming the shepherdess workshop.

The method of composition in these paintings is not dissimilar to certain traditional eighteenth-century Chinese paintings, combining elements sometimes copied from handbooks of painting motifs such as the "Garden as large as a grain of mustard." This examination and attribution raise the question of the shepherdess workshop’s relationship to Siou-Sin-Saang’s workshop. They share some common features, such as:

- The presence of similar rococo-style frames, like the one on the Drottningholm red drawing room overmantel;
- The little black and white dogs.

However, these features do not appear sufficient to suggest that these two workshops are one and the same.
The very fine series of nineteen outdoor scenes in the Leiden Ethnographic Museum in the Netherlands are all of the same size and have been fully analysed and dated by van Dongen. There is no doubt that they belong to a single workshop, which was active in the 1785-1790 period. Its artist's (or artists') talents were expressed in a wide variety of themes: ceremonies, landscapes, occupations and feasts. The number of scenes portraying the emperor's regal activities, seen particularly in Illustrations 95 and 97, might lead us to think that this workshop had an official standing.

96. The Emperor's Audience. Reverse glass painting. Without frame. 81 x 52.5 cm. Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no.360-1122 XIX. Photo Rights Reserved.

97. The Emperor Ploughing. Reverse glass painting. Without frame. 81 x 52.5 cm. Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no.360-1113 XIX. Photo Rights Reserved.
Over and above the evidence provided by the workshops, it is pos-
able to group paintings by making a comparative analysis of the
works themselves, taking account, also, of the people commission-
ing them and those the works were intended for—indeed, these are
known. Each group of works can be attributed to a particular
workshop. They are listed under different series in this chapter.

Series 1 and 2:
Pair 1 of the overmantel in Illustration 93

This bird and flowers pairing includes, on the left, a golden phasian-
tus on a rock near a river. It is watching a butterfly and sitting under-
neath some large peonies and a flowering magnolia, a set of motifs
that are all traditional Chinese symbols. The pheasant’s pose, the
shape of the peonies and magnolia and the frame itself mean that this
painting is very similar to nos. 6, 7, 18 and 39 in the corpus. The se-
cond of the pair shows a red parrot (a lory bird?) with blue wings
perched on a camellia with a vine climbing up it. Below it are some
peonies and a river, while in front of it a butterfly is flitting. This
scene is very close to no. 20 in the corpus (dated 1765, like the over-
mantel), while the parrot itself appears in the same pose and the same
colours in nos. 21 and 23 of the corpus. It is a lory bird, and more
precisely a lory with a collar. Buffon describes it thus:52

The whole body, including the tail, is a dark blood red, which is precisely the livery of lories; the wing is green, the
top of the head is black ending in purple on the back of the
neck; the legs and the field of the groin are a beautiful blue; the
base of the neck is covered (in males) with a yellow
collar, and it is by this latter characteristic that we thought
we should designate this species.

He adds that these lories are “confined to New Guinea and the Moluc-
cas Islands”: Sonnerat,51 who was much travelled in this region of the
Indonesian Islands, confirms in his turn that “birds of this species
(lories) are only to be found in the Molucca Islands and New Guinea,
those seen elsewhere have all been transported.” The Chinese painter
(1741-1820) that these two workshops in the overmantel’s Pair 2 were in fact one.

Some other series classified by workshop

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Location

The locations of Chinese painting workshops in Canton (not only for reverse glass painting) are given in the list drawn up by Waln in 1819: they were split among Old China Street and New China Street, two shopping streets that ran at right angles to the quay. According to Waln, the reverse glass painter Fatqua worked in New China Street, which is confirmed by his ‘business card’ in Illustration 30. Fifty-six years later, in 1875, J.H. Gray, walking through the streets of Canton, said:

Set back from this watercourse, we entered the street named Ngaan Keng Kai, or the street of spectacle glasses. In this narrow bazaar, Chinese reverse glass paintings and glass lanterns of all shapes and sizes are set out for sale in great numbers. In the small building of the reverse glass painters’ guild, situated in the same street, we saw artists who were very busy painting on glass. They seemed highly amused by the interest we showed in carefully examining the results of their work.

It would seem, then, that these workshops scattered across the two main commercial streets subsequently grouped into guilds and moved to one street, in accordance with the Chinese tradition of streets dedicated to a corporate body such as a guild.

Premises

I have not been able to procure any image, painting or engraving of a reverse glass painter’s workshop. There are, however, several descriptions and engravings of Cantonese workshops belonging to painters on canvas, silk or paper, including the most well-known of them, the painter Lamqua. His workshop has been described several times and its frontage was drawn by Auguste Borget. These descriptions date from 1830 at the earliest, which means the one that these Western visitors mentioned had been rebuilt about ten years earlier because, in 1822, a huge fire had destroyed this whole area of the city. It was situated in New China Street, occupying a three-storey wooden building with, on its façade, a wooden sign in English, reading: ‘Lamqua, handsome face painter’—a little flattery to attract the Western customer. The shop was on the ground floor, and this was where transactions with clients were conducted: commissions and purchases of works painted by the workshop, but also the purchase of artists’ painting materials like paper, brushes, colours, ink and inkstones. On the first floor, several of Lamqua’s assistant painters were busy. The visitors describing these scenes did not say whether each painter created a complete work from start to finish or whether, as for porcelain, painters specialised in particular motifs, like figures, flowers, birds or landscapes. On the second floor, Lamqua, the master himself, would be painting the portraits of Westerners and, at the same time, conversing with them. On the first and second floors were the engravings sent from the West, ready to be transposed in colour on to another medium. This, together with portraits, was an important activity for Lamqua’s workshop.

The painter Tingqua’s workshop was also painted in gouache on paper, probably by the artist himself (Illustration 98). Although the Chinese reverse glass workshops, which preceded the workshops for painting on canvas, were more rustic and probably had fewer employees than Lamqua’s workshop, their organisation and arrangement of space must have been quite similar.
Reverse glass paintings were not among the products that the East India Companies commissioned their supercargoes with buying in Canton. Purchasing these paintings and shipping them to Europe or the United States was a personal affair for supercargoes and seamen, from officers down to simple sailors. They bought them out of their own pockets in order to embellish their houses when they returned, or else to present them as gifts or resell them in the West at a substantial profit. The paintings were therefore part of their personal possessions, the pacotille that they were allowed to carry in the section of the ship’s hold reserved for them. For this reason, the buyers needed neither to officially register these works on the inventory of the ship’s cargo, nor produce any bill for them. This procedure explains why we have been able to find very few documents noting the quantities and prices of reverse glass paintings bought in Canton. Besides which, the time available to develop my thesis, and the number of themes to be dealt with, have not allowed me to research this subject as thoroughly as it deserves by looking for additional information, notably in the company archives. I have relied only on already-published documents.

Unlike European supercargoes, the captains and supercargoes of the Empress of China, the first American ship to go to China in 1783 and 1786, kept quite a precise tally of their purchases, particularly in the form of receipts from their Chinese suppliers. The following receipts have been found:

- October 1784, from Molyneux, 60 12 dollars for a reverse glass painting for Mrs Morris;
- October 1784, from Molyneux, 4 dollars tax for various objects including Mrs Morris’s reverse glass painting;
- July 1786, from S. Hubbart, 61 48 dollars for reverse glass paintings;
- 18 September 1786, from J. Green, 54 dollars for 6 reverse glass paintings;
- 11 December 1786, from J. Green, 24 dollars for taxes on 12 reverse glass paintings and 3 oil paintings;
- December 1786, on behalf of Mr de la Tombe of Boston, 18 dollars for 2 reverse glass painted Venus (the pair).

Analysis of these receipts therefore shows that in 1784-1786, a reverse glass painting was priced at 8 to 10 dollars, to which was added a tax of around one dollar. This price is to be compared with the sum of 2.8 dollars for a large silk parasol, 1 dollar for a teapot or a blue and white porcelain bowl, or 20 to 30 dollars for a piece of embroidered silk. I would finally point out that, in the same year, Mr de la Tombe sold 156 bottles of champagne at 1.5 dollars a bottle to Chinese merchants.

Another comparison of interest is Spaulin’s portrait of Ralph Haskins. The model paid 10 dollars in 1803 for his portrait on canvas, executed in Canton (in two hours, he says!) by the famous painter.

The market in Canton

The market for reverse glass painting from 1720 to 1820: a few figures
The European market for reverse glass paintings involved both:

- **A closed sector**, of sales commissioned by supercargoes of the East India Companies and entrepreneurs specializing in works of art (marchands merciers). These last, who received orders from the upper echelons of society, took part in the sales of cargoes or passed on orders to the supercargoes, who would carry them out. We have been able to find very few documents detailing these transactions.

- **An open sector**, of auction sales, a means of trading that was just beginning in mid-eighteenth-century Europe. Unlike sales in the closed sector, these transactions are known to us through sales catalogues listing the lots for sale and sometimes the prices for which they were sold, noted in handwriting by the auctioneer.

By consulting these French, British and Brussels catalogues65 for the 1750-1830 period, I have been able to draw up Appendix II (page 227) showing the following information about the lots containing Chinese reverse glass paintings:

- Date of the sale and description of the lot;
- Sometimes the auction house and the seller;
- Rarely the price.

These pictures enable us to make the following observations:

**France.** From 1757 to 1787, auction sales took place in Paris. The first sale of Chinese reverse glass paintings, in 1757, for which we know the seller’s name, involved the estate of a Mr Meignen, who was described as a former East India Company Supercargo in China, which testified to the role played by supercargoes in the spread of these paintings. The two largest sales were those of Mr Malenfant, described as a former East India Company Supercargo in China, in 1773 (21 reverse glass paintings) and the Prince of Conti in 1777 (15 reverse glass paintings). From 1787 to 1816, only one sale was organised, in 1799. The seller was the painter and collector Jean-Baptiste Pierre Lebrun. This weak market was due to a revolutionary period marked by the absence of aristocrats, who had been great collectors of reverse glass paintings involved both:

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**Great Britain.** Between 1787 and 1836, sales took place without interruption, mainly in London. Unlike the French sales, most of the sellers were not key figures in the country. There were, however, two exceptions: Queen Charlotte Sophia, wife of George III, whose belongings were sold in 1819, the year following her death, and David Martin, painter to the Prince of Wales, whose Chinese reverse glass paintings were put up for sale in 1799.

As trade with China had resumed and the aristocrats had returned, sales started up again from 1816 in both France and England, although they were slow. The golden age was over in Europe, the public had changed and the fashion for Chinese reverse glass painting would fade permanently in the West with the First Opium War.

**Brussels.** In this city, which was then Austrian, part of the great art collection belonging to the Apostolic Nuncio to Belgium, Molinari, was sold in 1763. It included some reverse glass paintings.

**United States.** The taste for reverse glass paintings started here as soon as the first merchant ship arrived in Canton in 1783. It did not wane until the mid-nineteenth century, but I have no figures to show the number of sales or the prices paid. The only figure available is contained in the meticulous inventory of reverse glass paintings in American museums compiled by Mildred Lee Ward in 1978.66 It records 759 reverse glass paintings, of which 91 are Chinese.

In France

Prices appear to be very diverse: the average price of a reverse glass painting varied within a range of 10 to 30 pounds per piece (the Malenfant sale in 1773) to a range of 60 to 12 pounds per piece (the Prince of Conti’s sale in 1777). It might be interesting to compare these prices with those for works by recognised painters that were sold at the same period in the same auction houses. It would appear that a Chinese reverse glass painting was sold in France at a similar price to a grisaille painting by Boucher in 1770, or a picture on canvas by Framaord in 1777.

**In Great Britain.** From 1787 to 1830 the price range was wide, from 0.1 to 3 pounds per piece, with a slight increase over the period. These prices are comparable to those for drawings (0.15 pounds in 1787), or paintings (3.1 pounds in 1803) by the very fashionable painter Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788). The curator of Shugborough Hall told me67 that the two large Chinese-painted mirrors in the house68 were probably those sold as lots 80 and 81 on 10 February 1780 to a Mr Anson,69 for the sum of 26.5 pounds. This price was apparently very high for two reverse glass paintings, but not for two mirrors of such dimensions, which were rare at the time, and for such fine gilded frames. The Chinese painting itself probably contributed little value.

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65. Through personal visits to Christie’s archives in London, Paris libraries and, on the Getty Foundation website, Getty Provenance Index Databases.


67. Email conversation with the curator, Mrs Gemma Roberts.

68. Nos. 86 and 87 in the corpus.

69. The Anson family were the owners of Shugborough Hall.
The Influence of Chinese Reverse Glass Painting outside China

The present chapter merely serves to outline a few avenues for future research which would be necessary to study the vast subject of Chinese reverse glass painting’s influence outside China. This subject concerns four countries or regions: India, Europe, Vietnam and Indonesia.

India
The family portrait of an Indian noble, Shuja-ud-Daula (1732-1775), Nawab of Oudh and Grand Vizier of the Mughal Empire (Illustration 90) was painted in Canton. It was transposed from an engraving, which was itself produced from a painting by the British artist Tilly Kettle (1735-1786). The style, and particularly the inner frame with stars, allows this painting to be dated to the very end of the eighteenth, or even to the early nineteenth century. It could be attributed to Fatqua.70 The technique of reverse glass painting did not exist in India at the time, and this painting reveals the link which had been established between the Indian aristocracy and Chinese reverse glass painters.

Another painting, no. 91 in the corpus, confirms this link: before it was sold, in 2013, it belonged to the Imperial Princess Durru Shabaz, wife of the Prince of Berar, and therefore to the royal collection of Hyderabad, of which he was crown prince.

This link has two main origins:
In the eighteenth century, Indian merchants, notably Parsees,71 were trading with China and therefore went to Canton. There, they were able to observe the Western taste for Chinese reverse glass paintings, especially for portraits.

By the late eighteenth century, India was gradually becoming part of the British Empire. The British East India Company ships would stop over in India on their way to and from China, to sell or barter Chinese products there. Because of this, Indian nobles discovered the craze for Chinese reverse glass paintings on the part of British aristocrats, particularly for portraits painted by transposing European engravings on to glass. So Indian nobles, in their turn, began to buy Chinese paintings, like the British sending their engraved portraits to be transposed on to glass in Canton.

But they went further than this and, perhaps imitating the Chinese emperor, had Cantonese reverse glass painters brought to their own court. Several of the Indian reverse glass paintings I have had occasion to see are so close to the Chinese manner of painting that they can only be attributed to a painter from that country, although the subject is Indian and the setting indisputably inspired by Mughal miniatures.

Finally, catalogue no. 90 of the Martyn Gregory Gallery features a seascape of the port of Calcutta, on canvas, painted by a Chi-

71. Persian followers of the Zoroastrian religion who migrated to India, producing many of India’s important merchants and industrialists.
like Jaya Appasamy, it therefore appears to me reasonable to assume that the Chinese painters who migrated to India were at the origin of an art that would subsequently flourish there, in parallel with its development in China since, from being an art confined to the court, it would, in the nineteenth century, become a popular art.

Further research is necessary to confirm this hypothesis, and still more to compile a history of this art in India.

Vietnam

One of the largest temples in the city of Huế, in Vietnam, owns and displays on its walls a set of beautiful Chinese reverse glass paintings in Chinese gilded frames with lucky charm carvings. Is this an anomaly? Or is it an example of a close relationship?

Thailand

Several large Buddhist temples in Bangkok have their walls adorned with Chinese reverse glass paintings in beautiful gilded wooden frames.

Indonesia

Reverse glass painting is an art that appeared in Indonesia in the twentieth century. Among the paintings I have had the opportunity to see are some Chinese reverse glass paintings that are very similar to those painted in late nineteenth-century China. They are owned by members of the Chinese community. The detailed research conducted by J. Samuel on Indonesian reverse glass painting will enable us to tell whether there is a historic link between these paintings and Chinese ones.

Europe

Chinese reverse glass painting was not at the origin of European reverse glass painting, which existed well before the eighteenth century. However, it may well have inspired European painters. In 1758, the reverse glass painter Pierre Jouffroy (1718-1796), for example, painted the portrait of the Princess of Conti ‘in Chinese fashion’, the pose, the clothing and the princess’s hairstyle are all inspired by reverse glass portraits of Chinese men and women, particularly by the shepherdess portraits. This link is confirmed by the fact that the Prince of Conti was a great collector of Chinese reverse glass paintings.

In Sweden, where Chinese reverse glass paintings started to arrive from the 1750s, the painter Lorentz Svensson Sparrgren (1763-1828) boarded a Swedish East India Company ship in 1788 with the intention of going to Canton to learn the art of reverse glass painting from the Chinese. On his return, he declared he ‘had learnt to paint on glass in the East Indies and was the only one to know this art’. Although his talent as a miniaturist is well known, the only work on glass by this artist that I have been able to examine does not appear to have been influenced by Chinese painting.


95 The Influence of Chinese Reverse Glass Painting outside China
VI

A Brief History of Reverse Glass Painting from 1720 to 1820
The emergence of Chinese reverse glass painting, around 1720-1730, has been described in detail in Chapter I, "The dawn of reverse glass painting in China." The way it developed, both in China and the West, will be dealt with here.

**Development of the market in China and the West**

The emergence of Chinese reverse glass painting, around 1720-1730, has been described in detail in Chapter I, "The dawn of reverse glass painting in China." The way it developed, both in China and the West, will be dealt with here.

**Development of the Chinese market**

Qianlong, an imperial enthusiast

Although the first European mirrors were painted under the reign of Kangxi, and after that of Yongzheng, it was under the reign of his successor, Qianlong, that reverse glass painting blossomed in China. This monarch had a strong liking for the Western arts and for decorative illusion. He had many trompe-l'œil paintings on the walls of his palaces and admired large mirrors, the sources of these illusions. He was so fond of the reverse glass paintings created in Canton that he had several of these Cantonese painters brought to his court, thus founding the first, and perhaps the only reverse glass painting workshop ever established by a monarch for the decoration of his palaces. It was these painters that Brother Attiret watched at work, so that he could acquire the technique and thus fulfill Emperor Qianlong’s order to paint on mirrors sent from Canton. The sovereign’s requests for reverse glass paintings in 1743 focused on the Chinese motifs described by Attiret: 

… which meant that for three-quarters of the time I was occupied only with painting, either in oil on mirrors, or in water on silk, trees, fruits, birds, fish and animals, but rarely figures.

Although, thanks to Brother Attiret, we know the motifs that were present in the early paintings of this imperial workshop, the documents I have been able to consult have not told me how long the workshop survived, nor how the motifs evolved. To my knowledge, none of the paintings produced by the workshop can be seen today, but I have not had access to the Imperial Palace’s reserves.

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1. Kangxi reigned from 1661 to 1722, Yongzheng from 1722 to 1735, and Qianlong from 1736 to 1796.
3. Between 1723, the date of his enthronement, and 1748, the date when Brother Attiret mentions the fact.
5. Attiret, Frère; Lettres à M. d’Assault, 1743, 1811, 416.
11. Kangxi reigned from 1661 to 1722, Yongzheng from 1722 to 1735, and Qianlong from 1736 to 1796.
13. Between 1723, the date of his enthronement, and 1748, the date when Brother Attiret mentions the fact.
15. Attiret, Frère; Lettres à M. d’Assault, 1743, 1811, 416.
Development of the Western Market

Arrival of the first Chinese reverse glass paintings in Europe

In 1741, in a letter to the Maréchal de Broissia, Brother Attiret had vaunted the qualities of this reverse glass painting, which was new to him:

“This type of painting is all the more beautiful because, seen from a short distance away, it seems as if the figures, animals, landscapes, or any other design is not painted on the mirror but reflected; one’s face can be seen in the gaps left by the paint, which makes for a very attractive variety. This type of painting would not find disfavour in Europe, especially if it were done in good taste…”

Did Brother Attiret simply have a premonition, or did he in fact play a part in the European craze for this Chinese painting, which started during the following years among the European aristocracy? This change alone, which took place outside the period studied in this book, might well be an interesting subject for research. All I will say here is that the Chinese market for reverse glass paintings became a mass market and extended to all the Chinese provinces. It often focused on small works, painted on mirrors made in China, and featuring portraits of young women, or scenes from the Taotie pantheon or from stories. Thus it was that reverse glass paintings became a mass market and extended to all the Chinese provinces. It often focused on small works, painted on mirrors made in China, and featuring portraits of young women, or scenes from the Taotie pantheon or from stories. Thus it was that reverse glass paintings, aristocratic in origin, transformed into a popular art form.

The first mention of a Chinese reverse glass painting arriving in Europe was of six reverse glass paintings of Chinese origin, brought back in 1739 by the captain of the ship London, belonging to the British East India Company.13 The second involves a meeting between a French art lover and a similar painting in 1745, in Port-Louis:

When I was in Port-Louis14 in 1745, I saw a Chinese mirror… where you could see a Chinese lady performing her ablutions. Above her, in a corner, was a parrot on its perch, and behind it, a monkey. Dazzled by the mirror’s beauty and the craftswoman’s skill, I desperately tried to discover by what means I could imitate it.15

This first known description of a mirror painted in China arriving in Europe highlights the fascination and enthusiasm that surrounded this new art, which would re-launch the fashion for chinoiserie that had been created in Europe in the late seventeenth century. It should be pointed out that this mirror was already very elaborate in comparison with those described in Chinese documents dating from 1722, 1731 and 1733, which only indicated floral motifs. It therefore shows that reverse glass portraits of women and compositions with exotic animals had already made their appearance.

The reverse glass paintings mentioned below are those sold in Gothenburg by William Chambers (1723-1796) on his return from China in 1749. For the first time, the painter is known. Chambers named him as Siou-Sin-Saang.16 In my opinion, some of the paintings in the Drottningholm Chinese pavilion should be attributed to him.17 Chambers certainly played an important role in creating the fashion for reverse glass painting in Europe, as he did for two other Chinese arts, architecture and garden design. During the same period, portraits of Swedish East India Company supercargoes were arriving in Sweden.

Europeans were sending mirrors to China to be painted from 1734, as Peter Osbeck, chaplain to the Swedish navy, noted when he was staying in Canton that year:18

Importing mirrors from Europe is forbidden. However, the Europeans bring mirrors with them and have them painted with roses or other flowers, because the Chinese are particularly skilled in doing it.

The aristocratic fashion for mirrors painted with Chinese motifs, 1730-1785

The arrival of the first paintings was followed by a spectacular craze for these works among the European aristocracy: They began to com-

mission them from China19 through the middlemen known as mar-
chandises merchants, who specialised in works of art. European aristocrats adorned their homes with reverse glass paintings, as well as buying and selling them on the European market.

In Sweden

The Swedish aristocracy was the first to become interested in this Chinese art. In 1753, King Adolf Fredrik gave his wife a Chinese pavilion, which he had rebuilt in 1763. In it, mirrors painted in China were displayed. All the principal motifs of Chinese reverse glass painting were already to be found on them: birds and flowers, outdoor scenes in pairs of allegories, and beautiful women.20 I attribute some of these works to Siou-Sin-Saang’s workshop.21 But the aristocracy was not alone in commissioning these paintings with Chinese motifs. On his return to Sweden, Johan Abraham Grill, for example, a supercargo with the Swedish East India Company, sent to Canton a plate of glass to be painted ‘with a pleasant and its mate, perched on a rock with some flowers around them’.22

In England

It was in England that the Chinese market in reverse glass painting underwent the greatest expansion. At the time, the British East India Company was by far the most active of the European companies in China, and William Chambers, a former supercargo with the Swed-
ish East India Company who had become architect to the British crown, devoted himself to spreading the word about Chinese arts, architecture, gardens and reverse glass painting.

In 1763 he had just built a pagoda and pavilion at Kew. Describing the pavilion’s interior, he said: ‘… and a gallery in which, on the wall between the windows, four large mirrors painted in China have been placed’.23

In 1764, the well-known French lawyer, Élie de Beaumont, visiting the home of the British Prime Minister, Robert Walpole, exclaimed:

The Chinese furniture, the tiles, the lathouses, the bird menagerie and particularly the peacocks from China are

11. ATTIRET, Frères, ‘Lettre au Maréchal de Broissia,’ 1741, 1911.
12. Have not been able to consult this report referred to by J. Wirgin in Göram, Alm, 294.
13. Port-Louis was the port to which the French East India Company’s ships were attached.
17. Osbeck, Peter, 1771, 233.
In 1770-1780, many British aristocratic houses were graced with furniture, porcelain, screens, wallpapers and reverse glass paintings made in Canton. Some of these Chinese pieces have been preserved in their original eighteenth-century state, like those at Saltram House (Illustration 102) and at Shugborough Hall. The motifs on these reverse glass paintings are mostly of beautiful women, but there are also some birds and flowers. The rococo-style frames were fashioned by well-known cabinet makers.

It was only from the 1780s that these paintings appeared on the British auction market, and it is evident that the sellers, like the buyers, were not predominantly aristocrats, proving that the market for enthusiasts had extended to the middle classes. The prices being asked for these works could be high, comparable to those for major works.

In France
Like its English neighbours, the French aristocracy fell in love with reverse glass painting, which started appearing in auction sales in 1757. Two important collections were offered for sale when their owners died: in 1774, it was the collection of Mr Malenfant, former valet to the king’s bedchamber, and in 1777, the Prince of Conti’s collection was put up for sale. Today, there is no Chinese reverse glass painting on display anywhere in France, as there was in the eighteenth century, but we do know that the two large paintings owned by Cardinal de Rohan (Illustrations 12 and 13, pages 42-43) must have been in the Château of Salerne in Alsace. They are now in Strasbourg town hall.

The taste of supercargoes and naval officers for reverse glass portraits and views of Canton
From 1740, supercargoes and naval officers passing through Canton realised that, like their aristocratic compatriots or their company directors, whose portraits, painted in Europe, adorned their country houses and offices, they too could have their portraits painted by a painter of quality, and at a price that was more than reasonable. Thus it was that reverse glass painting entered a new stage, with Westerners having their portraits painted—a stage that was to remain very active from 1720 to 1810.

Several manners of painting appeared in succession:
- The model himself was painted from an engraving or miniature, and then placed in a Chinese setting with symbols and a water’s-edge landscape. The first of these that have come down to us are the portraits of Mr and Mrs Pike (Illustrations 44 and 45, pages 86-87), which were painted around 1745.
- Same procedure for the model, but in a plain, mirror setting in the initial period, as in the portraits of Adolf Fredrik, King of Sweden (Illustration 47, page 89) and his wife, painted around 1752, and subsequently covering the whole of the glass.
- With the arrival of the painter Spoilum, the model was, for the first and probably the last time, painted on glass from life. The setting was a water’s-edge landscape, seen or not from the position where the model was posing, be it a room or a veranda. This painter had a ‘very modern’ period when the décor was minimalist—just a room with bare walls, a lattice window looking out at the sky and occasionally a piece of furniture. From 1780, Spoilum preferred to paint in oil on canvas, as did other Chinese portraitists who painted from life.
- Engravings or miniatures were transposed on to glass without any changes being made.

In the years around 1775, views of the port of Canton also appeared, seen from the bank opposite the factories. Painted from life, they are a valuable testimony to the way the port changed and developed throughout the late eighteenth century.

23. Beaumont (de), Elie, 1895, 144 and 145.
From 1780, a way of reverse glass painting appeared that would rapidly take over, namely the direct transposition of engravings and miniatures. The engravings were usually in black and white and imported from Europe, and the drawing was reproduced in its entirety, either freehand, or by placing the engraving under the glass. The painters would then add colour at will.

The market was twofold: there was a market for commissions and a ‘take-away’ one.

The market for commissions

Aristocrats and bourgeois alike, whether European or American, had no hesitation in entrusting Chinese painters with engravings copied from fashionable paintings, but they also authorised them to transpose their portraits, or those of their family and friends, on to glass. Some of them saw a profit to be made, like the American captain who, in 1800, had Gilbert Stuart’s famous portrait of Washington transposed onto glass29 so that he could resell the paintings in the United States at a price akin to the original. Not everybody had this aim in view, and most people simply wished to have a quality colour reproduction of an artwork either in their home or to offer as a gift—something that they would not have been able to afford in Europe or the United States. Those who had the opportunity to go to Canton, or who knew somebody who was going there, could play a part in the composition of the work, as did Andreas van Braam when he had his wife’s portrait painted30 (Illustration 52, page 93). This portrait has an amazingly complex composition, based as it is on several engravings and miniatures carefully chosen by him.

The remarkable skill shown by Chinese painters in depicting female flesh made them popular for transposing mythological or pastoral scenes by François Boucher or Joshua Reynolds, or suggestive scenes known as ‘racy’ ones. The portrait genre was not forgotten,

whether commissioned by the model himself or by somebody wanting to give it to a person with whom he wanted to curry favour. Scen es, which certain Cantonese painters transposed brilliantly, were also very popular.

The ‘take-away’ market

Knowing Westerners’ tastes for certain types of pictures, the Chinese painters made multiple copies of some of their transposed engravings, and offered them to visitors ‘in the shop’. Among these visitors were supercargoes, naval officers and travellers, who found reproductions of fashionable works here. This allowed them to stock up with presents, but also to invest in objects that would make them a handsome profit on their return to the West.

This market also offered ‘souvenirs of Canton’, mainly targeted at sailors. There was a boom in sailors’ farewells, showing a heartrending separation on a quayside, between a departing sailor and his girlfriend who would have to wait for his return. Bawdy scenes also sold well.

This book does not describe this period, as the documents available did not appear sufficient in number to make a thorough study of it. Furthermore, the information I was able to gather did not appear to show any change that had not already been perceptible before 1820.

The obvious lack of interest in this art, on the part of both the Chinese and Western upper classes, was reinforced, and the great Cantonese painters of the time, taking their cue from European taste, now worked only on canvas or paper. Reverse glass painting was the sole preserve of workshops producing ‘souvenirs of Canton’. It had lost what had been its great originality and its exceptional value to the art world, namely a successful artistic union between China and the West.
A rtistic unions between China and the West are rare, and rar-er still are successful attempts to create an art inspired by the two pictorial traditions, which are pleasing to both Chinese and Western art lovers. The first and best known of these productive attempts is represented by Sino-European works of architecture and painting: the summer palace European pavilions, Giuseppe Castiglione’s paintings and Matteo Rupi’s engravings, created by Jesuits under the reign and on the order of Emperor Qianlong (1736–1796). But a second achievement was in Chinese reverse glass painting, which was more surprising because it arose spontaneously, without being ordered by the emperor, and was destined, right from its inception, for both Chinese and Western upper classes. In one of the many pro- cès de l’art, which had its golden age between 1720 and 1820, due simply to their exoticism or decorative qualities. It was the suc- cess of a real art, which had its golden age between 1720 and 1820, due simply to their exoticism or decorative qualities. It was the suc-

But every golden age comes to an end. By 1820, the workshops were devoting themselves exclusively to transposing Western engravings or miniatures on to glass, without any Chinese element. Enthusiasts were no longer to be found among the European or American aristocracy or upper middle classes, but among a much wider public ranging from the European and Ameri-
can middle class to sailors making merry in Canton.

The opening up of China, following the Second Opium War, heralded an amazing transformation in the fortunes of reverse glass painting. From being a product destined for the Chinese aristocracy and export to the West, it became a popular Chinese art which swept through all the provinces of the Middle Empire. This period, al-
though not dealt with here, would certainly merit thorough investi-
gation. I will end this conclusion with a question that has dogged me throughout this research. What was the reason for this artistic con-
fluence and international success for a painting medium that was hardly used in the West and not at all in China? Certainly, as we saw in Chapter I, “The dawn of reverse glass painting in China,” the mir-

It was indeed done in good taste, and I hope that the research in this book provides proof of that. Thus it was that Chinese and Western culture reflected their images onto each other, thanks to works inspired by both cultures and created by simple Chinese artists in the narrow, bustling little streets of eighteenth-century Canton.
Appendix I  Corpus, photos and captions

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N.B. Some Chinese reverse glass paintings have been analysed in Western literature and their photos published. Because of different reasons (low resolution of the photos, conditions of copyright, etc.), these photos could not be presented here. However, it seems to me desirable to quote the books where they are presented. These references are listed at the end of each type, under the title ‘Complementary corpus without photos.’
Chinese motifs
Mirrors with birds and flowers


5. Golden Pheasants and Peonies. Painted mirror. Recent gilded wooden frame. 118 x 79 cm. Circa 1780. All Right Reserved.


Golden Pheasants and Garlands.
Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation. 45 x 82 cm.
Circa 1780.
Courtesy Roger Keverne.

Bird Display. Chrysanthemum and Amanthus Crest of Cock.
Painted bevelled mirror. Rosewood gilded wooden frame, circa 1765. 131 x 67.5 cm.
Circa 1765.
Pair with n° 10.
Ref: Wills, p. 117, ill. 133.
Ronald Phillips Ltd.

Quails, Zemist, Magnolias and Camellias.
Painted Mirror.
Chippendale period gilded wooden frame. 148 x 81.5 cm.
Ronald Phillips Ltd.

Lory, Ducks and Pomegranate.
Painted mirror.
Auburn Chippendale period gilded wooden frame, with 'chinoiserie' motifs. 152.5 x 114.5 cm.
Circa 1765.
[The frame possibly to a design by George Temple (1740-1762)]
Ronald Phillips Ltd.

Parrot or Lori and Camellia.
Painted mirror.
Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation. 40 x 28.6 cm.
Circa 1780.
All Rights Reserved.

Phasianus in Water’s Edge Landscape.
Painted mirrors. 20th century gilded wooden frame. 128.5 x 79.5 cm.
Circa 1765.
Ronald Phillips Ltd.

Phasianus in Water’s Edge Landscape.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame, circa 1800. 89 x 56 cm.
Hand written note on the back: ‘A.B DANIEL & SONS 47, 48, 49, WIGMORE STREET CAVENDISH SQUARE, LONDON’.
Pair with n° 24.
Ref: Child, p. 350, pl. 817.
Ronald Phillips Ltd.

Mandarin Ducks.
Golden Pheasants.
Pair of painted mirrors.
Gilded wooden frame with mirrors. 127 x 75.5 cm.
Circa 1775.
Formerly Holfick’s collection.

Ducks and Pigeons in Water’s Edge Landscape.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame, George II. 110 x 87 cm.
Circa 1750.
Ref: Jourdain M., Jenyns S., p. 100.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

Ducks in Water’s Edge Landscape.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame. 54.5 x 87.5 cm.
Circa 1785.
Formerly Holfick’s collection.

Birds, Flowers and Fruits.
Pair of painted mirrors.
Castle Ward.

Dove and Currants.
Gilded wooden ‘lancet’ frame with mirrors. 64.1 x 53.3 cm.

Parrot and Papayas.
Hexagonal gilded wooden frame with mirrors. 71.1 x 46.3 cm.
Photo: National Trust, Peter Mildy.
Birds and flowers.
Reverse glass paintings.
17 x 22 cm.
Photo: Writing, Bertil Nordiska Museum, Stockholm.

Complementary corpus without photo

Silver Phoenix, Myrrh and Flowers.
Ref. Jonyns, 1965, p. 150, fig. 86.

Pomegranate and Water’s Edge Landscape.
Ref. Jonyns, 1965, p. 150, fig. 87.

Golden Peacocks and Camellias.

Fenian and Bamboo.
Background painted on paper behind the glass.
Ref. N. Berliner, p. 220, cat. 17, plate 35.

Mirrors with birds and flowers

Outdoor Scenes

Outdoor Scene in Southern China.
Pair of painted mirrors.
Gilded wooden frame with mirrors. 175 x 105 cm.
Circa 1780.
Formerly Cardinal de Rohan’s collection.
Strasbourg City Hall.
© Photo Martine Beck Coppola.

Outdoor Scene, Music and Poetry.
Pair of painted mirrors.
Gilded wooden frame, Chippendale period. 165 x 92 cm.
Circa 1770.
Formerly Horlick’s collection.
Courtesy Heritage Art Digital (Arts, London).

Outdoor Scene, Music.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame. 79.7 x 51.4 cm.
Circa 1790.
The Chinese Porcelain Company, New York, NY.

Outdoor Scene, Music, Poetry.
Pair of painted mirrors.
Gilded wooden frame, Louis XV. 80 x 51.3 cm.
Circa 1780.

Outdoor Scene, Music.
Pair of reverse glass paintings.
Gilded wooden frame. 41 x 30 cm.
Circa 1800.

Outdoor Scene, Music.
Painted mirror.
English black japanned frame with gold decoration.
72 x 117 cm.
Circa 1765.
Ronald Phillips Ltd.

Outdoor Scene, Music.
Pair of painted mirrors.
Gilded wooden frame.
35.6 x 65 cm.
Circa 1760.
Dyrham Park.
Photo: National Trust, Susan M. Kracina.

Outdoor Scene, Music.
Pair of reverse glass paintings.
Gilded wooden frame. 40 x 30 cm.
Circa 1800.

Outdoor Scene, Music.
Pair of painted mirrors.
Gilded wooden frame. 35 x 65 cm.
Circa 1760.
Dyrham Park.
Photo: National Trust, Susan M. Kracina.

Outdoor Scene, Music.
Pair of reverse glass paintings.
Gilded wooden frame. 40 x 30 cm.
Circa 1800.

Outdoor Scene, Music.
Pair of reverse glass paintings.
Gilded wooden frame. 40 x 30 cm.
Circa 1800.

Photo Rights Reserved.

Outdoor Scene, Music.
Pair of painted mirrors.
Gilded wooden frame.
35.6 x 65 cm.
Circa 1760.
Dyrham Park.
Photo: National Trust, Susan M. Kracina.

Outdoor Scene, Music.
Pair of reverse glass paintings.
Gilded wooden frame. 40 x 30 cm.
Circa 1800.

Photo Rights Reserved.
Chinese motifs
Outdoor Scenes

57 Outdoor Scene, Music.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame, George III.
103 x 77 cm.
Circa 1800.
Formerly Horlick’s Collection.
Courtesy Sotheby’s Art Digital Studio.

58 Outdoor Scene, Music.
Painted mirror.
Oval black lacquered frame with
gilded decoration.
56 x 30 cm.
Circa 1810.
© National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery.

59 Outdoor Scene, Poetry.
Painted mirror.
Chinese hardwood frame.
66 x 40.6 cm.
Circa 1770.
Formerly Horlick’s collection.
Ronald Phillips Ltd.

60 Outdoor Scene, Poetry.
Painted mirror.
Chinese reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame with bamboo motifs.
76.8 x 51.3 cm.
Circa 1770.
Ronald Phillips Ltd.

61 Outdoor Scene, Poetry.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame with bamboo motifs.
73.5 x 88 cm.
Circa 1765.
Ronald Phillips Ltd.

62 Outdoor Scene, Poetry.
Painted bevelled mirror.
Gilded wooden frame.
56.5 x 43.5 cm.
Circa 1825.
Formerly Horlick’s collection.
Courtesy Sotheby’s Art Digital Studio.

63 Outdoor Scene, Poetry.
Painted mirror.
Russian reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame, middle of 18th century.
172 x 52 cm.
Collection of Catherine II, Empress of Russia.
The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.
photo: Vladimir Terebenin.

64 Outdoor Scene, Poetry.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame.
57.5 x 82.5 cm.
Circa 1780.
Formerly Horlick’s collection.
Courtesy Sotheby’s Art Digital Studio.

65 Outdoor Scene, Poetry.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
43.5 x 28.7 cm.
Circa 1770.
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

66 Outdoor Scene, Poetry.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
43.5 x 28.7 cm.
Circa 1750.
© National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery.

67 Romantic Scene.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame.
49.5 x 52.1 cm.
Dyrham Park.
Photo: National Trust, Seamus McKenna.

68 The Aristocrat, the Beauty and the Falcon.

69 Water’s Edge Landscape.
Pair of painted mirrors.
Gilded wooden frame, with bamboo motifs, 
George III.
67 x 56 cm.
Circa 1770.
Ronald Phillips Ltd.

© All Rights Reserved.
Chinese motifs

Outdoor Scenes

70 The Aristocrat, the Beauty and the Falcon. Painted mirror. Gilded wooden frame. 43 x 54 cm. Circa 1780. Courtesy Sotheby's/Art Digital Studio.


72 The Aristocrat, the Beauty and the Falcon. Outdoor Scene. Pair of painted mirrors. Rosewood frame. 56.5 x 86.5 cm. Circa 1760. All Rights Reserved.

73 The Aristocrat, the Beauty and the Falcon. Reverse glass painting. Hardwood frame. 40 x 29.5 cm. Circa 1800. Photo Bukowskis Auctions.


75 Emperor XuanZong and Yang Guifei. Painted mirror. Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation. 29 x 20 cm. Circa 1780. Ronald Phillips Ltd.

76 Emperor XuanZong and Yang Guifei. Reverse glass painting. Unframed. 52.5 x 81 cm. 1785-1790. Ref. van Dongen, fig. 3. National Museum van Wereldculturen, coll. no 360.1120 XIII. Photo Rights Reserved.

77 Outdoor Scene. Painted mirror. Gilded wooden frame. 82.5 x 89 cm. Circa 1770. Formerly Hinckley's collection. Courtesy Sotheby's/Art Digital Studio.

78 Outdoor Scene. Painted mirror. Gilded wooden frame. 51 x 38 cm. Ronald Phillips Ltd.


85 In the Garden. Gilded wooden frame. 84.5 x 54.6 cm. Circa 1790. Courtesy Roger Keverne.
Chinese motifs

Outdoor Scenes

85, 87 In the Garden.
Pair of painted mirrors.
Gilded wooden frame.
115 x 85 cm.
Shugborough Hall, Staffordshire.
Photo: National Trust, Sophie Bearley.

88, 89 In the Garden.
Pair of painted mirrors.
Gilded wooden frame.
[The two frames could be juxtaposed to compose a single scene].
139.7 x 84.5 cm.
Circa 1790.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

90 In the Garden.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame, George III.
101.5 x 84.5 cm.
Circa 1780.
Roedl Phillips Ltd.

91 In the Garden.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame.
91.5 x 60 cm.
Formerly collection of Imperial Indian Princess Durru Shevar.

92, 93 In the Garden.
Pair of painted mirrors.
Black lacquered and gilded wooden frame.
40 x 37.8 cm.
Circa 1770.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

94 Enjoying Eating Fruit.
Reverse glass painting.
Unframed.
52.5 x 81 cm.
1785-1790.
Ref. Van Dongen, fig. 5.
Nationale Museum van Wereldculturen, coll. n°360-1119 XIII.
Photo Rights Reserved.

95 A Summer Garden Scene.
Reverse glass painting.
Unframed.
52.5 x 81 cm.
1785-1790.
Ref. Van Dongen, fig. 5.
Nationale Museum van Wereldculturen, coll. n°360-1129 XIII.
Photo Rights Reserved.

96, 97 In the Veranda.
[Two painted mirrors with same motif but different colors.
European black lacquered frames with gilded foliation with a triangular prop backside — table mirror?]
96 In the Veranda.
52 x 39.8 cm.
Circa 1780.
Ref. Child, p. 360, fig. 852.
97 In the Veranda.
64 x 55 cm.
Circa 1780.
Ref. Howard, p. 150, fig. 181.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

98 In the Veranda.
Reverse glass painting.
Unknown frame.
44 x 49 cm.
Circa 1790.
All Rights Reserved.

99 Two Women in an Interior.
Reverse glass painting.
Black lacquered frame.
39 x 52.5 cm.
Circa 1790.
Courtesy of the American Museum in Britain.

100 In the Veranda.
Reverse glass painting.
Unknown frame.
36.8 x 29.2 cm.
Circa 1790.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

Complementary corpus without photo

101 Outdoor Scene, Art of Verse.
Ref. Jenyns 1965, p. 150, fig. 88.

102 Outdoor Scene, Poetry.

103 The Meet.
Ref. Jenyns 1965, p. 153, fig. 89.

104 In the Garden.

105 In the Veranda.
Ref. Jourdain M., Jenyns S., p. 106, fig. 64.

106 In the Veranda.

107 Outdoor Scene, Music.
Ref. Göram Alm, Wirgin J., p. 100.

108 Outdoor Scene, Art of Music.
Chinese motifs

‘Beautiful women’


110 The Voice of Youth. Pair of painted mirrors. Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation. 54 x 87.5 cm. Circa 1780. Formerly Horlick’s collection. Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.


112 Young Woman and Old Fisher Man. Reverse glass painting. Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation. 41 x 27.5 cm. Photo Bukowskis Auctions.

113 Young Woman, Flute Player and Falconer. Painted mirror. Reverse gilded wooden frame, George III. 54 x 87.5 cm. Circa 1780. Formerly Horlick’s collection. Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

114 Shepherdess, Flute Player and Falconer. Painted overmantel mirror. Reverse gilded wooden frame, George III. 91.5 x 146 cm. Circa 1780. All Rights Reserved.


124 **Young Woman in a Blue Veil.**

Pair of painted mirrors.
Reverse gilded wooden frame.
Unknown size.
Circa 1780.

Pieter Legrels.

125 **Shepherdess.**

Reverse glass painting.
Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation.
40.7 x 30.5 cm.
Circa 1780.

Vitromusée Romont (loan from Vitrocentre Romont, collection R. et F. Ryser).
Ref. Ryser, 1991, p. 225, fig. 257
© Vitrocentre Romont, photo: Yves Eigenmann, Fribourg.

126 **La bonne bergère.**

Reverse glass painting.
Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation.
40.7 x 30.5 cm.
Circa 1790.
Steiner collection Inv. Nr. HGS 451.
Photo Rights Reserved.

127 **Shepherdesses.**

Pair of reverse glass paintings.
Oval black wooden frames.
7.6 x 6.3 cm.
Circa 1780.

Martyn Gregory Gallery.

128 **Musiciens.**

Pair of painted mirrors.
Lacquered geometric frame.
84 x 100 cm.
Circa 1790.

© National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery.

129 **Woman in the Straw Hat.**

Young Woman in a Blue Veil.
Pair of painted mirrors.
Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation.
28 x 27 cm.
Circa 1770.

Ref. Child, pp. 367, 368, fig. 827, 828.
Courtesy Sotheby's/Art Digital Studio.

130 **Young Woman in the Straw Hat.**

Young Woman in a Blue Veil.
Pair of reverse glass paintings.
Oval black wooden frames.
52 x 39 cm.
Circa 1780.

Courtesy Galerie Sylvain Levy-Aldi.

131 **Young Woman in the Straw Hat.**

Painted mirror.
Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation.
11.4 x 9.5 cm.
Circa 1780.

Ref. Jourdain M., Jenyns S., p. 103, fig. 59
All Rights Reserved.

132 **Young Women in the Straw Hat.**

Pair of reverse glass paintings.
Octogonal wooden frames.
4.4 x 5.1 cm.
Circa 1800.

Martyn Gregory Gallery.

133 **Young Woman with Little Dog.**

Pair of reverse glass paintings.
Oval wooden frames.
11.4 x 9.5 cm.
Circa 1800.

Martyn Gregory Gallery.

134 **Young Woman with Lori.**

Painted mirror.
Rosewood frame.
66.5 x 53.5 cm.
Circa 1770.

Ref. Jourdain M., Jenyns S., p. 103, fig. 59
All Rights Reserved.

Chinese motifs

‘Beautiful women’
Young Woman in the Straw Hat. Painted mirror.
Unknown frame. 12 x 16 cm.
Circa 1790.
All Rights Reserved.

Young Woman riding a horse.
Pair of painted mirrors. Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation. 65 x 45 cm.
Circa 1780.
© National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery

Young Woman Riding a Buffalo.
Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation. 46.8 x 42.2 cm.
Saltram House, Devon.
Photo: National Trust, Sophia Farley, Denis Madge

Old Man and Young Woman. Painted mirror.
Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation. 46.8 x 42.2 cm.
Saltram House, Devon.
Photo: National Trust, Sophia Farley, Denis Madge

Young Woman Fishing.
Pair of reverse glass paintings. Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation. 52 x 39 cm.
Circa 1800.
[It could represent the legend of the Taoist Immortal Lang Caihe ’crossing the sea on a raft’]
All Rights Reserved.

Young Woman Fishing. Two painted mirrors with the same motif.
Same rococo gilded wooden frame. Different sizes:
148: 42 x 26 cm.
149: 110 x 64 cm.
Saltram House, Devon.
Photo: National Trust, Sophia Farley, Denis Madge

Young Woman with a Lari. Painted bevelled mirror.
Hardwood frame. 96 x 49 cm.
Circa 1770.
Courtesy Sotheby’s Art Digital Studio

Young Woman in a Blue Veil. Painted mirror.
Carved and lacquered wood frame. 74 x 47 cm.
Circa 1780.
Courtesy Sotheby’s Art Digital Studio

Young Woman on a Sampan. Painted mirror.
Carved wood frame. Unknown size.
Ref. Child, p. 377, fig. 815
[According the newspaper the woman would be concubine Xiang Fei (London News, ‘Christmas’, n°20, 1900)].
Photo Rights Reserved.

Young Woman with Little Dogs. Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame. 71.1 x 74.9 cm.
Circa 1810.
Ref. Sparkle III. E.
Photo Rights Reserved.

Young Woman on a Sampan. Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame. 74 x 47 cm.
Circa 1780.
Courtesy Sotheby’s Art Digital Studio

Young Woman in a Blue Veil. Painted mirror.
Carved and lacquered wood frame. 23.5 x 18.5 cm.
Circa 1770.
© Bonhams

Young Woman with Little Dogs. Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame. 23.5 x 18.5 cm.
Circa 1770.
© Bonhams

Young Woman in the Straw Hat. Painted mirror.
Unknown frame. 12 x 16 cm.
Circa 1790.
All Rights Reserved.

Chinese reverse glass painting
1720-1820

Young Woman in the Straw Hat. Painted mirror.
Unknown frame. 12 x 16 cm.
Circa 1790.
All Rights Reserved.

Young Woman Riding a Buffalo.
Pair of painted mirrors. Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation. 65 x 45 cm.
Circa 1780.
© National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery

Young Woman Riding a Buffalo.
Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation. 46.8 x 42.2 cm.
Saltram House, Devon.
Photo: National Trust, Sophia Farley, Denis Madge

Old Man and Young Woman. Painted mirror.
Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation. 46.8 x 42.2 cm.
Saltram House, Devon.
Photo: National Trust, Sophia Farley, Denis Madge

Young Woman Fishing.
Pair of reverse glass paintings. Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation. 52 x 39 cm.
Circa 1800.
[It could represent the legend of the Taoist Immortal Lang Caihe ‘crossing the sea on a raft’]
All Rights Reserved.

Young Woman Fishing. Two painted mirrors with the same motif.
Same rococo gilded wooden frame. Different sizes:
148: 42 x 26 cm.
149: 110 x 64 cm.
Saltram House, Devon.
Photo: National Trust, Sophia Farley, Denis Madge

Young Woman with a Lari. Painted bevelled mirror.
Hardwood frame. 96 x 49 cm.
Circa 1770.
Courtesy Sotheby’s Art Digital Studio

Young Woman in a Blue Veil. Painted mirror.
Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation. 52 x 39.5 cm.
Circa 1800.
Courtesy Sotheby’s Art Digital Studio

Young Woman in a Blue Veil. Painted mirror.
Carved and lacquered wood frame. 74 x 47 cm.
Circa 1780.
Courtesy Sotheby’s Art Digital Studio

Young Woman on a Sampan. Painted mirror.
Carved wood frame. Unknown size.
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[According the newspaper the woman would be concubine Xiang Fei (London News, ‘Christmas’, n°20, 1900)].
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Young Woman on a Sampan. Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame. 74 x 47 cm.
Circa 1780.
Courtesy Sotheby’s Art Digital Studio

Young Woman in a Blue Veil. Painted mirror.
Carved and lacquered wood frame. 23.5 x 18.5 cm.
Circa 1770.
© Bonhams

Young Woman with Little Dogs. Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame. 71.1 x 74.9 cm.
Circa 1810.
Ref. Sparkle III. E.
Photo Rights Reserved.

Young Woman on a Sampan. Painted mirror.
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Circa 1780.
Courtesy Sotheby’s Art Digital Studio

Young Woman in a Blue Veil. Painted mirror.
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Photo Rights Reserved.

Young Woman on a Sampan. Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame. 74 x 47 cm.
Circa 1780.
Courtesy Sotheby’s Art Digital Studio

Young Woman in a Blue Veil. Painted mirror.
Carved and lacquered wood frame. 23.5 x 18.5 cm.
Circa 1770.
© Bonhams

Young Woman with Little Dogs. Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame. 71.1 x 74.9 cm.
Circa 1810.
Ref. Sparkle III. E.
Photo Rights Reserved.

Young Woman on a Sampan. Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame. 74 x 47 cm.
Circa 1780.
Courtesy Sotheby’s Art Digital Studio

Young Woman in a Blue Veil. Painted mirror.
Carved wood frame. Unknown size.
Ref. Child, p. 377, fig. 815
[According the newspaper the woman would be concubine Xiang Fei (London News, ‘Christmas’, n°20, 1900)].
Photo Rights Reserved.
Chinese motifs

‘Beautiful women’

166 Young Woman on a Sampan.
Painted mirror.
Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation.
34.6 x 44 cm.
Circa 1810.
All Rights Reserved.

167 Young Woman on a Sampan.
168 Young Woman and Lychees.
Pair of painted mirrors.
Chinese Chippendale frame.
49.5 x 32 cm.
Circa 1820.
The two frames could be juxtaposed to compose a single scene.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

169 Young Woman on a Sampan.
Painted mirror.
Oval gilded wooden frame.
62 x 52.4 cm.
Circa 1800.
Ref. Child, p. 365, fig. 625.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

170 Reading on Water’s Edge.
Painted mirror.
Rococo gilded wooden frame.
130.8 x 81.3 cm.
Circa 1770.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

171 Woman Playing Flute on Water’s Edge.
Painted mirror.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
43 x 30.1 cm.
Circa 1775.
Ref. Child p. 366, fig. 826.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

172 Young Woman and Flute Player.
Painted mirror.
Later gilded wooden frame.
94 x 89 cm.
Circa 1770.
Ref. Child, p. 340, fig. 816.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

173 Matsubayashi Session.
Painted mirror.
Recessed gilded wooden frame.
42 x 26 cm.
Circa 1765.
Ref. Child, p. 340, fig. 816.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

174 Young Woman and Beared Man.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame.
50 x 40 cm.
Circa 1770.
© Bonhams.

175 Women with Flower and Fan.
Painted mirror.
Later gilded wooden frame.
35 x 18 cm.
Circa 1770.
Ref. Child, p. 352, fig. 822.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

176 Shepherdess and Flute Player.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame.
Unknown sizes.
Shugborough Hall, Staffordshire.
Photo: National Trust, Sophia Farley.

177 Reading on Water’s Edge.
Painted mirror.
European gilded wooden frame.
55 x 57 cm.
Circa 1775.
Formerly Hinshelwood’s collection.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

178 Young Woman on Water’s Edge.
Painted mirror.
Recessed gilded wooden frame.
190 x 81.3 cm.
Circa 1770.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.
171 Child Games.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame, George III.
43 x 114 cm.
Circa 1780.
Formerly Horlick’s collection.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

172 Games in the Garden.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
82.5 x 50.8 cm.
Circa 1810.
Courtesy Roger Keverne.

173, 174 In the Countryside.
Pair of reverse glass paintings.
Black lacquered frames with gilded lineaments.
49 x 47.5 cm.
Circa 1780.
© National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery.

175 Two Young Women.
Painted mirror.
Oval gilded metal frame with precious stones.
26 x 32 cm.
Circa 1800.
All Rights Reserved.

176 Princesses in a Pavilion.
Painted mirror.
Black lacquered frame with gilded filiation.
91.4 x 75 cm.
Circa 1780.
(photograph: Richard Goodbody).

177 Princesses in a Pavilion.
Gilded wooden frame.
80 x 60 cm.
Circa 1780.
© National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery.

178 Daydreams on Water’s Edge.
Painted mirror.
Reverse gilded wooden frame.
Onslow Park and House, London.
Circa 1767.
Photo: National Trust, Christopher Warleigh-Lack.

179 Young Lady on Water’s Edge.

180 Lady on Water’s Edge.
Pair of painted mirrors.
Black lacquered frame with gilded filiation.
42 x 37 cm.
Circa 1800.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

181 Lady on Water’s Edge.
182 Young Lady on Her Veranda.
 Pair of painted mirrors.
Hardwood frame.
26.3 x 20.5 cm.
Circa 1790.
Ref. Weirs, p. 296, fig.305.

183 Young Mother.
Painted mirror.
Reverse gilded wooden frame.
110.5 x 63.5 cm.
Circa 1790.
Formerly Horlick’s collection.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

184 Daydreams.
Painted mirror.
Black lacquered frame with gilded filiation.
44 x 34 cm.
Circa 1800.
© Bonhams.

Young Woman on Her Veranda. Painted mirror. Gilded wooden frame. 66 x 50 cm. Circa 1780. Formerly Holstid’s collection. Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.


Walk along the Water’s Edge. Painted mirror: Gilded wooden frame, circa 1900. 82 x 56 cm. Circa 1765. Ronald Phillips Ltd.


Young Lady on Her Veranda. Pair of painted mirrors. Gilded wooden frames. 45 x 30 cm. Circa 1800. Formerly Horlick’s collection. Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.


Breastfeeding.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame.
71 x 55.8 cm.
Circa 1810.
photo: Richard Goodbody.

Young Girl Styling.
Painted mirror.
Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation.
52 x 40 cm.
Circa 1780.
Courteney Swords Fine Art Auctioneers.

Young Woman with Falcon.
Painted mirror.
Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation.
52 x 42 cm.
Circa 1750.
photo: Richard Goodbody.

Young Woman with a Little Dog.
Reverse glass painting.
 Vernished wooden frame with gilded lineament.
31.1 x 26.7 cm.
Circa 1790.
photo: Richard Goodbody.

Portrait de femme.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
45.9 x 40.4 cm.
Circa 1790.
Vitromusée Romont (loan from Vitrocentre Romont, collection R. et F. Ryser).
© Vitromusée Romont; photo: Yves Eigenmann, following.

Young Girl with a Fan.
Reverse glass painting.
Oval gilded wooden frame.
23 x 17.5 cm.
Photo: Nikolai Langed.

Courtier.
Reverse glass paintings.
Gilded wooden frames with carved symbols motifs.
29 x 44 cm.
Circa 1815.
© National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery.

Lady and Child.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frames with carved symbols.
29 x 40 cm.
Circa 1815.
© National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery.

Hostess and Customer.
Pair of painted mirrors.
Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation.
46 x 42 cm.
Circa 1780.
Saltram House, Devon.
Photo: National Trust, Sophie Alday, Denis Madge.

Complementary corpus without photo

Young Woman on a Sampan.
Ref. Child, p. 377, fig. 815.

Daydream on Water's Edge.
Ref. Child, p. 381, fig. 831.

Daydream on Water’s Edge.

Woman and Horses on Water’s Edge.
Ref. Schwieger, fig. 277.

Reading on Water’s Edge.
Ref. Jordan M., Jenyns S., p. 103, fig. 63.

Wish in a Garden.
Ref. Child, pp. 376, 384, fig. 844.

Beautiful women
Chinese motifs
Portraits of Chinese dignitaries


221 Mandarin. Reverse glass painting. Gilded wooden frame. 61.5 x 55 cm. Circa 1780. Photo: Segemark, Peter, Nordiska museet, Stockholm.

222 Bearded Hong Merchant. Reverse glass painting. Unknown frame. 45.7 x 35.6 cm. Circa 1800. Martin Grygaard Gallery.

223 Scholar (European?). Painted mirror. Gilded wooden frame. 92 x 57 cm. © Farver & associates.


225 Mandarin.


227 High Rank Mandarin.

228 Wife of the Mandarin. Pair of painted mirrors. Reverse gilded wooden frames. 135 x 64 cm. Courtesy Galerie Sylvain Levy-Albin.

229 Young Aristocrat.


231 Young Aristocrat.


234 Aristocrat with Falcon. Painted mirror. Gilded wooden frame. 58 x 88 cm. [Lord Clive, father of the first Duke of Powis was one of the directors of East India Company and has been posted in India in 1757.] Ref. Howard, 1997, p. 151, fig. 194. Formerly Powis Castle’s Collection. Courtesy Sophia Art Digital Studio.


236 Young Chinese Dignitaries.


238 Young Aristocrat.

Chinese motifs

Landslapes

236 View of the Foreign Factories at Canton.
Oil paint, watercolor, gouache, glass, enameled.
39.5 x 59.7 cm.
Circa 1805.

237 The Hong of Canton.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
33.7 x 49.5 cm.
Circa 1830.
Martin Gregory Gallery.

238 Factories in Canton.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
33.7 x 49.5 cm.
Circa 1830.
Martin Gregory Gallery.

239 Factories in Canton.
Reverse glass painting.
Unknown frame.
40 x 35 cm.
Circa 1780.
Courtesy Galerie Buchholz London.

240 The Quayside at Canton.
Reverse glass painting.
Unframed.
52.5 x 81 cm.
1785-1790.
Ref. Van Dongen, fig. 1.
Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen.
Coll. n°360-1119 XIX.
Ref. van Dongen, fig. 2.
Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen.
Coll. n°360-1119 XIX.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

241 Whampoa Anchorage.
Reverse glass painting.
Unknown frame.
54.2 x 34.5 cm.
Circa 1800.
© Bonhams.

242 The Route of Whampoa.
Reverse glass painting.
Unframed.
52.5 x 78 cm.
Circa 1785-1790.
Ref. van Dongen, fig. 2.
Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen.
Coll. n°360-1119 XIX.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

243 Western Ships in an Estuary.
Reverse glass painting.
Sandalwood frame with Chinese motifs.
112 x 71 cm.
Circa 1780.
Courtesy Sotheby’s Art Digital Studio.

244 The Great Valley.
Reverse glass painting.
Unknown frame.
63.5 x 91.5 cm.
Circa 1810.
All Rights Reserved.

245 Landscapes.
Pair of reverse glass paintings.
Gilded wooden frames.
40.6 x 53.3 cm.
Circa 1790.
Martin Gregory Gallery.

246 Landscape (detail).
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
35 x 27 cm.
Circa 1790.
Author’s collection.

Complementary Corpus

248 Mountains Landscape.
Ref. Granville, 1933, p. 368.

249 The Great Valley.
Ref. Crossmann, p. 207, fig. 107.

250 Factories in Canton.
Ref. Crossmann, p. 26, fig. 56.

251, 252 Water’s Edge Landscapes.
Ref. N. Berliner, p. 75, 176, fig. 52.

253, 254 Landscapes.
Ref. Yang Roda, p. 138, fig. 91, 92.
Other Chinese motifs


256 The Emperor’s Audience. Reverse glass painting. Unframed. 1785-1790. 81 x 52.5 cm. Ref. Van Dongen, fig. 12. Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, coll. n°360-1122 XIX. Photo: Rights Reserved.

257 The Emperor’s Audience. Reverse glass painting. Unframed. 1785-1790. 81 x 52.5 cm. Ref. Van Dongen, fig. 13. Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, coll. n°360-1113 XIX. Photo: Rights Reserved.


259 A Palace Feast. Reverse glass painting. Unframed. 1785-1790. 81 x 52.5 cm. Ref. Van Dongen, fig. 7. Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, coll. n°360-1114 XIX. Photo: Rights Reserved.


265 From Clay to Pot. Reverse glass painting. Unframed. 1785-1790. 81 x 52.5 cm. Ref. Van Dongen, fig. 11. Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll. n°360-1126 XIX. Photo: Rights Reserved.


Multiple mirrors

268 Cithar Player
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
20 x 30 cm.
Circa 1770.
[Element of a series of ten paintings of young women playing different Chinese music instruments.]
Chinese pavilion in Drottningholm Palace, Stockholm.

269 Flute (dizi) Player
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
25.4 x 20.3 cm.
Circa 1810.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

270 Mouth-Organ (Sheng) Player
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
38.7 x 31.1 cm.
Circa 1810.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

271 Still life
Reverse glass painting.
Varnished and gilded wooden frame.
35.6 x 45.7 cm.
Circa 1810.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

272 Cabinet Windows
Twenty six painted mirrors.
Varnished wooden frame.
153 x 54 cm.
Circa 1760.
Ronald Phillips Ltd.

273 Overmantel Mirror
Sixteen mirrors, nine painted.
English gilded wooden frame, George III, 1765.
147 x 185 cm.
Circa 1765.

274 Overmantel Mirror
Twenty four mirrors, three painted.
Reverse glass wooden frame.
188.5 x 173 cm.
Circa 1765.
All Rights Reserved.

275 Overmantel Mirror
Eleven mirrors, three painted.
Reverse glass wooden frame.
148 x 165 cm.
All Rights Reserved.

276 Overmantel Mirror
Nineteen mirrors, ten painted.
Gilded wooden frame.
270 x 120 cm.
Circa 1760.
Chinese pavilion in Drottningholm Palace, Stockholm.

277 Overmantel Mirror
Eleven mirrors, three painted.
Gilded wooden frame.
148 x 185 cm.
Circa 1760.

278a Portrait of John Pike
Painted mirrors.
Lacquered and gilded wooden frames.

278b Portrait of Pitt Pike
Pair of painted mirrors.
Lacquered and gilded wooden frames.

279 Note on the backside:

[According to the note at the back of the painting, now mostly destroyed, the painting and its twin paintings depict the Supercargo on the Swedish East India Company’s service John Pike and his wife, whose daughter Anna Elisabet married the Supercargo in the same company’s services Jakob von Utby. The paintings have since turned into my grandfather’s possession and from him to his son Carl Peter Wilhelm Ramnus and from him to me. In my youth, the depicted persons always were always called Lord and Lady Pike. Linköping, November 15, 1934. C H. Ramsay]

70 X 45 cm.
Circa 1740.
Ref. Wirgin, 1991, p. 17, fig. 4; Kjellberg, 1974, p. 56.
Photo: Anneli Karlsson, Sjöhistoriska Museet, Stockholm.

279 Portraits of Westerners

280 Portrait of Fredrick Beyer
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame.
99 x 77 cm.
Circa 1750.
Ref. Listof Lannof, Söderpalm, p. 144, fig. 1.
Photo: Leifandean Olof, Courtesy Göteborgs Kunstmuseum.
Western motifs
Portraits of Westerners

281 Portrait of Anders Gadd.
Painted mirror.
Oval gilded wooden frame.
35.8 x 29 cm.
Circa 1765.
Ref. Lööf Larsolof, Söderpalm, p. 147, fig. 3.
Courtesy Göteborgs Stadsmuseum.

Painted mirror.
Oval gilded wooden frame.
35.8 x 29 cm.
Circa 1765.
Ref. Lööf Larsolof, Söderpalm, p. 147, fig. 3.
Courtesy Göteborgs Stadsmuseum.

283 Portrait of King Adolf Fredrick.

284 Portrait of Queen Louise of Stockholm.
Pair of painted mirrors.
Gilded wooden frames by Carl Harleman.
115 x 69 cm.
1750-1759.
Nordiska museet, Stockholm.
Photo: Vrigsberget.

285 Unidentified Englishman in a Veranda.
[Portrait of Colin Campbell?]
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame.
75 x 49.8 cm.
1774.
Hand written note on the back: ‘Drawn October the… at Canton in China/Spillem in the year 1774.’
Ref. Conner, 1998, fig. VI.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

286 Portrait of Thomas Fry.
Painted mirror.
Unknown frame.
38 x 25.4 cm.
254.
Hand written note on the back: ‘Drawn October the… at Canton in China/Spillem in the year 1774.’
Ref. Conner, 1998, fig. VI.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

287 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
29.4 x 23.7 cm.
Circa 1790.
Ref. Crossman, p. 204.
Courtesy Richard Milhender.

288 Portrait of a Western Merchant in a Red Jacket.
Painted mirror.
Original cantonese frame.
27.3 x 21 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

289 Portrait of Anders Gadd.
Painted mirror.
Oval gilded wooden frame.
35.8 x 29 cm.
Circa 1765.
Ref. Lööf Larsolof, Söderpalm, p. 147, fig. 3.
Courtesy Göteborgs Stadsmuseum.

290 Portrait of an English Gentleman.
Painted mirror.
Hardwood frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Ref. Crossman, p. 34, fig. 3.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

291 Portrait of Queen Louisa Ulrika.
Pair of painted mirrors.
Gilded wooden frames by Carl Harleman.
115 x 69 cm.
1750-1759.
Nordiska museet, Stockholm.
Photo: Vrigsberget.

292 Portrait of a Western Merchant.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
25.4 x 20.3 cm.
Circa 1775.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

293 Portrait of a Rich Merchant.
Gilded wooden frame.
Painted mirror.
70 x 57.5 cm.
1780.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

294 Portrait of a Naval Officer.
Painted mirror.
Red lacquered wooden frame.
45 x 33 cm.
Circa 1780.
© National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery.

295 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

296 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

297 Portrait of an English Gentleman.
Painted mirror.
Hardwood frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Ref. Crossman, p. 34, fig. 3.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

298 Portrait of Captain Cranston.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

299 Portrait of a Rich Merchant.
Reverse glass painting.
Lacquered frame with gilded foliation.
39.4 x 34.9 cm.
Circa 1800.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

300 Portrait of a Rich Merchant.
Reverse glass painting.
Lacquered frame with gilded foliation.
39.4 x 34.9 cm.
Circa 1800.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

301 Portrait of an European Merchant.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
25.4 x 20.3 cm.
Circa 1775.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

302 Portrait of a Western Merchant (2).
Painted mirror.
Lacquered frame with gilded foliation.
24 x 18 cm.
Circa 1780.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

303 Portrait of a Western Merchant (3).
Painted mirror.
Lacquered frame with gilded foliation.
24 x 18 cm.
Circa 1780.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

304 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Lacquered frame with gilded foliation.
24 x 18 cm.
Circa 1780.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

305 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Lacquered frame with gilded foliation.
24 x 18 cm.
Circa 1780.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

306 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Lacquered frame with gilded foliation.
24 x 18 cm.
Circa 1780.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

Gilded wooden frame.
Painted mirror.
70 x 57.5 cm.
1780.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

308 Portrait of a Western Merchant.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
25.4 x 20.3 cm.
Circa 1775.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

309 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

310 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

311 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

312 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

313 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

314 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

315 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

316 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

317 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

318 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

319 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

320 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

321 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

322 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

323 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

324 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

325 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

326 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

327 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

328 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

329 Portrait of a Young Englishman.
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
38.1 x 33 cm.
Circa 1770.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.
Western motifs

Portraits of Westerners

290 Portrait of an Englishman.
Gilded wooden frame.
38 x 28 cm.
Circa 1790.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

291 Portrait of Captain John Corner.
Reverse glass painting.
30 x 24 cm.
Hand written note on the back: "This painting on glass, done in China, is the portrait of John Corner Esq., captain of his own ship The Carnatic..."
Marty Gregory Gallery.

292 Portrait of Shipowner Audibert.
Reverse glass painting.
Oval gilded wooden frame.
35 x 26 cm.
Hand written note on the back: 'Mr Audibert/portrait fait à la/ Guadeloppe[?]/* père...grand-/mère de...'
Marty Gregory Gallery.

293 Portrait of a Western Merchant (5).
Painted mirror.
Varnished wooden frame.
48.5 x 45.7 cm.
Circa 1790.
Courtesy Sotheby's/Art Digital Studio.

294 Portrait of Catharina van Braam
Back side of the glass:
304 Portrait of Mr. Lennox.
305a Portrait of Miss Elizabeth Graham.
305b Portrait of Miss Christiane Graham.
Painted mirrors.
Regency gilded wooden frame, circa 1820.
130 x 89 cm.
Ref. Sparks, fig. H.
Photo: Rights Reserved.
[303] Photo: Rights Reserved.

295 Portrait of Catharina van Braam.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
55 x 45.2 cm.
Courtesty Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

296 Portrait of Captain Joseph Huddart.
Reverse glass painting.
Unknow frame.
84.5 x 66.5 cm.
[J. Huddart stayed in Canton several times during 1785-1788].
© Rijksmuseum.

297 Portrait of an Englishman.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
44 x 34.5 cm.
Musée des arts décoratifs de l’Océan Indien, Reunion, France.

298 Portrait of Catharina van Braam.
Back side of the glass:
308 Portrait of Alys and Miss Revell
in a Chinese Interior.
Painted mirror.
46.67 x 40.96 cm.
Circa 1780.
Handwritten note on the backside of painting (Ref. Granville): "View of the river at Canton China, with portraits of Frances Revell, wife of Henri Revell-China Civil Service (for nineteen years Head Super-Cargo to the Honourable East India Company) and her eldest daughter [frances]; painted about 1765.'
Ref. Howard, Ayes, p. 648, fig. 673;
Granville, p. 309
© 2006 Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA.
Photo: Mark Seidner and Jeffrey Dykes.

299 Portrait of Captain John Corner.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
63.5 x 49 cm.
Engraving Lady Huskisson and her daughter Ann, in 1784, by Thomas Burke (1749-1815), after an eponym portrait by Angelika Kauffmann (1741-1807).
Ref. Van Campen, 2005, pp. 29 to 36.
Courtesty Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

300 Portrait of Catharina van Braam
and Her Daughter Françoise (1785-?).
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
63.5 x 49 cm.
[Illegitimate son of Frederik 1st of Sweden and Edvig Taube, Karl Edvard (1737-1769) became Swedish Count in 1742].
Ref. Spark, fig. C.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

301 Portrait of Catharina van Braam.
Painted mirror.
Lacquered frame with gilded foliation.
44.5 x 29.2 cm.
Circa 1780.
[Lady Mary de Puyrond (1689-1762) was a famous writer. Wife of Edward Wortley Montagu, Ambassador of Great Britain in Constantinople, she brought back the smallpox vaccine from this country].
Ref. Sparks, fig. C.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

302 Portrait of Catharina van Braam.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame.
55 x 45.2 cm.
Courtesty Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

303 Portrait of Captain Joseph Huddart.
(1741-1836).
Reverse glass painting.
Unknow frame.
84.5 x 66.5 cm.
[J. Huddart stayed in Canton several times during 1785-1788].
© Rijksmuseum.

304 Portrait of Mr. Lennox.
305a Portrait of Miss Elizabeth Graham.
305b Portrait of Miss Christiane Graham.
Painted mirrors.
Regency gilded wooden frame, circa 1820.
130 x 89 cm.
Ref. Sparks, fig. H.
Photo: Rights Reserved.
[303] Photo: Rights Reserved.

305 Portrait of an Englishman.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
64 x 44.5 cm.
Musée des arts décoratifs de l’Océan Indien, Reunion, France.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

306 Portrait of an English Naval Officer.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
64 x 44.5 cm.
Musée des arts décoratifs de l’Océan Indien, Reunion, France.

307 Portrait of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.
Painted mirror.
Laquered frame with gilded foliation.
44.5 x 29.2 cm.
Circa 1760.
[Lady Mary de Puyrond (1689-1762) was a famous writer. Wife of Edward Wortley Montagu, Ambassador of Great Britain in Constantinople, she brought back the smallpox vaccine from this country].
Ref. Sparks, fig. C.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

308 Portrait of Alys and Miss Revell
in a Chinese Interior.
Painted mirror.
46.67 x 40.96 cm.
Circa 1780.
Handwritten note on the backside of painting (Ref. Granville): "View of the river at Canton China, with portraits of Frances Revell, wife of Henri Revell-China Civil Service (for nineteen years Head Super-Cargo to the Honourable East India Company) and her eldest daughter [frances]; painted about 1765.'
Ref. Howard, Ayes, p. 648, fig. 673;
Granville, p. 309
© 2006 Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA.
Photo: Mark Seidner and Jeffrey Dykes.

309 Portrait of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.
Painted mirror.
Laquered frame with gilded foliation.
44.5 x 29.2 cm.
Circa 1760.
[Lady Mary de Puyrond (1689-1762) was a famous writer. Wife of Edward Wortley Montagu, Ambassador of Great Britain in Constantinople, she brought back the smallpox vaccine from this country].
Ref. Sparks, fig. C.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

310 Portrait of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.
Painted mirror.
Laquered frame with gilded foliation.
44.5 x 29.2 cm.
Circa 1760.
[Lady Mary de Puyrond (1689-1762) was a famous writer. Wife of Edward Wortley Montagu, Ambassador of Great Britain in Constantinople, she brought back the smallpox vaccine from this country].
Ref. Sparks, fig. C.
Photo: Rights Reserved.
Western motifs
Portraits of Westerners

310 Woman with Flowers.
Painted bevelled mirror.
Gilded wooden frame, George II.
31.1 x 29.2 cm.
Circa 1760.
Ref. Sparks, fig. A.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

311 Portrait of Ogilvie Family.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame, George III.
39.5 x 63.3 cm.
Circa 1790.
Ref. Jenyns, 1965, p. 55, fig. 93.
Formerly Horst's collection.
Coating: Schubert's Art Digital Studio.

312, 313 Portraits of Young Women.
Pair of reverse glass paintings.
Gilded wooden frames, gilded inner frames painted under the glass.
21.8 x 17.1 cm.
Circa 1800.
Musée Grobet-Labadié.
Complementary corpus without photo

314 Portrait of Lars Hansen Swane.
[From 1741 to 1771 Lars Hansen Swane (1720-1781) has been a supercargo with the Danish East India Company.]

315, 316 Portraits of Young Ladies.
Ref. Howard, Ayers, p. 649, fig. 674.
[According to the authors, both paintings could be after Bouchers engravings.]

Complementary corpus without photo

322 Crucifixion.
Ref. Howard, Ayers, p. 649, fig. 670.

Western motifs
Other Western motifs

317 Daydream.
Painted bevelled mirror.
Lacquered wooden frame with mother of pearl.
93 x 87 cm.
Circa 1810.
All Rights Reserved.

318 Young Musicians.
Painted bevelled mirror.
Sandalwood frame.
93 x 58 cm.
Circa 1810.
All Rights Reserved.

319 Madonna.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame.
30 x 24 cm.
Circa 1770.
Author's collection.

320 Madonna.
Painted mirror.
Black lacquered frame with gilded foliation.
32.2 x 30.3 cm.
Circa 1810.
Engraving by René Gaillard (1719-1790).
Ref. Steiner, 2009, p. 150, fig. 60.
Steiner's Collection, Inv. Nr. HGS 567.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

321 Crucifixion.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame.
33 x 26 cm.
Musée des Arts décoratifs de l'Océan Indien, Réunion, France.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331.
332 (paintings as transpositions of engravings after paintings by François Boucher (1703-1770).
333 to 337 original paintings by Boucher were exhibited in 1750 Salon with the caption: ‘Quatre toiles de formes ovales […] la seconde Un berger accordant sa musette près de sa bergère […] la quatrième Un berger qui montre à jouer de la flûte à sa bergère’ René Gaillard engraved them and put a new caption: Le berger récompensé for the first one, L'agréable leçon for the second one.]

323 Les amants surpris.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
31.5 x 40 cm.
Circa 1810.
Engraving by René Gaillard (1719-1790).
Courtesy Göteborgs Stadsmuseum.

324 Les amants surpris.
Reverse glass painting.
Wooden and glass frame.
32.2 x 30.3 cm.
Circa 1810.
Engraving by René Gaillard (1719-1790).
Ref. Steiner, 2009, p. 150, fig. 60.
Steiner’s Collection, Inv. Nr. HGS 567.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

325 Le berger récompensé.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
46 x 49 cm.
Circa 1790.
Engraving by René Gaillard (1719-1790).
Musée Grobet-Labadié.
CETER Ville de Marseille.

326 L'agréable leçon.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
49 x 46 cm.
Circa 1790.
Engraving by René Gaillard (1719-1790).
Musée Grobet-Labadié.
CETER Ville de Marseille.

Complementary corpus
Rural and Mythological Scenes
### Transpositions of Western artworks: Rural and Mythological Scenes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>332</td>
<td>332 Vénus et Adonis.</td>
<td>Reverse glass painting. Gilded wooden frame. 53 x 43.8 cm. Circa 1800. Engraving by Jean-Charles Le Vasseur (1774-1814) or by Pierre-Louis Surugue (1686-1762), after a painting by Boucher sold in 1779 to Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Original painting is lost. Musée Grosset-Labadié. CITEJ, Ville de Marseille. [Paintings 334 and 335 were in Andreas van Braam’s collection.]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- Paintings 331 and 332 were in Andreas van Braam’s collection.
- Paintings 334 and 335 were in Andreas van Braam’s collection.
- Paintings 336 and 337 were in Andreas van Braam’s collection.
- Paintings 338 and 339 were in Andreas van Braam’s collection.
340 Mythological Scene: Diana in the Bath?
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
50.5 x 40.5 cm.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

341 Mary, Joseph and the Child Jesus.
Reverse glass painting.
48.5 x 53.2 cm.
Signed: “Fatqua Canton Pinxit”
Ref. Howard, Ayers, p. 652, fig. 67.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

342 Snake in the Grass.
Chinese red lacquered wooden frame.
With black and gilded inner frame reverse glass painted.
31 x 26.6 cm.
Name card on the back side said: “Fatqua, PAINTER in Oil and Water Colours, and on Glass, China Street, Canton. Prepares boxes of assorted colours for drawing at the lowest terms. FATQUA”. Transposition of an engraving after Scene in the Grass painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) in 1785. [So many artists as J. Raphael Smith (1751-1812), William Ward (1766-1826) ou H. Dawe (1790-1848) engraved this painting, that it’s difficult to know which one was transposed by Cantonese painter. It’s interesting to note that the nymph’s breast, nude in the original painting and on engravings is covered by a veil in the Chinese reverse glass painting. Prudish touch of Fatqua? Or of the commissionner?] Ref. Howard, Ayers, p. 645, fig. 672.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

343 Hebe and Jupiter
Reverse glass painting.
Reverse glass painted inner frame with red and gilded filiations.
52 x 39.8 cm.
Circa 1815.
Signed: “Fatqua Canton Pinxit”
Ref. Crossmann, p. 214, fig. 74.
Courtesy Richard Milhondes.

344 Perseus Delivering Andromeda
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
50.5 x 40.5 cm.
Circa 1808.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

345 Venus and Cupid
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
55.3 x 45 cm.

346 Sapho
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
60.3 x 47.5 cm.
Circa 1810.

347 Letter and Her Siblings.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese oval gilt wood frames.
25 x 33.5 cm.

348 Werther’s First Encounter with Lotte.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese oval gilt wood frames.
25 x 33.5 cm.

349 Albert, Lotte and Werther.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilt wooden frames.
25 x 33.5 cm.

350 Letter at the Tomb of Werther.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese oval gilt wood frames.
25 x 33.5 cm.

Transpositions of Western artworks
Novels and the theater

[347 to 352: Paintings after illustrations of Goethe’s novel: The Sorrows of Young Werther].

Enter the image description here.
Transpositions of Western artworks
Novels and the theater

351 The Last Interview between Lotte and Werther.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilt wood frames.
29 x 23 cm.
Photo: Kristenssen Karolina, Nordiska Museet, Stockholm.

352 Albert, Lotte and Werther
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese round gilt wood frames.
Diam. 51.7 cm.
Circa 1790.
Engraving by Charles Knight after a painting by James Northcote (1746-1831).

353 Virginie au tombeau
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
44 x 59 cm.
Circa 1810.
Hand written note on the back: ‘Factum n°2’.
Engraving by Augusto-Claude Lagrand (1765-1815) after painting Virginie au tombeau by Jean-Fredéric Schall (1732-1825), one of the last scenes of Paul et Virginie, novel by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (1737-1814).

354 Hamlet
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
57.7 x 72.3 cm.
Circa 1800.
Engraving (1796) by Robert Thor (1758-1802) after today lost painting Hamlet, by Henry Fuseli (1741-1825).

355 The Tempest
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
57.7 x 72.3 cm.
Circa 1800.
Engraving by Benjamin Smith (1754-1802), after a painting by George Romney (1734-1802).

356 The Winter’s Tale
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
58.4 x 73.6 cm.
Circa 1800.
Engraving by R. Thor (1758-1802) after William Hamilton (1730-1801).

357 Le Dîner au roya.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame.
31.5 x 26 cm.
Circa 1780.
Engraving Domestic amusements, The Lovely Spinner by James Watson (1740-1796) after a painting by John Caspar Holmann (1718-1766).
Vitromusée Romont (loan from Vitrocentre Romont, collection R. et F. Byen).
© Vitrocentre Romont, photo: Yves Eigenmann, Fribourg.

Ref. Child, p. 271, fig. 654.

358 A Fair Nun Unmasked Painted mirror.
Chinese lacquered and gilded wooden frame.
32 x 29 cm.
Circa 1785.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

359 A Fair Nun Unmasked Painted mirror.
Hardwood frame.
35.6 x 29.2 cm.
Circa 1780.
Caroline Walter
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
30 x 25 cm.

[Caroline Walter (1755-1826) was a Danish singer. Her agitated life, from divorces to exile between Denmark and Sweden, finished as official singer at the Swedish Court.]

Photo: Kristensson Karolina, Nordiska Museet, Stockholm.

361 to 364: Women in Blue Hat:
these large blue hats were fashionable in Europe at the end of eighteenth century.

361, 362: same engraving.

361 Woman in Blue Hat with Child
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
29 x 24 cm.
Circa 1810.
Photo: Bukowskis Auctions.

362 Woman in Blue Hat with Child
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
Unknown size.
Courtesy Göteborgs Stadsmuseum, photo: Persson Annika.

363 Woman in Blue Hat.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
27.9 x 22.2 cm.
Circa 1820.

364 Princess Charlotte.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese varnished wooden frame.
45.4 x 35.7 cm.
After a drawing by James McArdell (1729-1785).
Courtesy Walpole.

365 Madame Rousseau.
Reverse glass painting.
Recent frame, inner frame painted under glass with gilded and red foliation.
31 x 24 cm.
Signed: Falqua pinxit.
Engraving (1801) by Richard Coway (1742-1821).
Photo: China Trade, Romance and Reality, 1979, rights reserved.

366 Woman.
Reverse glass painting.
Recent frame, inner frame painted under glass with gilded and red foliation.
31 x 24 cm.
Ref. China Trade Romance and Reality, 1979, p. 45, fig. A.
Ref. Child, p. 375, fig. 843.
Photo: China Trade, Romance and Reality, 1979, rights reserved.

367 Woman and Child.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese varnished wooden frame.
34.3 x 29.2 cm.
Circa 1800.

368 Mandolin Player.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese varnished wooden frame.
33.6 x 26.6 cm.
Circa 1800.

369 The Chinese.
Hesitation.
Pair of reverse glass paintings.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
37 x 29 cm.
Circa 1810.
Ref. Child, p. 375, fig. 843.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

370 Hesitation.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
24.5 x 17 cm.
Engraving by William Ward (1766-1826), after Hesitation, painting by the same artist.
Photo: Wering, Bertil, Nordiska Museet.

371 Hesitation.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
37 x 29 cm.
Circa 1810.
Ref. Child, p. 375, fig. 843.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

Caroline Walter • Reverse glass painting • Chinese gilded wooden frame • 1720-1820

360

361

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369
Transpositions of Western artworks

Portraits

373 Le Paix.
Reverse glass painting.
European gilded wooden frame.
44.5 x 39.4 cm.
Circa 1790.
Courtesy Sotheby’s Art Digital Studio.

374 a, b et c Portraits of English Aristocrats.
Reverse glass paintings.
Gilded wooden frames.
(a) 14 x 11.4 cm, (b) 12 x 10.1 cm, (c) 14 x 11.4 cm.
N°374b is signed: ‘Fatqua Canton pinxit.’
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

375 George Augustus, Prince of Wales, future George III.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
75.5 x 63.5 cm.
Circa 1810.
Two handwritten notes on the back side. First one: ‘FAQRUA CANTON.
Second one: ‘This portrait was presented by Her Royal highness, Princess Charlotte to Miss France Lovatt, 1817. This portrait of His royal Highness George Augustus Frederick, Prince of Wales etc. etc. etc. Grand Master of the Ancient Honorable Society of Freemasons, was sent to William Forsteem esq. by his much esteemed brother & friend, Edmund Larkin esq. of the Shakespeare Lodge No 131. Inspector of the Tea for the Hon. E I Company at Canton, with an earnest request that it should be humbly and respectfully presented from him to His Royal Highness as a specimen of Chinese Painting.’
© National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery.

376 George.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
55.9 x 38.7 cm.
Circa 1800.
Mezzotint (1760) by Charles Spooner (1735-1767) after a German miniature by Jeremiah Meyer (1735-1789).
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

377 George Washington.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
72.4 x 52.7 cm.
Circa 1800.
Ref. Crossmann, pp. 219, 215, fig. 75 and 120; Lee, 1984, p. 195, fig. 209; Howard, Ayers, p. 647, fig. 672.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

379a, 379b, 379c.
 COURTISANS: A courtesan woman with an extravagantly tall headdress, a diaphanous négligée and a seductive décolleté sitting on a sofa. On her left is her book of appointments containing the visiting cards of her next gallants.

379a Jeune Femme assise sur un sofa.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
34.5 x 24.5 cm.
Circa 1780.
Musée des Beaux Arts de Valenciennes.
Photo © RMN-Grand-Palais/Michel Urtado.

379b  Courtisan.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
52 x 46 cm.
© Bonhams.

379c Courtisan.
Reverse glass painting.
Unknown frame.
31.7 x 24.1 cm.
Circa 1790.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

376 George.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
35.5 x 30 cm.
Circa 1800.
Photo: Bukowskis Auctions.

Transpositions of Western artworks

Courtesans

377 George Washington.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
34.5 x 24.5 cm.
Circa 1780.
Musée des Beaux Arts de Valenciennes.
Photo © RMN-Grand-Palais/Michel Urtado.

377 George Washington.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
35.5 x 30 cm.
Circa 1800.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

379a Jeune Femme assise sur un sofa.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
34.5 x 24.5 cm.
Circa 1780.
Musée des Beaux Arts de Valenciennes.
Photo © RMN-Grand-Palais/Michel Urtado.

379b Courtisan.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
52 x 46 cm.
© Bonhams.

379c Courtisan.
Reverse glass painting.
Unknown frame.
31.7 x 24.1 cm.
Circa 1790.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

376 George.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
55.9 x 38.7 cm.
Circa 1800.
Mezzotint (1760) by Charles Spooner (1735-1767) after a German miniature by Jeremiah Meyer (1735-1789).
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

377 George Washington.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
72.4 x 52.7 cm.
Circa 1800.
Ref. Crossmann, pp. 219, 215, fig. 75 and 120; Lee, 1984, p. 195, fig. 209; Howard, Ayers, p. 647, fig. 672.
Martyn Gregory Gallery.

379a, 379b, 379c: A courtesan woman with an extravagantly tall headdress, a diaphanous négligée and a seductive décolleté sitting on a sofa. On her left is her book of appointments containing the visiting cards of her next gallants.
Sailors’ farewells

382. Roger Scene
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
34.5 x 26.5 cm.
Circa 1810.
Photo: Morisot Bent, Nicolas Blazer.

383. Young Woman Unveiling Her Breast.
Reverse glass paintings.
Chinese gilted wooden frames.
24 x 19 cm.
Circa 1810.
Photo: Russianik Aukcions.

384. Miss Chance.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese oval gilted wooden frame.
26.9 x 21.7 cm.
Circa 1800.
Pair with an other painting, Miss Fortune.
Musée Grobet-Labadié.
CETE, Ville de Marseille.

385. Trying on My Brother’s Breeches.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
29.2 x 24.8 cm.
Circa 1810.
Ref: Sparks, fig. B.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

386. The Unfaithful Sultana.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
31 x 22 cm.
Steiner’s Collection, Inv. HGS 401.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

387. The Sailor’s Farewell.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
31.7 x 26.6 cm.

388. Vanity Fair.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
35.6 x 25.4 cm.
[On the lintel of the door is graved ‘Lovejoy’, name of a famous brothel in London in the eighteenth century. According P. Conner, this painting could be after one the fashionable satiric engravings named Macaroni Fashion. Matthew Darly was one of the masters of this kind of paintings.]
Martin Gregory Gallery.

389. At the Breakers.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
36 x 26 cm.
Stutner’s Collection, Inv. HGS 411.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

390. Declaration of Love.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
31 x 22 cm.
Crown Blackbush Antiquewear.

391. Crying on the Beach.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
31 x 26 cm.
The flag is Swedish.
Ref: Kjellberg, p. 209.
Courtesy Göteborgs Stadsmuseum.

392. Praying on the Seaside.
Reverse glass painting.
Oval chinese gilted wooden frame.
49 x 42 cm.
Circa 1810.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

393. Praying on the Seaside.
Reverse glass painting.
Oval chinese gilted wooden frame.
49 x 42 cm.
Circa 1810.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

394. Risqué Scene.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
34.5 x 26.5 cm.
Circa 1810.
Photo: Morisot Bent, Nicolas Blazer.

395. At the Breakers.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
36 x 26 cm.
Stutner’s Collection, Inv. HGS 411.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

396. At the Breakers.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
31 x 22 cm.
Photo: Bukowskis Auctions.

397. The Sailor’s Farewell.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
24 x 19 cm.
Circa 1810.
Photo: Bukowskis Auctions.

398. The Sailor’s Farewell.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
24 x 19 cm.
Circa 1810.
Photo: Bukowskis Auctions.

399. The Unfaithful Sultana.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
31 x 22 cm.
Steiner’s Collection, Inv. HGS 401.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

400. The Sailor’s Farewell.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
24 x 19 cm.
Circa 1810.
Photo: Bukowskis Auctions.

401. Crying on the Beach.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
31 x 26 cm.
The flag is Swedish.
Ref: Kjellberg, p. 209.
Courtesy Göteborgs Stadsmuseum.

402. Vanity Fair.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
35.6 x 25.4 cm.
[On the lintel of the door is graved ‘Lovejoy’, name of a famous brothel in London in the eighteenth century. According P. Conner, this painting could be after one the fashionable satiric engravings named Macaroni Fashion. Matthew Darly was one of the masters of this kind of paintings.]
Martin Gregory Gallery.

403. Praying on the Seaside.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
Unknown size.
Musée Grobet-Labadié.
CETE, Ville de Marseille.

404. Risqué Scene.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
34.5 x 26.5 cm.
Circa 1810.
Photo: Morisot Bent, Nicolas Blazer.

405. Risqué Scene.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
34.5 x 26.5 cm.
Circa 1810.
Photo: Morisot Bent, Nicolas Blazer.

406. Crying on the Beach.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
31 x 26 cm.
The flag is Swedish.
Ref: Kjellberg, p. 209.
Courtesy Göteborgs Stadsmuseum.

407. Praying on the Seaside.
Reverse glass painting.
Oval chinese gilted wooden frame.
49 x 42 cm.
Circa 1810.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

408. Praying on the Seaside.
Reverse glass painting.
Oval chinese gilted wooden frame.
49 x 42 cm.
Circa 1810.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

409. The Unfaithful Sultana.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
31 x 22 cm.
Steiner’s Collection, Inv. HGS 401.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

410. The Sailor’s Farewell.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
24 x 19 cm.
Circa 1810.
Photo: Bukowskis Auctions.

411. Crying on the Beach.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
31 x 26 cm.
The flag is Swedish.
Ref: Kjellberg, p. 209.
Courtesy Göteborgs Stadsmuseum.

412. Praying on the Seaside.
Reverse glass painting.
Oval chinese gilted wooden frame.
49 x 42 cm.
Circa 1810.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

413. Praying on the Seaside.
Reverse glass painting.
Oval chinese gilted wooden frame.
49 x 42 cm.
Circa 1810.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

414. Vanity Fair.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
35.6 x 25.4 cm.
[On the lintel of the door is graved ‘Lovejoy’, name of a famous brothel in London in the eighteenth century. According P. Conner, this painting could be after one the fashionable satiric engravings named Macaroni Fashion. Matthew Darly was one of the masters of this kind of paintings.]
Martin Gregory Gallery.

415. Praying on the Seaside.
Reverse glass painting.
Oval chinese gilted wooden frame.
49 x 42 cm.
Circa 1810.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

416. Praying on the Seaside.
Reverse glass painting.
Oval chinese gilted wooden frame.
49 x 42 cm.
Circa 1810.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

417. Praying on the Seaside.
Reverse glass painting.
Oval chinese gilted wooden frame.
49 x 42 cm.
Circa 1810.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

418. The Unfaithful Sultana.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
31 x 22 cm.
Steiner’s Collection, Inv. HGS 401.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

419. The Sailor’s Farewell.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
24 x 19 cm.
Circa 1810.
Photo: Bukowskis Auctions.

420. The Sailor’s Farewell.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
24 x 19 cm.
Circa 1810.
Photo: Bukowskis Auctions.

421. The Sailor’s Farewell.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
24 x 19 cm.
Circa 1810.
Photo: Bukowskis Auctions.

422. The Sailor’s Farewell.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
24 x 19 cm.
Circa 1810.
Photo: Bukowskis Auctions.

423. The Sailor’s Farewell.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
24 x 19 cm.
Circa 1810.
Photo: Bukowskis Auctions.

424. The Sailor’s Farewell.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
24 x 19 cm.
Circa 1810.
Photo: Bukowskis Auctions.

425. The Sailor’s Farewell.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilted wooden frame.
24 x 19 cm.
Circa 1810.
Photo: Bukowskis Auctions.
Landscapes and seascapes

[398, 399] These paintings, after the same engraving, could be a scene of The Sorrows of Young Werther by Goethe.

398 Sailors’ farewells
Reverse glass painting.
Round chinese gilded wooden frame.
Diam. 31.7 cm.
Pair with n°392.

399 Sailors’ farewells
Reverse glass painting.
Round chinese gilded wooden frame.
Steiner’s Collection, Inv. Nr HGS 531.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

400 The Smugglers: the Pursuit.
Pair of reverse glass paintings.
Oval chinese gilded wooden frame.
30 x 35 cm.
Author’s collection.

401 The Smugglers: the Creek.
Pair of reverse glass paintings.
Oval chinese gilded wooden frame.
[402] 52 x 87 cm  [403] 52 x 84.4 cm.
Circa 1780.
After paintings by Abraham Stock (1635-1770).

402 Merchant Shipping off the Ports of Rotterdam and Amsterdam.
Pair of reverse glass paintings.
Chinese gilded wooden frames.
[402] 52 x 87 cm  [403] 52 x 84.4 cm.
Circa 1780.
After paintings by Abraham Stock (1635-1770).

403 The Tempest.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
40.2 x 50.5 cm.
Circa1780.
Engraving La Tempête by Elisabeth Cousinet (1726- ?), after an eponym painting by C. J. Vernet (1714-1789).
Musée Grobet-Labadié.
CITAR, Ville de Marseille.

404 Night Scene.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
42 x 52 cm.
Circa 1780.
Gouaix Guillon-Sylvestre Levy Allou.

405 Seconde vue des environs de Caudebec en Normandie.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
30.4 x 43.7 cm.
Circa 1780.
Engraving Seconde vue des environs de Caudebec by Yves le Gouaz (1742-1816) after the painting by Philippe Hackert (1737-1807).
Ref. Ryser, p. 227, fig. 259.
Vitromusée Romont (loan from Vitrocentre Romont, collection R. et F. Ryser).
© Vitromusée Romont, photo: Yves Eigenmann, Fribourg.

406 Vue d’Europe.
Multiple layers of glass with reverse glass painting.
Recent varnished wooden frame.
26.5 x 35.5 x 4.7 cm.
Circa 1780.
Vitromusée Romont (loan from Vitrocentre Romont, collection R. et F. Ryser).
© Vitromusée Romont, photo: Yves Eigenmann, Fribourg.

407 The Fishery.
Reverse glass painting.
Unknown frame.
37.3 x 51.7 cm.
Engraving by William Woollett (1735-1793) after The Fishery by Richard Wright (1723-1775).
Ref. Steiner, 2009, p. 112, fig. 45.
Steiner’s Collection, Inv. Nr HGS 538.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

408 Soldier’s Farewell.
Reverse glass painting.
Round chinese gilded wooden frame.
Steiner’s Collection, Inv. Nr HGS 531.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

409 Windsor Castle.
Painted mirror.
Gilded wooden frame.
55 x 77 cm.
Circa 1780.
Courtesy Sotheby’s/Art Digital Studio.

410 The Fischery.
Reverse glass painting.
Unknown frame.
37.3 x 51.7 cm.
Engraving by William Woollett (1735-1793) after The Fishery by Richard Wright (1723-1775).
Ref. Steiner, 2009, p. 112, fig. 45.
Steiner’s Collection, Inv. Nr HGS 538.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

411 The Fischery.
Reverse glass painting.
Unknown frame.
37.3 x 51.7 cm.
Engraving by William Woollett (1735-1793) after The Fishery by Richard Wright (1723-1775).
Ref. Steiner, 2009, p. 112, fig. 45.
Steiner’s Collection, Inv. Nr HGS 538.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

412 The Fischery.
Reverse glass painting.
Unknown frame.
37.3 x 51.7 cm.
Engraving by William Woollett (1735-1793) after The Fishery by Richard Wright (1723-1775).
Ref. Steiner, 2009, p. 112, fig. 45.
Steiner’s Collection, Inv. Nr HGS 538.
Photo: Rights Reserved.

413 The Fischery.
Reverse glass painting.
Unknown frame.
37.3 x 51.7 cm.
Engraving by William Woollett (1735-1793) after The Fishery by Richard Wright (1723-1775).
Ref. Steiner, 2009, p. 112, fig. 45.
Steiner’s Collection, Inv. Nr HGS 538.
Photo: Rights Reserved.
Miscellaneous

411 The Apotheosis of Washington
Reverse painting on glass.
66.5 x 47.4 x 16.2 cm.
Guangzhou, China.
Circa 1802-1805 after a print by J. J. Barralet and Simon Ockendon which was published in Philadelphia in 1796, 1802-1805.
Peabody Essex Museum.

412 The Apotheosis of Washington
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
85.1 x 62.9 cm.
Circa 1802-1805.
Ref. Crossman, p. 211, fig. 111.
Courtesy Winterthur Museum.

413 Freedom
Reverse glass painting.
Unknown frame.
72.7 x 53.3 cm.
Circa 1810.
Text: ‘When FREEDOM first her glorious DAY had won / She smiled on WASHINGTON her Darling Son / Mild JUSTICE claims him as his Virtue rise / And LOVE and HONOR still attend the Prize.’
Ref. Crossman, p. 211, fig. 111.
Courtesy Winterthur Museum.

414 Liberty.
Reverse glass painting.
Unknown frame.
61 x 48.3 cm.
Circa 1800.
Engraving by Edward Savage (1761-1817), published in 1795 in Philadelphia, after an eponym painting by the same artist.
Ref. Crossman, p. 217
Courtesy Winterthur Museum.

415 Allegory of the United States of America.
Reverse glass painting.
Gilded wooden frame.
57.2 x 40.9 cm.
Circa 1800.
Courtesy Winterthur Museum.

416 Battle of Lexington.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
44.5 x 38.7 cm.
Circa 1805-1810.
Engraving by Cornelius Tiebout (1777-1832) after a drawing (1798) by Elkanah Tisdale (1768-1835).
Courtesy Winterthur Museum.

417 January, April, May, September, October.
Reverse glass paintings.
Gilded wooden frames.
65.5 x 49.5 cm.
Circa 1800.
Ref. Author collection.

418 The Nightmare.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
29 x 31.6 cm.
Circa 1810.
Engraving by Thomas Burke (1749-1815) after the eponym painting by Henry Fuseli (1741-1825).
Ref. Rijksmuseum, Masterpieces, 1790-1840.

419 Le barbier de village.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
18.3 x 21.4 cm.
Circa 1770.
Engraving signed Jorma, maybe François Basan (1723-1797), after a painting by David Teniers (1610-1690).
Vitromusée Romont (loan from Vitrocentre Romont, collection R. et F. Ryser).
© Vitrocentre Romont, photo: Yves Eigenmann, Fribourg.

420 Le marchand d’Orvietan.
Reverse glass painting.
Varnished wooden frame.
18.3 x 21.4 cm.
Circa 1770.
Vitromusée Romont (loan from Vitrocentre Romont, collection R. et F. Ryser).
© Vitrocentre Romont, photo: Yves Eigenmann, Fribourg.

421 Nature morte, faisans.
Reverse glass painting.
Chinese gilded wooden frame.
45.8 x 35.6 cm.
Circa 1790.
Vitromusée Romont (loan from Vitrocentre Romont, collection R. et F. Ryser).
© Vitrocentre Romont, photo: Yves Eigenmann, Fribourg.

422 The Burlet de village.
Reverse glass paintings.
Varnished wooden frame.
18.3 x 21.4 cm.
Circa 1770.
Engraving signed Jorma, maybe François Basan (1723-1797), after a painting by David Teniers (1610-1690).
Vitromusée Romont (loan from Vitrocentre Romont, collection R. et F. Ryser).
© Vitrocentre Romont, photo: Yves Eigenmann, Fribourg.
Appendix II Chinese reverse glass paintings in auctions 1720-1831


431 The Widow of an Indian Chief watching the Arm of her deceased Husband. Mezzotint by John Raphael Smith (1752-1812) after a painting by Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-1797). Pair with n° 432. Ref. Crossman, p. 211, fig. 112.


Miscellaneous

Complementary corpus without photo


428 George Harrison (?) and Alliance’s crew?. Handwritten note on the back side: “G. Harrison . has’ d of Spoilum in Canton, AD 1788”. Ref. Lee, p. 192, fig. 208; Downs, Scherier, 1941, fig. 18.

French Auctions

1757, Aug 17th. 
Paris, Seller: Meignen. 
Six small paintings on glass. 
- Four Chinese paintings on glass, golden frames.

1770, March 27th. 
Remy Paris, Seller: de Bourlamaque. 
- Chinese lady in a landscape, painted on glass in China. 
27 x 18 inches, 55 French pounds. 
- Two other Chinese paintings on glass. 16 x 13 inches, 16 French pounds.

1773, July 21th. 
Paris, Seller: Malenfant. 
- Four Chinese paintings on glass, colored figures, 25 x 21 inches, 99.19 French pounds. 
- Four other Chinese paintings under glass, 16 x 13 inches, 46.19 French pounds. 
- Three Chinese paintings under glass, Flowers and birds, giltwood frame, 27 x 17 inches, 200 French pounds. 
- Three Chinese paintings under glass, Chinese frame, lacquered frame, 25.7 French pounds. 
- Two other figures (Chinese lady?) painted on glass, giltwood frame, 24 x 10 French pounds. 
- An other pair of Chinese paintings on glass, Lady with a pipe in a landscape, giltwood frame, 31 x 18 French inches and two other pairs of smaller Chinese paintings on glass, Ladies, 27 x 8 inches, 135.1 French pounds for 3 paintings. 
- Little red fishes in water, Chinese painting on double layer glass, giltwood frame, 10 x 14 inches, 24 French pounds.

1774, April 25th. 
- Three Chinese paintings on glass, Chinese woman in her bedroom, 200 French pounds. 
- Two beautiful paintings on glass, Fruits and vases, made in a four way more unusual in such Chinese worksarts, 3 feet 4.5 inches x 1 foot, 7 inches, 60 French pounds, one sol.

1775, November 6th. 
Remy Paris, Seller: Marquis de Gouvernet. 
- Chinese Lady and Gentleman, painted on glass, lacquered frame, 9 x 6 inches, 40 French pounds. 
- Couple of golden phantast, painted on glass, 20 French pounds.

1777, April 9th to 12th and 14th. 
- Chinese Lady seated on a sofa, 120 French pounds. 
- Flowers and phantasts, two paintings on glass, 2 feet 7.5 inches x 2 feet, 211 French pounds. 
- Ladies in their bedroom, pair of Chinese paintings on glass, same size, 120 French pounds each pair. 
- Young Chinese Ladies, one smoking and the other seated with fan, on glass, 130 French pounds. 
- Four paintings on glass, Figures in a landscape, 200 French pounds. 
- Chinese Lady with flowers and a dog, painted on glass, 15 French pounds.

1777, February 25th. 
Paris, Seller: M. de Montblin. 
- Chinese woman picking up flowers, painted on glass. 

1782. 
Durand Paris, Seller: M. de Montblin. 
- Painted mirror with golden and black lacquered frame, Picture of a beautiful lady, in a golden embroidered red dress in a landscape, he brings a basket of fruits, 1 foot 8 inches. 
- Two paintings on glass in Indian wood frame hands clasped, 9 x 7 inches. First one is a Picture of a lady in a embroidered red dress leaning on a balcony; the second one is a painted mirror, Picture of a lady, in the same rich dress, standing, hands clasped in front of an altar.

1799, January 30th. 
- The Three Graces Resting in a Landscape, painted on glass in China, 10 Francs. 
- Resting Lady, painted on glass in China, 10 Francs. 
- Composition with three and four Figures, painted on glass, in China, 12 Francs.

1818, April 17th. 
- Three Chinese paintings on glass, 8.15 Francs, Man and Woman Seated on a sofa, painted on glass in China, painting amazing for its grace and expression. 
- One similar painting (done in China, on glass). 

English Auctions

1788, March 8th. 
London, Seller: ? 
- Five (models), of heads and flowers, and two Chinese paintings on glass, 0.56.

1797, December 18th. 
- Two, a fruit piece, and a Chinese painting of a lady on plate glass (THIS LOT - a fruit piece).

1799, January 28th. 
Bruce London, Seller: David Martin. 
- Curious Chinese painting on glass, coasting vessel with figures, black and gilt frame.

1799, February 15th. 
- Several chinese reverse glass painting were sold at this auction sale. Unfortunately only one artwork is described as a reverse glas painting: 
- A beautiful painting on oil, on a glass plate, 25 inches by 21 from the French engraving ‘la mère bien aimée.’

1807, August 13th. 
- A beautiful painting on glass of a Chinese villa and figures, in a gilt frame, 3.10£.

1807, August 26th. 
- A vase of flowers painted on looking glass and a pair of Chinese landscapes and figures on ditto, no frames.

1820, January 6th. 
Bullock London, Seller: ? 
- A Chinese landscape and figures, with buildings, beautifully painted on plate glass, and framed.

1820, March 16th. 
Bullock London, Seller: ? 
- Chinese Botanical subjects, beautifully painted on plate glass and partially silvered.

1827, December 21th. 
Christie’s London, Seller: Major Scott Waring. 
- Five Chinese Paintings, on glass, portrait of a child, in crayons, and three coloured Prunts (THIS LOT - Five Chinese Paintings, on glass), 0.86.

1830, June 5th. 
- A Chinese female in the interior of a chamber, painted on looking glass, and a group of flowers. The first 84 Lots in this Catalogue are the Property of Mr. Frederick Benjamin King, and are sold by Order of his Assignees (THIS LOT - A group of Flowers), 1.16 lot.

1831, June 29th. 
Phillips London, Seller: Captain Hall. 
- Vase. Painted on glass by a Chinese artist (coppy by an anonymus Chinese artist after Titian), 8.0£.

1831, October 20th. 
Foister, Seller: Charles Aders. 
- Six paintings on glass, Chinese subjects.

Bruxelles Auction

1763. 
Vleminckx Bruxelles, Seller: NOUNCE Molinari. 
- A Chinese painting on glass, golden carved frame, 28 x 18 inches. 
- Item, two Chinese painted mirror, golden carved frame, 31.1 x 19 inches. 
- A pair of small Chinese paintings on glass, Chinese golden frame, 16.1 x 12 inches.
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