

Chinese Gusu Woodblock Prints from the Early Qing Dynasty

Private Rhenish Collection

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In the Qing dynasty woodblock printing flourished in the Kangxi- and Qianlong period (late 17th to early 18th c.). In this period ports were opened at the Eastern and Southern coasts for foreign trade with Europa. Prints in several colors from the area of Gusu (now Suzhou) illustrate novels, legends, genre scenes and were designed as lucky charms alike. The collection offered here gives an impressive insight into Chinese traditions and ideas (Cat. No. 2050, 2052, 2053).

While Europe was enthusiastic enough about its own image of the exotic country to invent 'chinoiserie', Western influence also can be observed in Chinese woodblock prints. Some interesting examples survived in the present collection. Two of four sheets that combine to form a monumental panorama showing the famous views of Hangzhou West Lake (Cat. no. 2048 and no. 2049). Here, the short inscription in a cartouche not only reveals the studio and the artist, but also states that it was intended to realize a particularly detailed depiction based on Western forms of presentation, like copperplate engravings. Also influenced by Western techniques are the two sheets showing beautiful ladies (Cat. no. 2051). Here, the folds in the robes are depicted by crosshatching, which is not used in Chinese ink painting. This type of Chinese prints with Western influence are rare to find. These were popular only for a short period and barely produced after the 1770s.

清代早期姑蘇版畫 —德國萊茵地區私人收藏

隨著17世紀晚期至18世紀中葉康乾兩帝開放東南口岸通商，江南蘇杭一帶的木刻版畫“姑蘇版畫”流傳至歐洲，開始了它的黃金時期，題材以戲出故事、仕女童子、勝景圖、吉慶祥瑞等為主。與此同時，歐洲人對“中國趣味”（也稱“中國風”）的崇尚推動了“仿泰西筆”（即模仿西洋繪畫技法）的洋風姑蘇版畫發展。這裡的版畫收藏匯集了近二十張珍貴的姑蘇版畫，多具有書籍插圖或年文化特徵（2050、2052、2053號），有的則是西洋銅版畫風格的大幅仕女圖（2051號）及勝景圖（2048、2049號）。18世紀後期此類洋風版畫在中國市場消失，保存較完整的藏品大多存於國外博物館及私人收藏中。