

A Curious Affair

the fascination between east and west



\$12.95

If you want to know who we are,
We are gentlemen of Japan:
On many a vase and jar —
On many a screen and fan . . .

—A Chorus of Nobles, from *The Mikado*

Through a chance of history, sea contact between Europe and Asia was made by Europeans during the early Renaissance. Not long after Columbus reached his "new world"—one that had been inhabited for thousands of years but was new to Europe—the Portuguese Vasco de Gama became the first European to reach India by sea. Although Asia was known to Europeans, in some ways da Gama faced even more formidable seafaring challenges than Columbus had. Within a few decades of these pioneering explorers' voyages, ships could reach Asia by sailing either east or west from Europe. "The fascination between East and West," notes Forrest McGill, "had of course existed for many centuries before the voyages of exploration. Now, with direct contacts open, it burst forth."

A Curious Affair explores the legacies of five centuries of interaction—and the mutual fascination that fueled it—between the two regions. Although relations between East and West could often turn deadly, there were also many moments of lightness and frivolity, and it is these that are given special attention here. Such moments charm and disarm, yet, and this book shows, they also bear deeper implications.

continued on back flap

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forrest mcgill

photography by kaz tsuruta



asian art museum

san francisco

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The Asian Art Museum–Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture is a public institution whose mission is to lead a diverse global audience in discovering the unique material, aesthetic, and intellectual achievements of Asian art and culture.

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Frontispiece: Detail of *Great Port of London, England* (p. 23)

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FIRST EDITION

director's preface

To see ourselves as others see us may be both a revelation and a shock. Our exhibition *A Curious Affair: The Fascination between East and West* provides striking, often charming examples of how Asians and Westerners have seen each other over many centuries. Also highlighted are the luxury goods Asians and Westerners wanted from each other, and the copies they made when the genuine article was not available, or too costly. These were the Gucci bags and designer furniture of their day, and their high-end knock-offs. Now, of course, eighteenth-century knock-offs are admired and sought after in their own right, and avidly studied for the information they reveal about what seemed worth emulating and why, and how the process worked.

The supporters and lenders who have made the exhibition possible deserve our deep appreciation. Ann and Gordon Getty have not only allowed us to disrupt their home by borrowing dozens of splendid art objects and pieces of furniture but have also, through their foundation, generously underwritten the production of this introductory book. Additional support for the publication was provided by Fred M. and Nancy Livingston Levin, the Shenson Foundation, in memory of Drs. Ben and A. Jess Shenson. Fred M. and Nancy Livingston Levin also kindly lent artworks for the exhibition, as did Norman Givant, Malcolm D. Gutter, Alice and Robert Piccus, Michael Sack, and the California State Library Special Collections.

Displaying European and American art objects side by side with Asian ones is a bit of a departure for the Asian Art Museum, but no phenomenon is more central to the life of San Franciscans than the interaction of Asian and European cultures. Every Irish-American who loves sitar music, and every Chinese-American who loves the Lindy Hop is involved in a curious affair.

Emily J. Sano

acknowledgments

We are of course indebted to the collectors and sponsors who made the exhibition possible. For myself, I must give double thanks to the collectors, both for their loans and for their readily shared knowledge and advice. They knew much more about their art objects than I, and have answered many questions, provided documentation, and tried to correct my mistakes. Deborah Hatch, the chief curator of fine arts for the Getty Collection, merits special mention for her tireless efforts to arrange photography sessions, conservation examinations, and many other logistical matters, and to make available the latest information and expert opinions.

In fact I can take credit for nothing that may be interesting or new in this book or the exhibition it accompanies. The fields covered are far from my own, and while I am of course responsible for problems, I have relied entirely on the research and thoughts of others—experts at the Asian Art Museum and elsewhere in the Bay Area, and scholarly authors too numerous to mention.

Forrest McGill

a curious affair

East and West (speaking as if these were polar points instead of shades in a spectrum) have long been engaged in a curious affair; "curious" because it is a little odd and because it is often characterized by curiosity. And "affair?" Affairs are matters, *doings*; too routine to specify, or too risqué: Madame X had an affair with a man of affairs.

"They are interested in each other" means there's a warm, perhaps flirtatious reciprocity. But change the intonation slightly—"They are interested in *each Other*"—and there is a negative possibility, of scientists examining a collection of exotic species. The Other can be our perfect complement, or it can be some alien thing needing to be probed and controlled. The works in the exhibition in which Asians have depicted Westerners or vice versa mostly seem good-natured, even when caricaturing. But the possibility for depiction to turn patronizing and cold, like the view of the scientist wielding tongs and magnifier (or to turn hot with ridicule) was never absent.

Affairs may be delightful or exploitative. If there is a differential in power between the participants, there's likely to be trouble for the weaker. In the East-West affair of the last half-millennium, the weaker has usually been the East, and the troubles were multiple and severe: appropriation of resources, colonial domination, opium wars.

Our exhibition focuses on the lighter moments of the affair. These are often frivolous, but may have deeper implications. In poetry and painting the handsome young deity Krishna and his mortal beloved Radha at one point exchange clothes. We are voyeurs of their lovely sensual play. We come to realize, though, that the trading of something as superficial as clothes points to a serious idea. Of the lover and beloved in their new garments the poet says "They are one another." These beings so seemingly different, from such different realms, are not just similar, but ultimately indistinguishable.

Our exhibition has been inspired by another exhibition, the Victoria and Albert Museum's great 2004 *Encounters: The Meeting of Asia and Europe 1500-1800*. We had hoped to host the V&A's exhibition, but unforeseen circumstances on our end prevented our doing so. When it became apparent that San Francisco Bay Area collections included a number of high-quality art objects appropriate to the theme, and that many of these had not been seen in public before, we decided on a modest homage to *Encounters*. What would be modest was not the importance of the objects, but the comparative size and ambition of the endeavor: nothing borrowed from beyond our region; no objects, or few, to represent important periods (the sixteenth century) and places (Korea, Southeast Asia, Iran) for which local examples were not available; no commitment of years of research; not a scholarly catalogue but a slim introductory book.

It is hoped that this book will be like a billet-doux: revealing a little something and piquing further interest.



Map titled *Asia Newly Drawn (Asia Noviter Delineata)*, this printing 1635
 By Willem Janzoon Blaeu, Dutch, 1571–1638
 Lent by Alice and Robert Piccus

This map, first printed in 1618 and frequently reprinted, is one of the best-known early European maps of Asia. It is more accurate than many maps of its day but includes such oddities as showing the Korean peninsula as an island. Along its upper edge are vignettes of Asian cities such as Calcutta and Goa. Along the sides are pairs of figures representing "Arabes," "Tartari," "Chinenses," and other Asians.

voyages

One of history's great hypotheticals is what if the great Chinese Muslim admiral Zheng He, whose voyages of exploration and trade from 1405 to 1433 took him through Southeast Asia, past India, to the coast of Iran—what if he, or Chinese sea captains following him, had sailed around the Cape of Good Hope, up the coast of Africa, and right into Lisbon harbor?

Zheng He's death, and the increasing indifference of the Chinese imperial government to overseas trade and to the investigation of far-off countries, brought the end of Chinese exploration. It was left for direct communications between Asia and Europe to be established by Europeans, not Asians.

A few years after Columbus found his new world, the Portuguese Vasco da Gama became the first European to reach India by sea. In a way, sailing west from Europe was easier than sailing east. The westward route may have been unknown and fearsome, but so was the eastward route, and the distance Da Gama had to cover was more than two-and-a-half times longer than Columbus's voyage. The need to sail all the way around Africa imposed a formidable barrier between West and East, but the desire for spices, porcelains, and silks, coupled with the frequent impulse to convert and exploit, drove the travelers on.

The Portuguese reached Indonesia's "Spice Islands" in 1512, China in 1514, and finally, in 1543, Japan. Meanwhile, in 1521, Magellan and his Spanish crew became the first Europeans to reach Asia by the westward route around South America and across the Pacific.

The fascination between East and West had of course existed for many centuries before the voyages of exploration. Now, with direct contacts open, it burst forth . . .



The Arrival of a Portuguese ship, approx. 1575–1615
 Japan
 Momoyama period (1573–1615)
 Pair of six-fold screens, ink, colors and gold on paper
 Asian Art Museum, *The Avery Brundage Collection*, B60D77+

For almost a hundred years after the arrival of the Portuguese in 1543, European traders, including eventually the Dutch and English, could occasionally be seen in on the streets of some Japanese cities. The strangeness of the Europeans aroused interest, and a demand grew for paintings showing their outlandish features and exotic costumes. Here, in two details from a pair of screens, a ship is shown at anchor while small boats take cargo and passengers back and forth, and a group of Portuguese men and their Indian or Indonesian attendants walk into town. Below them, Japanese women concentrate on their game of *go*.



A Lady of rank on a terrace,
approx. 1765–1780

By an artist in the circle of
Mir Kalan Khan, Indian,
active approx. 1730–1780

Gouache on paper

Asian Art Museum, From
the Collection of William K.
Ehrenfeld, M.D., 2005.64.44

From the 1550s on, Indian painters sometimes included European figures in their works. Occasionally these figures were “real,” that is, they represented Europeans who were actually present at the event depicted. Sometimes, though, a scene with Europeans is harder to interpret. Here four auburn-haired ladies are dressed in unusual, partly European costume. The throne on which the central lady sits is of completely Indian type, however, as are the honorific implements her attendants behind her hold. In the distance European sailors, recognizable by their black hats, aim muskets at a characteristically Indian-type sea monster. On the far shore four mounted hunters—again Europeans?—fight a lion. What, if anything, does all of this add up to, beyond an intriguing fancy?



Hexagonal teapot with European figures, approx. 1725–1775

China

Enamel on metal

Asian Art Museum, The Avery Brundage Collection, B60M473

A European man in eighteenth-century costume sits on the ground like a Chinese scholar at a picnic; nearby a European woman nurses a baby. Their surroundings are a Chinese house and garden. Behind the woman is a stack of Chinese-style books, and behind the man is a Chinese table displaying an ancient Chinese bronze vessel, a vase, and a bowl of Buddha-hand citrons. What we are to make of the scene is far from clear. The figure of the woman probably came from a European drawing or engraving, as perhaps the figure of the man did too. But they seem to have adapted themselves comfortably to lounging in their Chinese courtyard. Objects such as this were often made for the European market, but the mixture of European figures and Chinese setting must have seemed quaint to both Chinese and European eyes.



European lady (detail),
1795–1830
India
Colors on paper
Asian Art Museum,
Gift of George Hopper
Fitch, B86D9

A lady wearing a high-waisted dress and turban fashionable from about 1795 to 1820 sits by a little European table. This could be a portrait, but is more likely to be an Indian painter's interpretation of a fashion illustration of the period. In India (as elsewhere) it was not unusual for artists to base their works on European printed illustrations. In Europe in the early 1800s prints showing the latest mode of dress were produced in large numbers, and must have circulated from Calcutta and other Indian ports.



"Picture of Dutch Women Raising a Wineglass and Caring for a Child" from *Life Drawings of People of Foreign Nations*, 1861
By Sadahide, Japanese,
1807–approx. 1878
Woodblock print, ink and colors on paper
Asian Art Museum, Gift of Mr. Richard Gump, B81D15

Like the representation of the European woman in the Indian painting to the left, this scene of a Dutch woman with her maid and little child was probably based more on other art works than on real-life observation. An earlier Japanese print depicts a Dutch woman also holding a stemmed glass and accompanied by maid and child, and the woman's dress, like that of the woman in the Indian painting, seems likely to derive from European fashion illustrations.



Three European men, approx. 1610-1650
Japan
Two-fold screen, ink, colors, and gold on paper
Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty

The European man pointing off-screen is perhaps a ship's captain, his high status marked by the parasol held over him by an attendant. On one side of him stands a dandyish young man, and on the other a European dog of a sort that the Japanese found interesting.



The American merchant Eugene Van Reed,
approx. 1860-70
By Sadahide, Japanese, 1807-approx. 1878
Ink and colors on silk
Asian Art Museum, Transfer from the Fine Arts
Museums of San Francisco, Gift of Mrs. Noble T.
Biddle, 2001.8

Sadahide represents one of the early American merchants in Japan as a rather proud figure on horseback. The merchant's Japanese attendant has on his jacket a medallion with an American eagle and the US shield. Similar eagles and shields appeared, in the period of this work, on a variety of American official documents, advertising posters, and, in a rather different form, coins.

The merchant, Eugene Van Reed, went to Japan as a twenty-four-year-old in 1859, only six years after Commodore Perry's mission. He spent thirteen years in Yokohama as a clerk in the American consulate, a trader, an arms dealer, and a travel agent for Japanese people wishing to visit the United States. He is best known—or most infamous—for his activities later. According to the website of the Japanese American National Museum, "in 1868, Van Reed sent a group of approximately 150 Japanese to Hawai'i to work on sugar plantations and another 40 people to Guam. This unauthorized recruitment and shipment of laborers, known as the *gannen-mono*, marked the beginning of Japanese labor migration overseas. However, for the next two decades the Meiji government prohibited the departure of 'immigrants' due to the slave-like treatment that the first Japanese migrants received in Hawai'i and Guam."

The painting of Van Reed was donated in 1918 by Margaretta Van Reed Biddle, who was Van Reed's sister. She and Van Reed were born in Pennsylvania, but lived in San Francisco after their father moved the family to California just after the Gold Rush of 1849. Presumably her brother commissioned Sadahide to paint his portrait, and later gave it, or bequeathed it, to his sister. Sadahide also portrayed Van Reed in a woodblock print, dated 1861.

Candle holder with Chinese boy, approx. 1730–1750
Figure by Johann Joachim Kändler, German, 1706–1775
Hard paste porcelain and gilded bronze
Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty

It is interesting, and sometimes puzzling or disconcerting, to see what physical features or characteristics of clothing were used—in either Asia or the West—to signal the nationality of a foreigner in artworks. The boy in this candle holder was apparently thought of in Europe as “Chinese.” Neither his face nor his toga seems particularly Chinese. He wears a large leaf on his head, though, as do a number of other European representations of “Chinese” people, and it seems that this leaf became a conventional sign of Chinese identity in the minds of some eighteenth-century Europeans.

Kändler was for many decades the master modeler at the Meissen porcelain factory.



Tankard with a scene of trading in China, approx. 1723
Germany: Meissen, Saxony
Hard-paste porcelain with underglaze painting and overglaze enamels
Painting attributed to Johann Gregorius Höroldt, German, 1696–1775
Lent by Malcolm D. Gutter



The parasols, fans, and elaborate headgear of the Chinese figures painted on this Meissen tankard were among the frequent attributes of the Chinese in eighteenth-century European imagery. Here a merchant shows a customer a piece of cloth, while another merchant on a junk calls attention to his wares, including a barrel of precious red coral. (The image above has been digitally flattened for easier viewing.)

The artist thought to have painted this scene, Johann Gregorius Höroldt, was appointed chief painter at the Meissen factory in 1720, and continued to work there for fifty years. His designs were influential in the continuing development of European chinoiserie.



Pair of seated chinoiserie figures, approx. 1750–1775
 Perhaps France
 Terracotta with modern white paint, on later bases of gilded bronze
Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty

A Lady and gentleman, approx. 1790–1810
 China
 Painted clay and wood
Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty



Figures from the fantasyland of European chinoiserie sometimes appear to be entirely imaginary. Of course in real life some Chinese people did sometimes wear broad pointed hats, carry parasols, and care for pet songbirds, as the man and woman shown on the left do. But the supposed Chinese costumes, props, and stock routines were repeated so often as to become stereotypes.

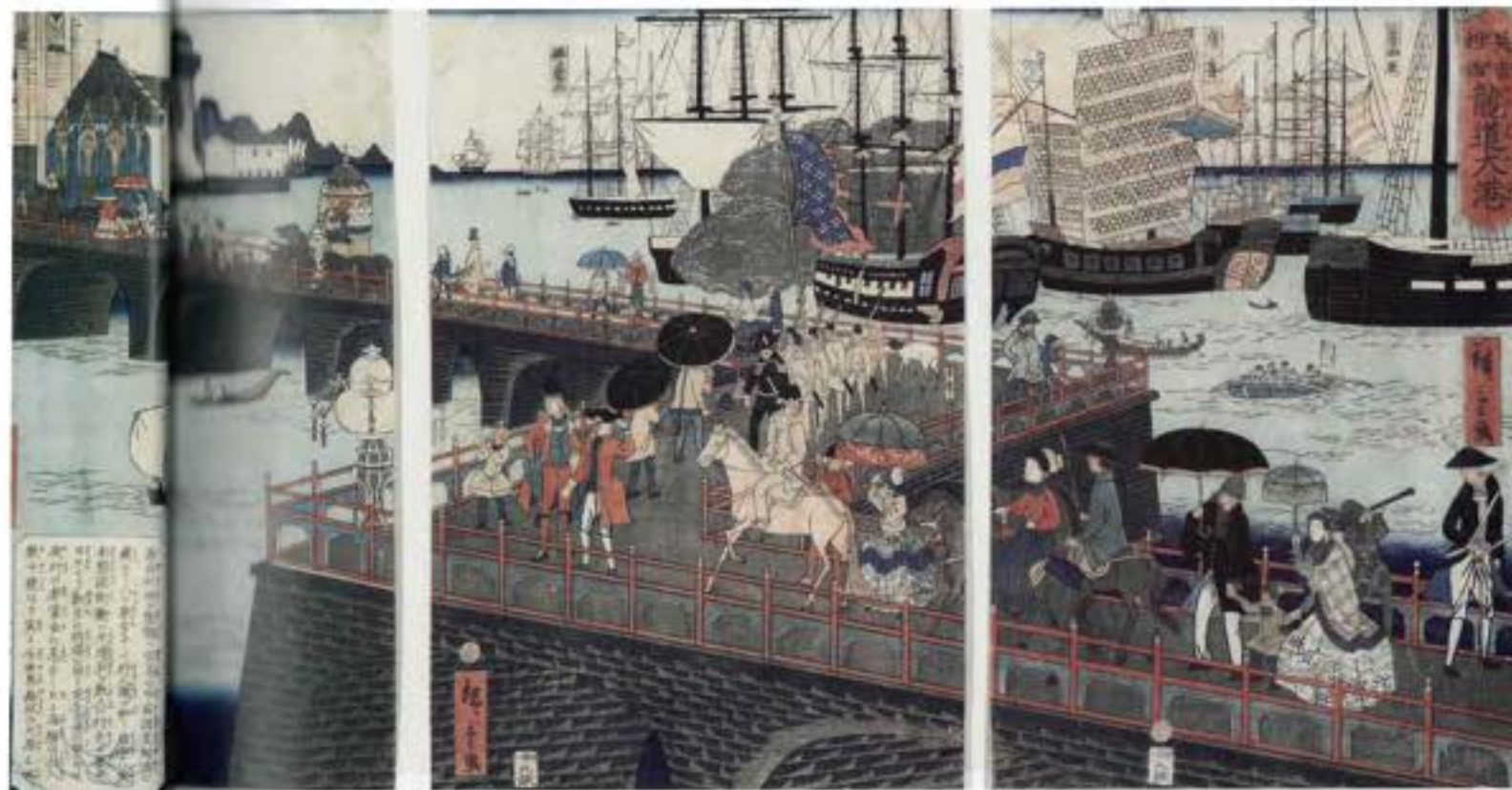
The figures on the right were made in China, and present a more realistic, in fact rather serious, portrayal of a Chinese couple. Such figures were also incorporated into European dreams of the Orient: similar ones were displayed in the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, England, remodelled from 1815 to 1822 with a whimsical "Hindoo" exterior and "Chinese" interior.



Franciscan Church in Holland, approx. 1770–1790
 Attributed to Utagawa Toyoharu, Japanese, 1735–1814
 Woodblock print, ink and colors on paper
 Asian Art Museum, Gift of Mr. Richard Gump, B81D14

Great Port of London, England, 1862
 By Utagawa Hiroshige II, Japanese, 1826–1869
 Woodblock print, ink and colors on paper
 Asian Art Museum, Gift of Mr. Richard B. Gump, B81D2.a-c

Even after the closing of Japan in 1639, after which no Westerners were permitted in except a few Dutch traders restricted to one town, the Japanese continued to be interested in European products such as telescopes and clocks. In the eighteenth century, restrictions on the import of European books were eased, and eventually European printed illustrations circulated fairly widely. Japanese artists found a local market for woodblock-printed copies of some of these illustrations,



for example those showing the sights of the great cities of the West. The Japanese print on the left shows the Forum, Column of Trajan, and Colosseum in Rome, but labels the view “church in Holland,” adding Japanese characters that may stand for “Franciscan.” How the labeling went so badly wrong is of course not known, but few Japanese viewers of the time would have recognized the mistake, any more than most European viewers would have noticed that an illustration of Kyoto was mislabeled as Shanghai.

The set of prints on the right, from some eighty years later, is labeled as London, and nothing is as clearly amiss as in the print on the left. At the same time, the prints on the right show none of the recognizable landmarks of London, and anomalies abound. A London bridge would not be expected to zigzag across the Thames, or to be decked with Japanese-style railings and lanterns. The Victorian ladies in their hoopskirts would not encounter gentlemen wearing the knee brooches and waistcoats of a bygone day. And though the ships sailing up to London were no doubt varied, they surely did not include a Chinese junk. The artist seems to have combined the best information and images available, some off the mark, but others—twelve of the Londoners carry umbrellas—spot on.



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 Attributed to Utagawa Toyoharu, Japanese, 1735–1814
 Woodblock print, ink and colors on paper
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A Shrine in the Forest, 1887
By Theodore Wores, American,
1859–1939
Oil on board
*Lent by Fred M. and Nancy Livingston
Levin*

Blossoms in Japan
By Theodore Wores, American,
1859–1939
Oil on canvas
*Lent by Fred M. and Nancy Livingston
Levin*

British artists were visiting India by the 1770s. For the next hundred years, though, few other artists, Western or Asian, had the opportunity to see each others' homelands with their own eyes. One of the first American painters to travel to Japan was the San Franciscan Theodore Wores, who arrived there in 1885 and stayed for three years. Most of his views of Japan, such as *A Shrine in the Forest*, reflect his European academic training and have nothing Japanese about them except their subject. In *Blossoms in Japan*, however, Wores creates a painting in the tall, relatively narrow format of many Japanese paintings and prints, and emulates something of the flattened space and abrupt cropping that other Western artists like Degas and Whistler admired in Japanese prints.



Plate with dragon, tree, birds, and flowers, approx. 1690–1700
Japan
Kakiemon ware, porcelain with overglaze enamels
Lent by Malcolm D. Gutter

Plate with dragon, tree, birds, and flowers, approx. 1730
Germany; Meissen, Saxony
Hard-paste porcelain with overglaze enamels
Lent by Malcolm D. Gutter



True porcelain was a specialty of China, having been made there since before the tenth century. Porcelain was made in Japan only from about 1610, when the special materials and techniques involved in its production were introduced by Korean potters. Europe had a craving for porcelain, but, not being able to produce it locally, had to import large quantities, at great cost, from China and Japan. No European was more fixated in his desire for porcelain than Augustus the Strong, elector of Saxony (r. 1694–1733). He challenged his country's treasury with the scale of his purchases, and pressured his experts to unravel the secrets of porcelain production. Finally, about 1710, they made the first true—"hard paste"—porcelain in Europe, and by 1720 it was being manufactured at the Meissen factory near Augustus's capital of Dresden.

Some of the early porcelains of Meissen copied Chinese or Japanese wares. These two plates, with their decoration of coiling dragon, tortoise, cranes, pine tree, and flowers, show how closely the Saxon artists could follow their models.

Vase with figures in landscapes,
approx. 1660–1700

China; Jiangxi province

Qing dynasty (1644–1911)

Qinghua ware, porcelain with
underglaze-blue decoration

*Asian Art Museum, The Avery
Brundage Collection, B60P72*

Long-necked vase with figures in
landscapes, approx. 1721–1723

Germany; Meissen, Saxony

Hard-paste porcelain with
underglaze painting

Painting attributed to

Johann Caspar Ripp

Lent by Malcolm D. Gutter



The painters of the Meissen factory emulated not only Japanese models, as the two previous examples show, but also Chinese (or earlier European imitations of Chinese). Chinese blue-and-white porcelain vases of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were not infrequently decorated with landscapes in several broad bands corresponding to divisions of the vessel's shape. In both of its main bands the Meissen vase shows gentlemen relaxing in a garden, a common enough Chinese theme. The comparative Chinese example shows another common theme, fishermen and their boats.



Plate with monogram of the Dutch East India Company, approx. 1660–1680
Japan; Saga prefecture
Arita ware, porcelain with underglaze decoration
Asian Art Museum, The Avery Brundage Collection, B60P974

Plate with coat of arms of the Lauder family, approx. 1760–1770
China; Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province
Porcelain with overglaze polychrome decoration
Asian Art Museum, Bequest of Robert C. Dickenman, 1989.23.6



In 1659 the Dutch East India Company (VOC, for *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*) began large-scale export of porcelain from Japan by ordering nearly 65,000 pieces. In successive decades the exports, both official, through the VOC, and unofficial, continued to grow. In the next century, however, as Chinese factories further geared up their production for export, and Europeans themselves mastered the creation of porcelain, the export of Japanese porcelain trailed off.

Meanwhile, the many newly prosperous families of Great Britain wanted services of table china decorated with their (sometimes freshly invented) coats of arms, and Chinese factories were ready to accommodate the demand. The plate on the right comes from a service for the Lauders, descended from a wealthy Edinburgh merchant ennobled in 1690. The service may have been acquired by Captain John Lauder, who commanded a British ship that traded at Guangzhou (Canton) in 1768 and 1770.



Teapot, 1700–1800
 China; Yixing
 Yixing ware, stoneware
Asian Art Museum, Transfer from the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, B81P71.a-b

Three tea canisters, 1763 and later
 By Samuel Taylor, British, active 1744–1760s, and Edward Farrell, British, active 1816–1830s
 Silver
Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty



Tea was of course one of the Chinese products most desired in eighteenth-century Europe, and the association between tea and China was firmly fixed in the Western mind. Implements for making and serving tea might well be of Chinese manufacture, or of Chinese, or pseudo-Chinese, design. The unglazed stoneware teapots of China's Yixing kilns were particularly prized in both China and the West. Yixing teapots often took fanciful shapes, such as the trunk and branches (and fanciful squirrel as a knob) seen here. A rather similar trunk-and-branch-shaped Yixing teapot was in the collection of one of Europe's most obsessive collectors of Chinese ceramics, Augustus the Strong.

Tea canisters were often made by British silversmiths in the fantasy style of chinoiserie. The canisters here are decorated with "Chinese" figures, and are shaped like pavilions with pillars at the corners. The conical roofs are topped by the parasols with little bells that European creators of chinoiserie so favored.



Colonel Mordaunt's Cock Match, 1794

By Richard Earlom, after a painting by John Zoffany, British, 1743–1822

Hand-colored mezzotint on paper

Asian Art Museum, From the Collection of William K. Ehrenfeld, M.D., 2005.64.653

Colonel Mordaunt's cock match, approx. 1850

India

Ink and colors on cloth

Asian Art Museum, Gift of Dr. William K. Ehrenfeld, 1988.23.2



Scrutinizing the British print on the left and an Indian painting related to it turns up puzzles.

The British print copies a painting by the British artist John Zoffany, who traveled in India from 1783 to 1789. The history of the two original versions of Zoffany's painting and the various British and Indian copies that were made of it is complicated. Suffice it to say that the Indian painter here must have been familiar with this British print or some other copy. The Indian painter has reversed most of the composition, but not, oddly, the two main figures, the British colonel and the Indian ruler who owned the two cocks in the match. The Indian painter has introduced many other alterations, as important as changing the setting from a tent to a colonnade, and as seemingly small as reversing the direction of a glance. The question is, why?



The Death of Ananias, after a design by Raphael, approx. 1650–1710
 Northern India
 Ink on paper
Asian Art Museum, From the Collection of William K. Ehrenfeld, M.D., 2005.64.58

In 1515 Pope Leo X commissioned from Raphael a set of huge preparatory paintings to serve as designs for tapestries in the Sistine Chapel. These paintings and tapestries became famous, and were copied in drawings and prints by a number of European artists. One of these copies must have reached Mughal India, as did many European engravings and book illustrations, perhaps brought by British diplomats or traders.

The Indian artist chose to follow fairly closely some parts of the European model. At the same time, however, the Indian artist has transformed aspects of both style and content, exaggerating the complexity of the drapery, adding and subtracting figures, and changing the setting from an urban square to a rural hillside. The scholar Joachim K. Bautze has suggested that the Indian artist also reinterpreted the unfamiliar biblical subject in Hindu terms, making the apostles resemble Hindu holy men.



Sir Mahbub Ali Khan,
 Nizam of Hyderabad,
 1906
 By Moudar Khan,
 Indian
 Oil on canvas
*Asian Art Museum,
 From the Collection of
 William K. Ehrenfeld,
 M.D., 2005.64.172*

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Indian princes presented themselves, as did the Meiji emperor of Japan and King Chulalongkorn of Siam, in European-style uniforms with European-style medals; in their portraits, they assumed one of the conventional stances of the day, for example leaning on a piece of elaborate furniture. In doing so, they made use of a universally understood visual language of wealth, status, and power.



Chest on stand, approx. 1680
United Kingdom
Japanning and gilding on wood; metal fittings
Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty

Chinese, and especially Japanese, lacquer ware was much prized in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe—it was so rare and expensive that European artisans sought to imitate it. The raw material of lacquer was unavailable, however, and European artisans had to develop the best substitute they could, using varnish mixed with other materials such as asphalt.

Imported lacquer cabinets were sometimes fitted with European legs or other components to set them off. Here, a cabinet of British manufacture, decorated with pseudo-East Asian scenes in what was called "japanning," has been treated like an imported piece, with ornate, gilded Baroque stand and cresting.

The contrast of the nearly smooth surface of the cabinet with the burgeoning three-dimensional carving of the swags, scrolls, and cherubs, and the asymmetry of the cabinet's decoration of landscapes and figures with the strict symmetry of the stand and crest make a striking impression.





Chair with the coat of arms of the Heathcote family,
1720–1733
Attributed to James Moore (British, 1670–1726)
Lacquered and gilded wood
Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty

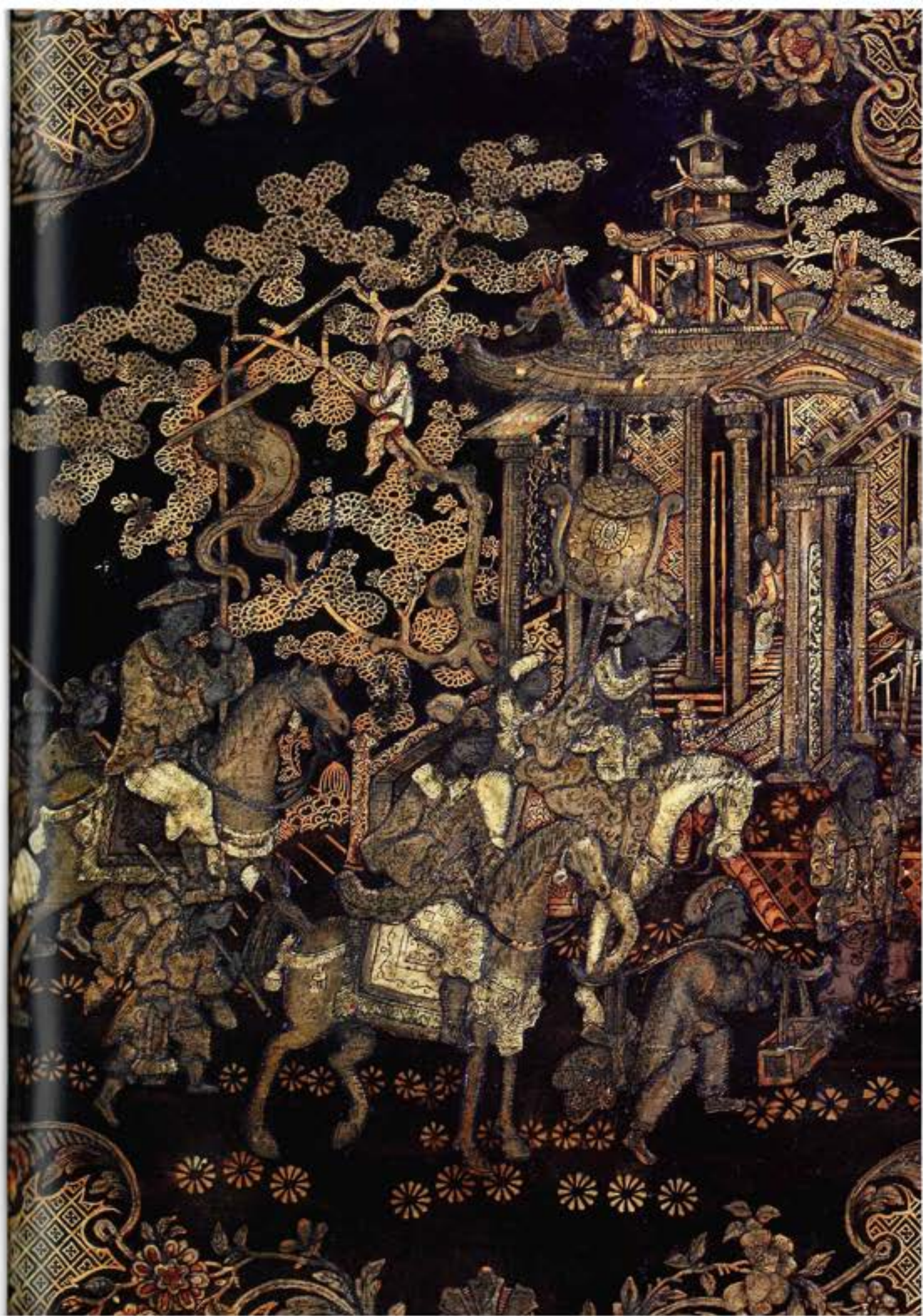
On the back of this chair a colorful coat of arms seems to float in the sky over a delicate East Asian landscape. The incongruity apparently did not trouble viewers in Georgian England.

In 1720 William—eventually Sir William—Heathcote married Elizabeth Parker, the daughter of the lord chancellor of Great Britain, the Earl of Macclesfield. The coat of arms combines Heathcote's arms with Parker's. In about the same year, Heathcote ordered from China a porcelain dinner service showing a simpler version of the combined arms. (Compare the plate with the coat of arms of the Lauder family on p. 31.)



Bureau-cabinet, approx. 1725–1750
Attributed to Giles Grendey,
British, 1693–1780
Gilded and japanned wood,
gilded bronze
Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty

This cabinet is ornamented with a whimsical mélange of Rococo with real and imaginary Chinese and Japanese elements. A warrior brandishes a spear from the back of a miniature elephant, deer-serpents arch over a gateway, impossibly tall and elegant gentlemen admire the view, and giraffes saunter by. Eighteenth-century Europeans knew something of the real Asia, but the realities did not necessarily constrain their fantasies.





Chair from the "Infantado suite," 1730-1740
 By Giles Grendey, British, 1693-1780
 Japanned wood and caning
 Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty

An attraction to lacquer and a taste for chinoiserie were common not just in eighteenth-century Britain, Germany, and France but over much of Europe. The Spanish duke of Infantado set out to redecorate his castle, and called upon the British cabinetmaker Giles Grendey to supply him with more than eighty pieces of japanned furniture. On the side chairs, of which about twenty are known, the back slats are decorated with curious figures of Chinese men with parasols.



Side chair, approx. 1700-1730
 United Kingdom
 Japanned wood and caning
 Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty

On the back of this chair two landscapes seem to be combined. At the lower end, buildings with upturned eaves are shaded by a gargantuan willow. Above, and seen at closer range, are ducks and flowers by a lake shore.



"Designs for China Shelves" in *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director: Being a Large Collection of the Most Elegant and Useful Designs of Household Furniture, in the Most Fashionable Taste* (1754), third edition, 1762
By Thomas Chippendale, British
Printed book
Lent by the Sutro Library, a branch of the California State Library



Chinese-Chippendale-type cabinet, approx. 1760-1780
United Kingdom
Mahogany
Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty

Thomas Chippendale's well-known book *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* of 1754 (with additional illustrations added in 1762) circulated widely and influenced furniture design in Europe, the US, and other parts of the world for decades. It included several pages of designs for "Chinese chairs," and "China shelves." The latter had to do with China in two respects: they were for displaying china and were in what was thought to be Chinese style. This cabinet follows one of Chippendale's designs closely. Its curving roof-like elements and its geometric latticework were associated by Europeans with Chinese design.



Armchair for the Chinese bedroom at Badminton House, approx. 1754
By John Linnell, British, 1729-1796
Japanned and gilded wood (refinished approx. 1840; reupholstered 2002)
Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty

One of the grandest chinoiserie rooms of eighteenth century Britain was the Chinese bedroom at the Duke of Beaufort's estate, Badminton House. The London designer John Linnell and his father's furniture workshop were commissioned to provide chairs, chests, shelves, and an extravagant pagoda bed. Some of this furniture is now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, as is Linnell's original design drawing for the chairs.



Design for an armchair, approx. 1753, by John Linnell, Victoria and Albert Museum, London / Art Resource, NY. *Not in exhibition.*



Table with elephant-topped legs, approx 1904
 Designed by Lockwood de Forest, American, 1850-1932; made in Ahmed-
 abad, Gujarat state, India
 Wood
Lent from a private collection

A Proposed design for the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, 1808
 By Humphrey Repton, British, 1752-1818
 Lithograph
From the Collection of William K. Ehrenfeld, M.D., 2005.64.81

The Western taste for Asian or Asian-related furniture and decora-
 tive objects was by no means limited to those in Chinese or Japanese
 styles. Portuguese, and later British and French traders brought

Indian luxury goods and curiosities to the salons of Europe. Sumptuous Indian textiles were
 much in demand, and in the decades after 1800, ladies coveted shawls of cashmere, made in
 Kashmir in northern India. From certain British country houses of the 1780s to the turreted
 and domed Royal Pavilion at Brighton, England, of the 1810s to the exotic movie palaces of
 the 1920s, Indian elements were adopted into Western architecture and interior design.

This massive Indian-style table comes from a 1904 Indian-style house near Oakland,
 California. The table, as well as other furniture and decorative woodwork, was designed for
 the house by the artist Lockwood de Forest, an associate of Louis Comfort Tiffany's. De For-
 est went to India in 1881. He set up, with an Indian partner, the Ahmedabad Wood Carving
 Company, through which, for several decades, he supplied meticulously handcrafted home
 decorations to wealthy American clients. The city of Ahmedabad, in Gujarat in northwestern
 India, had a long and splendid history of wood carving, so de Forest found artisans with the
 necessary skills, as well as many wonderful examples of old woodwork from which to draw
 inspiration.

Chest on stand

Chest: approx. 1690–1710; northwestern India, for the European market; wood, ivory, and gilded metal

Stand: approx. 1725–1775; United Kingdom; gilded wood

Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty

Indian decorative objects, like Chinese and Japanese (or imitation Chinese or Japanese) ones, were eagerly collected in the West, and were sometimes adapted to a new purpose or given a European frame or setting. (Compare the imitation Japanese chest with European stand on p. 38.) Here, a chest made in India, of sedate shape but exuberant ornament, has been fitted with a stand exuberant in both shape and ornament. The chest is inlaid with flowers and floral patterns ultimately derived from the decoration of such Mughal monuments as the Taj Mahal (1630s–1650s). Inside are charming vignettes, like those in Mughal miniatures, of ladies and gentlemen enjoying the delights of a garden.





Hoop back chair, approx. 1800–1810
 India, Murshidabad
 Ivory with gilding, wood, caning
 Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty

Chair, approx. 1760–1780
 India, Vizagapatam
 Ivory with colors and gilding, wood, caning
 Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty

Western-style furniture was made in many parts of Asia for export to Europe or for the use of local European traders and officials. Eventually, too, wealthy Asians wanted such furniture, to symbolize their modernity or cosmopolitanism. Asian furniture makers initially had to rely for their European



"Backs of Chairs" in *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* by Thomas Chippendale

designs on studying actual pieces of European furniture, or, probably more often, illustrations or designs in European books. One of the most influential design books was Thomas Chippendale's *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* of 1754 (with additional illustrations added in 1762). The chair on the right, made on the east coast of central India, seems to have relied on Chippendale's designs. Its back, with elaborately pierced splat and wavy crest rail, is related to several of Chippendale's chair back designs, and its straight, uncarved legs are like those of Chippendale's "Chinese chairs."

The design of the chair on the left has some features such as the thin, tapering legs in common with the designs of British cabinetmaker George Hepplewhite.



One of the Twenty-Four Ghats at Mathura, 1894

By Lockwood de Forest, American, 1850–1932

Oil on canvas

Asian Art Museum, from the Collection of William K. Ehrenfeld, M.D., 2005.64.116

The Sacred Pool, approx. 1900

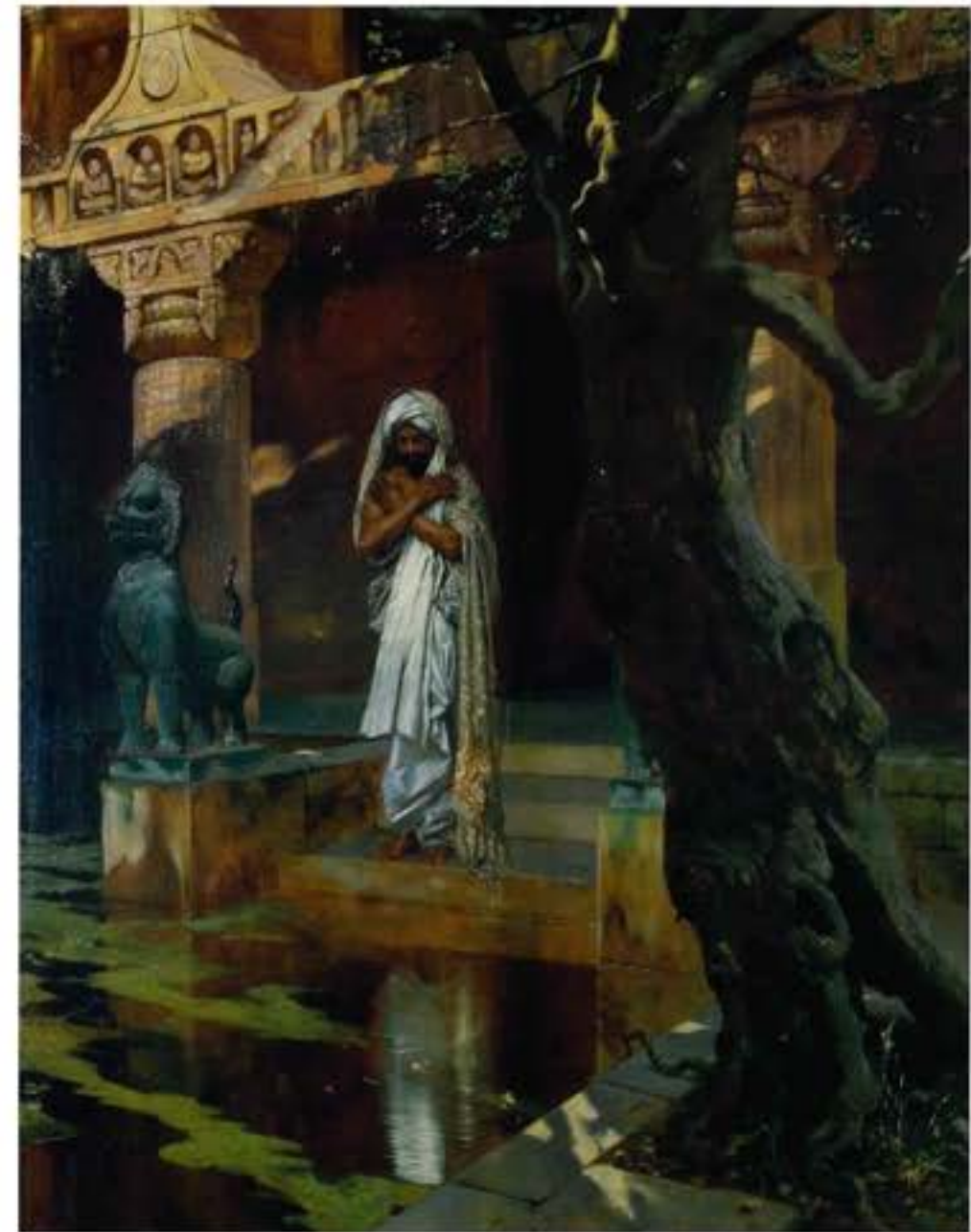
By Rudolph Ernst, Austrian, 1854–1932

Oil on canvas

Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty

When European artists set out to paint scenes of India (or other parts of Asia) they sometimes strove for a just-the-facts approach, and sometimes they let their imaginations run wild. Often, of course, they produced—whether consciously or not—some sort of morality play in exotic costume.

The first approach can be seen in Lockwood de Forest's view of buildings along the river at Mathura in north-central India. (For more on de Forest, see p. 51; another example of the just-the-facts approach can be seen on p. 60.) The painting is dated by the artist to the year after he had visited Mathura; presumably he relied on sketches made on the spot to create the painting in his studio at home.



Rudolf Ernst, an Orientalist painter who exhibited in the Paris Salons, worked in the realm of fantasy. Many of his paintings are set in Turkey or Syria and feature the usual Orientalist cast of characters: indolent harem girls, amorous sheiks, zoned-out bhang smokers. Here he has collected exotic bits from hither and yon, depicting a sacred pool (a feature of some Hindu temples) outside a recognizable fifth-century Buddhist cave temple in western India, and flanking the steps with bronze lions from the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok. The result might almost be a scene from the 1973 Ray Harryhausen movie *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*. Of course, Ernst and Harryhausen drew from similar stores of exotic imagery, and appealed to similar longings to visit magical faraway lands.



Opposite, top, and above, left

Two illustrations from *Voyage de Siam des pères jésuites envoyez par le roy aux Indes et à la Chine* by Guy Tachard, 1686, Mandeville Special Collections Library, University of California, San Diego. Not in exhibition.

Opposite, bottom

Capriccio with the French Ambassador Approaching the Palace of the King of Siam in a Ceremonial Barge

By Antonio Joli, Italian, approx. 1700–1777

Oil on canvas

Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty

Above, right

"Prospect of the Porcelane Tower at Nan King in China," detail, from G. H. Millar's *The New and Universal System of Geography*, London, 1782

Engraving

Lent by Malcolm D. Gutter

Eighteenth-century European collectors liked expansive painted views of interesting cities, such as Canaletto's of Venice. These views need not be tiresomely accurate. Antonio Joli, a professional view painter, purports to show the Siamese capital of Ayutthaya during an actual historical event, the arrival of Louis XIV's ambassador in 1685. The Siamese king had sent ornate royal barges to carry the ambassador and his entourage up the Chao Phraya River (which Westerners insisted on calling the "Menam"—the Thai word for "river"). Joli's game is given away, however, by the term "capriccio" that he (or someone) used in the painting's title. We are presented with a caprice, a *jeu d'esprit*, a folly. So, even though Joli's Siamese barges and buildings are based on those depicted in a 1686 account of the French mission by Guy Tachard, who was one of the envoys, Joli has not hesitated to give his panorama a vertical accent on the left by throwing in a Chinese pagoda, the famous "Porcelain Pagoda" of Nanjing.



"Mausoleum of Sultan Purveiz, near Allahabad," from *Oriental Scenery*, 1796
 By Thomas Daniell, British, 1749–1840, and William Daniell, British, 1769–1837
 Aquatint, ink and colors on paper
 Asian Art Museum, Gift of Richard B. Gump, B86D20.5

Platter with Indian scene including the "Mausoleum of Sultan Purveiz," approx. 1820
 United Kingdom
 Glazed transfer-printed pottery
 Lent by Michael Sack

Real and imaginary images of Asia spread beyond the upper classes of Europe and America through travelers' tales, book illustrations, theatrical presentations, and some means we may not think of at first, such as dishes. Around 1800 British factories began printing illustrations of scenery and buildings onto tableware. These were relatively inexpensive—much less expensive than hand-painted wares—and could be bought by many households for everyday use. Lavish



and costly books of views of famous places were mined for images, which were then transferred, either fairly faithfully or after considerable doctoring, to platters, plates, and jugs.

The platter on the right shows a seventeenth-century Mughal tomb in Allahabad in north central India. The depiction is drawn from one of the large aquatints in Thomas and William Daniell's renowned series *Oriental Scenery*. The Daniells traveled in India from 1785 to 1794, painting and sketching picturesque landscapes and monuments. On their return to Britain they used these materials to begin creating the 144 views of India in six volumes that eventually made up *Oriental Scenery*.

The Daniells' fairly straightforward portrayal of the Mughal tomb has been transmogrified by the unknown creator of the image on the platter. Elements such as the mountain with a building at its peak, the gateway half hidden at the left, and the elephant procession have been brought in from other Daniell prints. The addition of such elements, and the distortion of scale relationships, so that the tree on the right (also from a Daniell print) grows beyond any earthly size—these result in a perfect Romantic fantasy of India: ponderous and unsettling, but strangely attractive.

Nijinsky in costume for the "danse Siamoise" in the ballet *Les Orientales* (detail), approx. 1910
By Jacques-Emile Blanche, French, 1861-1942
Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty

A fascination with India and Southeast Asia gripped some of the West's notable artists, musicians, and literary figures in the later years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth. Hinduism and Buddhism became better known, and their teachings sometimes appealed to those out of sympathy with formal Christian and Jewish traditions. Richard Wagner, for example, picked up an interest in Buddhism from the writings of the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, and, in 1856, sketched (but did not proceed to compose) an opera on the life of the Buddha.

Tantalizing glimpses of Indian and Southeast Asian art, music, and dance could be caught at the great world's fairs in Chicago in 1893 and in Paris in 1889 and 1900. In the exhibits representing the British, Dutch, and French colonies in India, Burma, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Vietnam it was possible to see reproductions or originals of major works of sculpture, to admire classical dancing, and to hear, probably for the first time, real Indian or Southeast Asian music played by expert instrumentalists such as the Javanese gamelan ensembles at the Dutch East Indies pavilions. Claude Debussy, for example, reported being entranced, and gamelan-like passages began turning up in his works.

Paris felt more frissons of exoticism and Orientalism in 1909, when Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes began performing. Russians were a little exotic already, and the allure of Léon Bakst's costumes, Michel Fokine's choreography, and above all the mesmerizing and outlandish dancing (and persona) of Vaslav Nijinsky fed the appetite for the beautiful and bizarre.

Les Orientales, one of the early Ballets Russes productions, featured Nijinsky in a Chinese dance, a Siamese dance, and so on. Both Bakst and Fokine had attended performances by a visiting troupe of Siamese dancers in St. Petersburg in 1900, and so would have had memories of authentic movements and costumes. Certainly some details of Nijinsky's Siamese costume and gestures shown here are not entirely invented. The pantaloon-like lower garment and its heavy decorative apron have distant analogies in real Siamese theatrical costumes, and the pose of Nijinsky's left hand comes directly from the gesture vocabulary of Siamese dance.

Asia, or at least "Asia," had of course been represented on the European stage long before *Les Orientales*, and would continue to be. In opera and operetta, for example, there were Handel's *Porus*, *King of the Indies* and Gluck's *The Chinese* in the eighteenth century, Massenet's *The King of Lahore* and Delibes's *Lakmé* in the nineteenth, and Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* and Holst's *Savitri* in the early twentieth.

These works range, in their depictions of things Asian, from serious to trivial, and usually reflect more of the attitudes and concerns of their own place and time than those of any Asian locale. Gilbert and Sullivan remind us where Western images of Asia often came from, while taking the prize for silliness:

A Chorus of Nobles, from *The Mikado*:

If you want to know who we are,
We are gentlemen of Japan:
On many a vase and jar —
On many a screen and fan,
We figure in lively paint:
Our attitude's queer and quaint —
You're wrong if you think it ain't, Oh!





A Curious Affair: The Fascination between East and West was produced to accompany an exhibition of the same title, organized by the Asian Art Museum and presented at its galleries in San Francisco from June 17 through September 3, 2006. The publication was made possible through

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The Asian Art Museum is directed by Emily J. Sano, and the exhibition was curated by Forrest McGill. This book was edited, designed, and typeset by Thomas Christensen in *Avenir* and *Egyptienne* (both typefaces designed by Adrian Frutiger, b. 1928), with photography by Kaz Tsuruta. It was printed on 100-pound Discovery paper and bound by Typecraft, Inc., Pasadena, California.

continued from front flap

A Curious Affair was produced to accompany an exhibition of the same name, presented at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco from June 17 through September 3, 2006. The exhibition featured more than 75 paintings, sculptures, furniture, ceramics, and other decorative arts. Included were artworks made in Great Britain, the United States, and France, as well as in China, India, Japan, and other Asian countries. They were drawn from private San Francisco Bay Area collections and the collection of the Asian Art Museum, and many were never before been exhibited publicly.

The Asian Art Museum is a public institution whose mission is to lead a diverse global audience in discovering the unique material, aesthetic, and intellectual achievements of Asian Art and Culture.

FRONT COVER: Three European men, approx. 1610–1650 (detail). Japan. Two-fold screen, ink, colors, and gold on paper. *Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty.*

BACK COVER: Bureau-cabinet, approx. 1725–1750 (detail), attributed to Giles Grendey (British, 1693–1780). Gilded and japanned wood, gilded bronze. *Lent by Ann and Gordon Getty.*

Cover design by Thomas Christensen

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