

Guide to
the works

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Corner 2 India/ Company School Painting

As the Mughal Empire declined in the mid-18th century, court miniature painters moved to the cities where the East India Company branches were located in order to have the high officers as their patrons. They reflected the taste of the British for the patronage and created a peculiar style mixing the traditional Mughal miniature and Western techniques and photography. Since the paintings were produced for the East India Company, the style is called Company Painting. It is also said to be the westernized miniature in the last development of the Indian miniature. It doesn't show the influence of Western painters who lived in India, but also has an interaction with photography of the early stage (photography was brought to Indian subcontinent in early 1840s).

The Company Painting was produced all over India. Rajastani Painting (Rajasthan and middle part of India), Pahari Painting (Punjabi hills) and Tanjore Painting in South India show different styles and development in each region. In Tanjore Painting, portraits were originally painted in profile and it has a strong sense of flatness. Rajastani and Pahari Painting took slanting composition and have a sense of depth. All paintings have flat background taking the tradition of the miniature.

Corner 3 China Trade Painting

Kwangchow, Hong Kong and Shanghai prospered between the 18th and 19th century as ports to connect China and the West. In return to the Chinese ceramics, silk products, lacquer and other crafts, Western culture were brought through the ports. It was called China Trade. Among the merchandise were paintings for the Westerners. The paintings are specially called China Trade Painting.

It was as early as the 16th century when Western paintings were brought to China. European missionaries also acted as court painters and spread Western painting in the Chinese court. Many professional painters visited China after that. A British artist George Chinnery (1774-1852) among those painters gave a large influence to the China Trade Painting.

A Chinese painter Lamqua (Kwan Zuolin), a student of Chinnery, became even more popular as a portrait painter than Chinnery showing his talent. In the 1830s, he opened a studio with around 20 artisans on a street where many foreign mercantile houses were located. Sunqua and Yonqua are also known as influenced by Chinnery, however, many artists are unknown since the paintings were made in studios anonymously.

The major subject matters of the China Trade Paintings were scenery of ports with foreign mercantile houses, mansions of the Chinese merchants and people in traditional costumes. However, the actual images painted were, as it were, an illusion of China that satisfied the exoticism rather than the real landscape or real daily life of Chinese people. One distinctive example is 'A Chinese Landscape in Winter with a Family on a Track, a Walled Town Beyond.' The artist created an imaginable landscape with snow which is impossible in subtropical Canton, deriving images from existing Chinese paintings and prints as well as from his own imagination.