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Sonia Coman

book review of

*Qing Encounters: Artistic Exchanges between China and the West*  
edited by Petra ten-Doesschate Chu and Ning Ding, with Lidy Jane Chu

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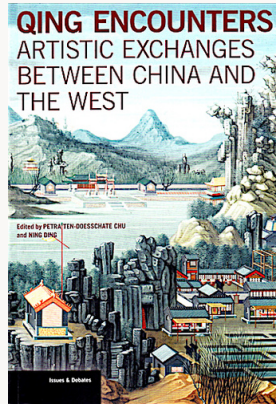
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Petra ten-Doesschate Chu and Ning Ding, with Lidy Jane Chu, eds.,  
*Qing Encounters: Artistic Exchanges between China and the West*.  
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*Qing Encounters: Artistic Exchanges between China and the West* is a rich and thought-provoking collection of essays. The texts it comprises come together under the umbrella of two different yet overlapping themes: China and the West and the Qing Empire and eighteenth-century Europe. Jonathan Hay, as guest writer, draws attention to this distinction in his Foreword. Engaging with China and the West would have been a much larger enterprise, one that surely could not have been confined satisfactorily to one volume. The artistic relation of Qing China and eighteenth-century Europe is narrower by virtue of the spatial, temporal, and categorical limitations it imposes. Nevertheless, it is a daunting task in and of itself.

Why Qing? Why Europe? And why the eighteenth century? The first question is thoroughly explained throughout the volume in terms of the multi-ethnic aspect of the Qing empire and the court's cultural strategies of legitimation and power, to which artistic exchange with Europe was integral. Perhaps more consideration could have been given to the second question. Understanding why the editors chose to focus on Europe as the other end of the exchange may seem obvious because of the central position of European studies in the history of art; however, a more insistent de-familiarization and distancing may have benefited the project, especially considering its overarching theme. As for the third question, the essays provide ample evidence of the significance of the eighteenth century in shaping cultural and artistic exchanges, specifically with regard to major epistemological changes in Europe and the important policies and attitudes of the three Qing emperors Kangxi (r. 1661–1722), Yongzheng (r. 1722–1735), and Qianlong (r. 1735–1796).

To the unknowing reader, the title of the book announces that an artistic relationship between the Qing Empire and eighteenth-century Europe existed and took the form of an exchange. That reads as an important semantic choice. Why did the contributors to the volume decide on calling this relationship an “exchange”? Artistic exchange entails

reciprocity and an underlying sociality that fuels politically conditioned projects of mutual identification and collaboration. Of course, a Saidian reading of the Chinese-European cultural encounter would be very different, and there is a rich literature on this perspective. While the negative aspects of this multicultural story are not sufficiently emphasized, the book sheds light on what was positive, such as creative outcomes, constructive borrowings, accurate accounts, and the presence of information instead of the lack thereof. This perspective ultimately enriches our understanding of these complex phenomena. Notwithstanding, it was extremely beneficial to the reader that several essays in the volume, Kristel Smentek's for example, acknowledged and summarized relevant previous scholarship and explained how their definitions and interpretations differed markedly from it.

Another aspect to be considered is whether the volume engages with China in isolation or within the larger East Asian context. On the one hand, some of the contributing authors provide nuanced accounts of how the multicultural dimension of the Qing Empire affected the Chinese-European artistic collaboration and the sociopolitical ends of the Chinese appropriation of Western techniques (e.g. one-point perspective, copperplate engraving). On the other hand, the book minimally acknowledges the eighteenth-century European-Japanese artistic exchange which, although clearly different, could have been invoked to construct fruitful comparisons.

From almost every essay in this volume, the reader learns about the multifaceted cultural activity of the Jesuit missionaries at the Qing court. Some of them produced paintings and architectural designs despite their lack of training in those respective fields. One missionary, Matteo Ripa, took on an engraving project although he did not previously know that technique. Most occupied multiple roles at the Qing court; some were lay members of the Jesuit missions, such as Giovanni Gherardini. The "Renaissance men" aspect of these cultural agents who played significant roles in the Chinese-European exchange brings to the fore numerous questions regarding how the nature of their knowledge, and the limits thereof, conditioned artistic influence and cross-cultural adaptations of paradigms and techniques.

The essays combine different methodologies, especially historiographical and visual analysis. Many essays share the same case studies. The reader benefits from the different angles from which the same sites (e.g. Yuanmingyuan) and objects (e.g. imperially commissioned Chinese-French prints) are investigated. Some of the essays present conflicting conclusions on the same case study or idea. It was very helpful to get acquainted with divergent scholarly opinions in the same volume. An acknowledgment or commentary on this aspect, either in the editors' Introduction or in an Afterword, might have benefited the project in terms of its cohesiveness.

In the Introduction, Petra Chu and Ning Ding provide an overview of the four broad categories that group the volume's essays: practices of collecting and display in China and in Europe (essays by Richard Vinograd, Anna Grasskamp, Kristel Smentek, and Mei Mei Rado); the role of visual culture in the transmission of knowledge between China and Europe (essays by John Finlay, Che-Bing Chiu, Yuen Lai Winnie Chan, and Marcia Reed); the adoption of European modes of representation in China and of Chinese modes of representation in Europe (essays by Yue Zhuang, Ya-Chen Ma, Kristina Kleutghen, and

Lihong Liu); and hybrid objects that resulted from the intersection of Chinese and European artistic traditions (essays by Yeewan Koon, Greg Thomas, Stacey Sloboda, and Jennifer Milam).

Devoted to the collecting and display of multicultural objects, Part I raises an important question: To what extent were there attempts to integrate foreign objects within the space they inhabited in the host culture? According to Richard Vinograd, both cultures either showcased differences or foregrounded “equivalences” among cultures otherwise acknowledged as dissimilar. For example, a plate decoration of a Chinese interior evoked Dutch domesticity. Kristel Smentek’s essay in the first section of the book suggests that the European practice of mounting Chinese and Japanese porcelain with metal fittings exemplified the attempt to harmonize the ‘foreign’ object and its environment. One of her chapter’s contributions concerns the shift that occurred in the type of metal that French *marchand-merciers* (merchant-designers) used to mount East Asian porcelain. She argues that gilt bronze ormolu fittings replaced the more delicate silver or silver gilt mounts because the French interiors that featured mounted porcelain objects had plenty of gilt bronze in various furnishings.

Vinograd proposes that objects of exchange alter the identity of the spaces they inhabit. He refers to these sites as “hybrid spaces” that reveal cultural differences. A fascinating aspect of this author’s approach is the inclusion of pictorial space among other spaces of display that are not representational, but real. He makes a convincing case for how multicultural spaces, both pictorial and physical, “were often densely intermingled even in experiential terms” (15). For example, like the Kew Gardens, the imperial precincts at Chengde featured disparate cultural references whose material expressions, including pavilions and gardens, can be regarded as multi-medium collections. Within the Chengde architectural complex, in the Hall of Spectacular Views among Curved Mountains, a 1755 painting titled *Imperial Banquet in the Park of Ten Thousand Trees* depicted a park that was itself a section of the same precincts. Like the park, the painting, too, was multicultural on several levels: authorship (painted by Chinese and Jesuit artists, including the Italian Giuseppe Castiglione and the Bohemian Ignatius Sichelbart); subject matter (the landscape includes auspicious rock formations, geometric Manchu land, Southern Chinese gardens, Mongol yurts, and a Buddhist pagoda); and modes of representation (the painting combines Western perspective and modeling with Chinese-style landscape elements). This situation exemplifies a *mise-en-abîme* of multicultural composite spaces, each reflecting and echoing the others. In addition, Vinograd’s essay addresses the theatricality of Qing culturally hybrid images and of European *chinoiserie*, although he does not explain the reasons for which the theatrical effect was sought. Chiu’s essay in Part II engages with the notion of theatricality, too. With regard to his case study of the Western-style gardens at the emperor’s European pavilions at Yuanmingyuan, Chiu points out that weeping willow trees had their branches propped up to create a dramatic and artificial effect. Vinograd’s essay speaks to the chapters on gardens in Part II in that it provides the framework of understanding gardens as multicultural botanical collections.

In their respective essays, both Anna Grasskamp and Kristel Smentek write about framing devices in an intercultural context. Specifically, they address European mounts on Chinese porcelain and Chinese stands for either local porcelain (Smentek) or Flemish astronomical

instruments at the court of the Kangxi emperor (Grasskamp). Vinograd, Grasskamp, and Smentek all agree that these practices of display showcase cultural differences rather than neutralize them. According to Grasskamp, the difference between European mounts, conceptualized as *parerga*, and Chinese display stands, conceptualized as *tai*/platform, is that the former mediates the contact between viewer and object (i.e., it is the gilt bronze mount that one touches in order to pick up the porcelain), while the latter allows for direct contact with the object (i.e., one can pick up the astronomical tools from their stands.) This essay would have benefited from a more elaborate engagement with the notion of cultural appropriation, particularly in terms of situating Grasskamp's fascinating use of *parerga* and *tai*. Smentek engages carefully with the notion of appropriation and proposes several contributions. Firstly, she brings two kinds of objects under the umbrella of the same category. While the French *marchand-mercier* added a physical component in the form of metal fittings to a foreign object, literally altering it, Chinese objects that emulated the French Rococo aesthetic and European techniques were equally multicultural, although the entire production was local. This observation establishes a shift of perspective whereby "appropriation" occurs not only at the level of discrete objects, but also at the level of medium, technique, subject matter, and style. Secondly, Smentek agrees with recent scholarly re-evaluations of the culture of the *marchand-mercier* mounted porcelain, according to which the mounts showcase the Chinese object as precious as well as mysterious. The fact that European producers and consumers were unaware of the processes of porcelain making, at least until the second half of the eighteenth century, enhanced the wondrous effect of the object and its desirability. Thirdly, Smentek argues that experiencing the mounted porcelain was both visual and haptic and led to a contrast between the "metal-ness" of the mounts and the softness of the porcelain, akin to the eighteenth-century notion of "tact flou," defined by eighteenth-century French writers as the tactile experience of material delicacy. This insight enhances our understanding of the multicultural object in a French context at an experiential level and a socio-cultural level.

The last essay of Part I addresses the roles of Western textiles at the court of the Qianlong emperor. Mei Mei Rado provides a nuanced account of Western brocaded silks, either received as gifts or imported, and Chinese silks that emulated Western ones. One of Rado's central arguments is that Western textiles, unfamiliar to Chinese elite and popular audiences alike, represented an interface that highlighted the emperor's power. As Rado explains, one of the three Chinese government-run silk manufactories, Suzhou, replicated European silks. In response to these Western-style and locally produced silks, the emperor encouraged faithful reproduction, but voiced concern over efficiency and cost. Rado argues that mastering foreign weaving techniques and reproducing European silks was a political tool. She offers a great example of a politically charged multicultural object: some of the Suzhou silks were based on Spitalfields English motifs, but the typically pastel Spitalfields colors were replaced with nothing other than bright yellow—a color reserved for the emperor and his immediate circle. Rado lists several reasons that substantiate the political dimension of the emperor's decision to don Western silks. These European fabrics helped construct the persona of a 'universal' ruler and a bright presence quite literally, considering the shimmering effect of the silver and gold threads of the textiles. In sum, Rado convincingly argues that the lavishness and rarity of the fabrics emphasized the uniqueness of the emperor. Her essay includes two other directions of research that call for expanded expositions. Firstly, Rado points out that the motifs of European silks, unlike those of Chinese silks, did not carry any puns or literary associations. Comprehensibility was

restricted to what met the eye. Contributing to the emperor's mystery and power, these Western silks represented, as Rado puts it, an "ornamental surface." In this regard, Rado mentions the "rhetorical" role of Western silks in the construction of the emperor's identity. Not unlike Grasskamp's proposition of defining the framing devices of multicultural objects as *parerga*, Rado's suggestion of the "rhetorical" dimension of Western silks deserves further exploration. Similarly, Rado's discussion of the use of Western silks for Chinese imperial military accessories would have benefited from a more thorough analysis. Lastly, it is worth mentioning that Rado's essay connects to Jennifer Milam's text, the last essay of the volume. China's importation of European silks through Russia further substantiates the socio-economic and cultural role of Russia in the Chinese-European encounter of the eighteenth century.

The second section of the book explores the circulation of knowledge about China and Europe, in both directions, through the lens of prints (in the essays of John Finlay and Marcia Reed) and gardens (in the essays of Che-Bing Chiu and Yuen Lai Winnie Chan.) The central premise of John Finlay's essay is that interrelated texts and images represented major vehicles for the transmission of knowledge from China to Europe, specifically France. Finlay's is a fascinating account of little known and previously unpublished material. Focusing upon the collection of paintings, prints, texts and correspondence of the French minister of state, Henri Léonard Jean Baptiste Bertin (1720–1792), Finlay emphasizes the extent to which Bertin saw text and image as an integrated way of understanding China. Focusing on the *40 Views of Yuanmingyuan*, the emperor's summer quarters also known as the Garden of Perfect Clarity, Finlay's essay outlines the different forms under which these images circulated in China and in Europe. Specifically, they started as imperially commissioned paintings corresponding to the emperor's forty poems. Soon after the paintings were completed, a printed compendium was executed, accompanied by extensive commentary on the poems. Although clearly copied from or modeled on the original set of paintings and printed compendium, the prints of these forty views that reached Europe were loose pages, kept in no particular order. As such, they were misperceived as images of disparate places. Bertin himself knew that the images depicted imperial gardens, but was unaware that they all depicted the same site. Finlay reveals that Jesuit missionaries at the Chinese court, with whom Bertin corresponded, sent him a painted album of the views with praising commentary of the emperor's accomplishments. Bertin therefore had surprisingly accurate information about this project. On the other hand, he was collecting paintings that, although based on these forty views, departed so much from the initial set of paintings that they did not seem to be of the Yuanmingyuan site. This case study allows Finlay to highlight important ideas about the control, and lack thereof, that a collector could have over the knowledge that art objects channeled across cultures. Finlay also reminds the viewer that Bertin was concerned with authenticity, thought of Chinese export images as less valuable than those that catered to the Chinese market, and belonged to a very narrow circle of elite French intellectuals who had access to the elusive knowledge from and about China.

Marcia Reed's essay, too, addresses the role of prints in the transmission of knowledge, but in the other geographical direction. Unlike Finlay, she focuses on the influence of European prints and printmaking techniques on Chinese imperial print projects. These multicultural prints showcased the power of the Qing emperor. Similar to Rado's essay, the premise of Reed's essay is that multicultural prints represented vehicles for political messages in international and domestic contexts. Reed's text explains that the Qianlong emperor and his

court artists had significant access to European prints and to knowledge about copper engraving techniques. If he initially commissioned prints that Chinese and European artists executed jointly, subsequent projects had a Chinese only production. Writing about the Chinese-French production of the print series known as the *East Turkestan Campaign*, Reed traces the circulation of objects, including Chinese drawings, French copperplates, and French and Chinese impressions of the original French copperplates, and the parallel circulation of knowledge. The copperplates, worked on under the supervision of the French royal printmaker Cochin II, served as educational tools for Chinese engravers. Reed claims that the French printmakers did not fully understand the narratives of the drawings that they had received from China and altered them minimally according to French legibility patterns and contemporaneous tastes. However, it should be noted that engraving projects entailed an inherent multi-authorial process, irrespective of whether or not the project involved artists from different cultures. Even in the case of printmaking projects undertaken in France with French artists only, the final impression “remembered” the authorial marks of the artist who did the initial drawing, the artist who engraved the plate, and the artist(s) (if any) who reworked the plate. Ewa Lajer-Burchardth addressed this multi-authorial aspect in scholarship that is not concerned with cross-cultural exchange per se.<sup>[1]</sup> From a different perspective, Ya-Chen Ma also takes up Reed’s case study in her essay in Part III.

The chapters of Che-Bing Chiu and Winnie Chan explore the transmission and acquisition of cross-cultural knowledge by investigating garden design and the changing status of Chinese gardens. Chiu and Finlay write about the same case study—Yuanmingyuan—but Finlay is concerned with images of the site, while Chiu focuses on the gardens. Chiu’s essay proposes a shift of perspective that aligns scholarly work with what interested eighteenth-century actors. In so doing, Chiu contributes to the recent trend of decentralizing “(fine) art” in visual studies and material culture. He provides an overview of how Jesuit missionaries sent information about Chinese gardens back to Europe. These texts, especially Jean Denis Attiret’s 1743 text on *maisons de plaisance*, spurred the European craze for Chinese-style gardens in the eighteenth century. At the Qing court, those same missionaries were charged to design and execute the European pavilions at the emperor’s Yuanmingyuan. If the construction process of European pavilions is well documented, there is only scarce information about the gardens. Indicative of how little information there is in this area of inquiry is the extent to which Chiu provides lists and descriptions in his article in order to help the reader to imagine the appearance of this object of study. Despite the paucity of information, Chiu relates a great anecdote that gives a sense of the political currency of botany and garden design in the East-West exchange at the Qing court. The missionary Pierre Nicolas Le Chéron D’Incarville managed to be appointed botanist at the court, which he very much wanted, after acquainting the emperor with the *mimosa pudica* plant, which droops when it’s touched. The emperor not only gave D’Incarville the desired position, but also wrote a poem about the plant and had it painted by another missionary, the Italian artist Giuseppe Castiglione. Another important aspect of cross-cultural exchange that Chiu presents is the combination of *xiesheng* (the aesthetic principle of rendering the essence of the object by observing it intensely and for a long time) and the bird-and-flower genre, as exemplified in Castiglione’s imperially commissioned images that documented local and foreign plants.

The essay of Yuen Lai Winnie Chan complements Chiu’s account of European-Chinese exchange in the context of Qing gardens. Chan’s focus is not on imperially commissioned



gardens and images of plants, but on Chinese merchant-owned nursery gardens that became sites of commerce and signs of modernity. Chan writes about the influence of Western gardens in the trade center of Canton. Her argument traces the transformation of these Chinese gardens from sites of private contemplation to sites of public entertainment. Chan explains that plants became commodities in early nineteenth-century Canton under the monopoly of Hong merchants. Specifically, she makes a case for the neighborhood of Fa Tee (Flowering Land), where the merchants' nursery gardens were situated, as an area of public commerce frequented by both local and foreign visitors who purchased horticulture essentials and rare plants. Chan explores the effect of Western-style modern gardens at three levels: firstly, the criticism of Chinese intellectuals vis-à-vis potted plants, which they regarded as vulgar; secondly, the addition of flowers as a key component of the garden to the traditional Chinese elements of rocks and water; and thirdly, the replacement of the distant natural landscape conducive to contemplation with the factories that surrounded Fa Tee gardens in an emerging Chinese urban modernity.

The third section of the book is dedicated to adopted techniques of representation and their artistic and socio-cultural meanings, especially in the case of the use of perspective and chiaroscuro in Chinese drawings, paintings and prints. The essays of Yue Zhuang and Kristina Kleutghen offer two divergent interpretations of one-point perspective and modeling in images produced at the Qing court. Ya-Chen Ma revisits the *East Turkestan Campaign* prints to focus on the composite modes of representation that Chinese artists used in their renditions of this subject. Lihong Liu contributes an excellent essay on how the Chinese concept of *ying* mediated the assimilation and adaptation of Western modeling and perspective.

Zhuang's essay is premised on the symbolic role of modes of representation, including the meaning of one-point perspective in Renaissance painting (as proposed in well-known texts by Samuel Edgerton, Norman Bryson, and Martin Kemp).<sup>[2]</sup> Zhuang focuses on two renditions of an image from the 36 views of the Chengde summer retreat: a Chinese woodcut and an engraving by the Qing court painter Matteo Ripa. She argues that Ripa, in light of the Chinese Rites Controversy and his own internal conflicts, replaced the "void" in the Chinese woodcut with the Western technique of hatching.<sup>[3]</sup> According to Zhuang, the "void" in the woodcut is indicative of the neo-Confucian principle of *li*—the void, the immaterial, the universal—surrounded by *qi*—the material generative force, exemplified in the woodcut by architecture and natural elements. As a court painter for the Kangxi emperor, Ripa was in a complex situation politically, religiously and personally, at a time when Jesuit missionaries disregarded papal orders that prohibited participation in Confucian rites. Through a quasi-psychoanalytic reading, Zhuang proposes that Ripa's use of hatching in his version of the woodcut replaced the neo-Confucian *li* with a linear order infused with Christian values. She also suggests that the sunrays in Ripa's version evoke a sense of divine grace over a landscape in which the artist felt the power of God. Based partially on Ripa's diary, Zhuang's suggestion is intriguing, but her essay leaves some questions unanswered. Did Ripa know whether the "void" in the woodcut had or could have had a neo-Confucian reading? And how does the hatching affect the perspectival logic of the image?



The essay of Kristina Kleutghen dismisses the possibility of any Christian symbolic dimension in Chinese Qing images that employ Western one-point perspective. Kleutghen thinks of perspective as part of what she calls the “technical” knowledge that the Kangxi emperor willingly learned as a sign of status and power. As Kleutghen convincingly argues, the assimilation of Western knowledge was integral to the emperor’s self-fashioning according to the Confucian ideal of the sage-ruler. Kleutghen traces the transition from mathematics to the arts in the imperial use of Western perspective, marked by the rule of the emperor Yongzheng. Of course, this attitude came at a time of tense diplomatic relations marked by the Chinese Rites controversy. Kleutghen also explores the use of perspective beyond the Qing court, in the perspectival woodblock prints popular with Suzhou merchants. Kleutghen agrees with Ya-Chen Ma, author of another essay in the same section of the book, in that the reason for which Western-style perspectival prints appealed to wealthy Suzhou merchants must have been that, away from the court, these non-aristocrats with economic power patronized art that was disapproved of by Chinese literati of a higher class. Kleutghen’s account is brought full circle with her analysis of the interest that the Qianlong emperor had in Western perspective as well as Suzhou culture. She points out that he had Suzhou “reconstructed” for his imperial gardens in Beijing.) A side point of Kleutghen’s essay—on the connection between Suzhou and the prints for optical devices of the eighteenth-century Japanese artist Maruyama Ōkyo—deserves further scholarly attention.

Ya-Chen Ma continues this section’s engagement with Western perspective in Qing images, focusing on the print series known as the *East Turkestan Campaigns*, previously discussed in Reed’s essay. Ma addresses the suite of sixteen paintings in ink and color that Chinese court painters made at the emperor’s order, most likely after the same drawings that were sent to France to be engraved. A comparison between the paintings and the prints shows few differences, from which Ma concludes, convincingly, that the French engravers followed the drawn originals fairly closely. This visual exercise helps her isolate the presence of European techniques in the French prints. Accordingly, the one-point perspective, combined with an elevated view, was already present in the Chinese drawings, while the modeling/hatching was added in France by Cochin’s engravers. Ma argues that the prints combine French modes of representation (hatching, modeling/ *chiaroscuro*, the presence of clouds in the sky) with early Qing modes of representation, specifically in terms of the depiction of battle scenes. She shows that a shift had occurred from Ming style battle scenes that focused on the abilities of one military leader to the early Qing style that emphasized the disciplined nature of the Qing army. The latter found its full expression in a composite mode of representation that adapted Western perspective to increase visual order and legibility.

The last text in the third section of the volume is Lihong Liu’s compelling essay on the distinct, yet interconnected notions of shadow, shade, reflection, modeling, *chiaroscuro*, and perspective. Liu explores the double meaning of the Chinese term *ying* (shadow as well as reflection) and how this multi-layered concept affected the adoption and interpretation of Western techniques of rendering light and shade. Her essays provides a provocative parallel between the eleventh century Shen Kuo and Leonardo da Vinci in terms of how both thought of, and wrote about, reliefs on a wall as lessons in discerning light and shade. They both encouraged artists to ‘read’ landscapes into the three-dimensionality of a wall or a patch of mud. This cross-temporal and cross-cultural affinity frames Liu’s discussion. She

addresses the conflict between the Chinese aversion to depicting shadows and the adverse response of European artists to such a position, explaining how, from the perspective of Chinese artists who privileged clarity and the presence of an omnipresent light, shadows were perceived as stains and unnecessary breaks in the coherence and legibility of the image. Part of Liu's essay is dedicated to the notions of reflection and mirroring as the other side of *ying*. She discusses the semantic significance of reflecting images, ranging from narrative roles to transfers of identity from the depicted figure to the environment it inhabits. It is useful to think of this portion of Liu's essay in relation to the ideas that Sloboda puts forth, in Part IV, on reflecting surfaces in European *chinoiserie*.

The fourth and last section of the book sheds light on the strategies at the core of *chinoiserie* and *européénerie* (in the essays of Yeewan Koon, Greg Thomas, and Stacey Sloboda). The essay that concludes the section investigates a different kind of multicultural hybridity, as Jennifer Milam discusses the unique case of Russia—both Asian and European—in the eighteenth-century exchange between China and the West.

Yeewan Koon's chapter analyzes an album of gouaches by the Chinese export painter Pu Qua from several angles. Firstly, Koon maps out a network of the other compendia to which the Pu Qua album is connected, including the album titled *The Costumes of China* by the British author George Henry Mason, who mentioned Pu Qua as author of the images; British images of street types, known as *Cries*, which characterize the socio-ethnographic pursuit of the Pu Qua project; and Chinese images known as *Fengsu hua*, which portray social customs and urban life. Both of these British and Chinese reference points precede the Pu Qua album and, like it, feature street types against blank backgrounds. Koon argues that the Pu Qua album combines both traditions in a hybrid product with its own message. Secondly, Koon notices that the Pu Qua album differed from earlier albums of social types in that it depicted figures absorbed in their activities as opposed to theatrical figures that looked out of the picture plane. Implicit in that analysis is, of course, Michael Fried's theory of absorption and theatricality. Thirdly, Koon argues that the Pu Qua album can read both as a depiction of urban life in China and as a depiction of social types of Canton, a major cosmopolitan city. Fourthly, Koon argues that China and European countries alike used these images of street life, as well as the kind of ethnographic research that such images resulted from, as political tools. In Britain, presumably 'authentic' images of China represented means of knowledge and control, especially after an initial round of failed British-Chinese trade negotiations. For the Qing court, 'authentic' images of conquered territories asserted power through seemingly accurate representations of a multicultural empire.

The essays of Greg Thomas and Stacey Sloboda re-evaluate extant notions of *chinoiserie*. Thomas' case study focuses on the Indian-style and Chinese-style Royal Pavilion at Brighton. He uses it as an example of late *chinoiserie* in the early nineteenth century. Parallels can be drawn between this case study and that of the European pavilions of the Qing emperor, as explored in other essays in the book. Thomas provides a stimulating lens through which to understand *chinoiserie* as a boundary-breaking artistic practice. He argues that *chinoiserie* was like installation art in that it dictated the visual identity of a space in which disparate elements were configured to form one aggregate aesthetic program. Responding to Smentek's essay in the same volume, Thomas points out that the hybrid Chinese porcelain and French ormolu objects combine two authentic parts: both the

Chinese porcelain and the ormolu technique were locally specific. From a political perspective, Thomas suggests that the Prince Regent, the future king George IV, treated Chinese and French objects equally. According to Thomas, the Prince Regent had both Chinese and French objects on display as 'foreign' cultures to be 'framed' in imaginative and aesthetically pleasing contexts. He claims that *chinoiserie* was not denigrating Chinese culture or solely asserting power in imperialist ways, as an Orientalist critique would have it. Instead, he proposes that *chinoiserie* was a whimsical and aesthetically innovative practice that established an imagined affinity between equally great international powers. It is hard to embrace this line of thought because it is definitely not telling the entire story. However, as it allows for other interpretations of *chinoiserie*, it is a provocative de-familiarization.

Both Thomas and Sloboda discuss the various degrees of 'foreign-ness' and authenticity of objects that are broadly put under the umbrella of *chinoiserie*. In the case of the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, Thomas mentions the co-existence of Chinese objects produced for the Chinese market, Chinese objects produced specifically for export, and European products that were deemed Chinese-style by European artists and producers. Sloboda makes an important distinction between objects in the Chinese taste, on the one hand, and *chinoiserie*, on the other. She argues that the latter is only a part of the field of objects of Chinese taste. Sloboda's essay explores three aesthetic aspects of *chinoiserie* decoration: connectivity, repetition and the emphasis on the surface. Both Sloboda and Kent Bloomer, in his book *The Nature of Ornament* (2000), argue that decoration connects discrete things into an aesthetic whole because decoration is typically at the margins or boundaries of things, for example around doorways, on floors and ceilings or on the margins of pages. Sloboda eloquently presents the repetitive dimension of *chinoiserie* decoration in the context of a collage in the Chinese room at Saltram House in Plymouth, England. Made out of expensive Chinese wallpaper acquired via the East India Company, the collage emulated the Rococo aesthetic of eclectic decorative schemas. It was also indicative of the domestic crafts associated with feminine occupations and taste. Sloboda argues that the mixing of disparate wallpaper fragments erased any representational logic and thereby insisted on the exclusively "decorative" nature of the imagery. It is worth considering Sloboda's observations on the connective and collage-like techniques of *chinoiserie* in light of Thomas's understanding of *chinoiserie* as installation art.

The last chapter of Part IV examines the case of Russia during the reign of Peter I. The tsar's plans to modernize Russian society drew on both Western European culture and technological knowledge from China. For Russia in the eighteenth century, diplomatic relations with China were necessary not only for trade, but also to negotiate and secure the border that the two countries shared. Milam shows that, according to philosopher Gottfried Leibniz, Russia occupied a key geographical position to facilitate East-West exchange and to build on knowledge from both sources. Milam indicates that Chinese objects were modified in Russia just as the French *marchand-merciers* altered and mounted Chinese porcelain; Russian producers also embroidered Russian symbols on imported Chinese silks. Peter I perceived the acquisition of Chinese collectibles as an arena of competition with Europe. According to Milam's research, the tsar was disappointed and concerned that, although geographically more remote, European countries had the same, if not better, access to a great variety of Chinese objects, primarily via the East India Company. Milam's essay draws attention to a stimulating combination of European *chinoiserie* and Chinese objects in a cultural space that had a unique relation to both Europe and China.

In conclusion, this book makes an excellent contribution to studies of *chinoiserie*, *européénierie*, cultural appropriation, and the history of cross-cultural collecting and display in the early modern period. The contributing authors provide new information on under-explored objects; propose new definitions of established notions such as *chinoiserie*; and suggest new terms for understanding cross-cultural adaptation, such as *ying* in relation to Western modeling and perspective in Qing images. Useful to scholars of Chinese art as well as to scholars of European art, the book offers multiple conceptual entryways into this multicultural and multidisciplinary field.

Sonia Coman  
Ph.D. Candidate, Art History, Columbia University  
scc2150[at]columbia.edu

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## Notes

[1] Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, "Image Matters: the Case of Boucher" in *Dialogues in Art History, from Mesopotamian to Modern: Readings for a New Century* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art; Yale University Press, 2009), 279. Lajer-Burcharth argues that the repeated experience of engraving someone else's drawings affects the formation of the engraver's style. Also, in multi-authorial projects, the engraver's hand contributes to the aesthetic identity of the print.

[2] Samuel Edgerton, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective* (New York: Basic Books, 1975); Norman Bryson, *Word and Image* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); and Martin Kemp, *Geometrical Perspective from Brunelleschi to Desargues: A Pictorial Means or an Intellectual End?* (London: British Academy, 1985).

[3] The Chinese Rites Controversy refers to a seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century argument that began in China among missionaries regarding whether or not Confucian ceremonies were incompatible with the Christian faith. Generally, Jesuits thought the rites could be tolerated; Dominicans and Franciscans thought the rites were to be condemned. Over the course of two centuries, the papacy banned the rites, lifted the ban, and subsequently reinstated it. Eventually the ban was lifted in the twentieth century.