Glocalizing Macao: On Macao Trade Paintings (18th - 19th centuries)

Glocalizando Macau: Sobre as Pinturas de Comércio de Macau (séculos XVIII–XIX)

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the paintings depicting Macao and that date from the late 18th century to the mid-19th century. In so doing, a new case study termed 'Macao Trade Paintings' is established. Understanding this artistic production requires a research strategy that integrates data and methodological tools from across a wide range of disciplines, including literature, sociology, and economic history. Macao Trade Paintings, a designation that was inspired by the term China Trade Paintings, emerged from commissions originally from Western (curiously, mostly non-Portuguese) patrons, followed by requests from Chinese and other Asian clients. These works were produced both by Western and Chinese painters in Macao, in Canton, and in other South China locations, as well as in Europe and in America. This mixed patronage, the blending of local techniques with Western techniques and materials, and the subjects reflecting the Portuguese administration of Macao, the presence of Westerners, and the broader Chinese context, all contribute to their particular transcultural character. This peripheral, small-scale production, from a contact zone, soon entered international art circuits and correspondingly serves as a specific case study within the field of global arts as these paintings have been publicly displayed, collected privately and publicly, and put up for sale at major auction houses ever since the 18th century.

Keywords: Macao; transculturality; global arts.

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Resumo

Este artigo analisa as pinturas que retratam Macau e que datam do final do século XVIII a meados do século XIX. Ao fazê-lo, estabelece-se um novo estudo de caso denominado 'Pinturas Comerciais de Macau'. A compreensão desta produção artística requer uma estratégia de pesquisa que integre dados e ferramentas metodológicas duma vasta gama de disciplinas, como a literatura, a sociologia e a história económica. As Pinturas Comerciais de Macau, uma designação que foi inspirada pelo termo Pinturas Comerciais da China, surgiram encomendas originalmente de mecenas ocidentais (curiosamente, principalmente não portugueses), seguidas de pedidos de clientes chineses e de outros países asiáticos. Estes quadros foram realizados por pintores ocidentais e chineses em Macau, em Cantão e outras cidades do sul da China e também na Europa e na América. Este mecenato misto, a combinação de técnicas locais com técnicas e materiais ocidentais, e os temas que refletem a administração portuguesa de Macau, a presença de ocidentais e o contexto chinês mais amplo, contribuem para o seu caráter transcultural particular. Essa produção periférica e de pequena escala, proveniente duma zona de contato, entrou, de imediato, nos circuitos artísticos internacionais e, consequentemente, serve como um estudo de caso específico no campo das artes globais, já que essas pinturas têm sido exibidas publicamente, colecionadas privada e publicamente, e colocadas à venda pelas principais leiloeiras mundiais desde o século XVIII.

Palavras-chave: Macau; transculturalidade; artes globais.

Introduction

A relatively small collection of approximately three hundred paintings constitutes the case study of this paper. The term 'glocalizing' is here seen as a phenomenon closely related to 'trade,' as Macao Trade Paintings emerged as a category of export art prompted by commercial interactions between Westerners (Europeans and Americans) and the Chinese. These paintings were produced by local artists, as well as American and European artists, both in Macau and abroad during the brief period from the late 18th century to the mid-19th century.

This designation departed from the term China Trade Paintings coined by Carl L. Crossmann in 1972 for the paintings depicted in the Chinese seaports

open to the trade with Western merchants and trade companies between the 18th and the 19th centuries². Innovatively classified as 'Macao Trade Paintings', these works include landscapes of Macau and scenes depicting its unique social and cultural customs, along with its religious life shaped by various Asian religions (Buddhism, Taoism, folk religions) and Catholic rituals.

This paper accordingly intends to critically examine the role of these paintings as representants and transmitters of their own artistic language within both a local and a global artistic and cultural context. Thus, various frames of reference inform this discussion. To accomplish its objectives, this paper advocates the uniqueness of these paintings by underscoring their transcultural artistic and iconographic content. This naturally requires taking into account the sociological, economic, religious and cultural values that determined their emergence in Macao. They thereby differed from China Trade Paintings.

While numerous studies have examined China Trade Paintings, a notable historiographical gap persists regarding the uniqueness of Macao Trade Paintings. In light of this, this paper aims to systematically compile and summarize Macao Trade Paintings as an independent art category. It seeks to rectify the long-standing misconception in the literature that considers them merely as part of China Trade Paintings. Furthermore, the paper will critically assess their position and role in comparison to China Trade Paintings and as global artworks.

The second objective discusses the significant contribution these paintings made to global art, also known as world art, a field of studies that constitutes a vital focus in art historiography and theory³. More specifically, this paper describes how the tiny spot of Macao underwent transformation, from a

² CROSSMAN, Carl L. The China Trade: Export Paintings, Furniture, Silver and Other Objects. Princeton: Pyne Press, 1972.

³ In recent years, Monika Juneja has emerged as a leading scholar in the field of Global Arts, with a focus on Eurasia. Her work aligns with the research trends associated with this term in art historiography, which owes much to Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann for coining it. See, in particular, her last monograph: JUNEJA, Monika. Can art history be made global? Meditations from the periphery. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2023; KAUFMANN, Thomas DaCosta (ed). Circulations in the global history of art. Farnham et. all: Ashgate, 2015).

peripheral producer of art to occupying a new centrality, exporting innovative prototypes and subjects. This dual process of transformation highlights the significance of practices such as cultural mixing, decentering, and interchange⁴. Finally, Macao Trade Paintings are here approached both as objects of private and public collectionism, and as commodities in the international art market.

Thus, this paper features four five sections in addition to the introduction and conclusion. The first section outlines the broad methodological and research approach applied in approaching this casestudy. The second section analyzes these paintings within the closely intertwined evolution of Macao and Canton resulting from the Canton Trade System. The third section deals with the emergence of Macao as a centre of tourism and leisure. The fourth section discusses the transcultural character of these paintings. Eventually, the fifth section sets out a diachronic interpretation of Macao Trade Paintings as collectibles, display objects, and commodities in world markets, from their commissioning through to the present time.

1. A broad research methodology

This paper is ambitious in charting new directions for interpretation. Differently to previous research focused almost exclusively on the artistic facets, a broad multidisciplinary perspective is here introduced to the field of studies. For a general and yet comprehensive understanding of the evolution of Macao and its special relationship with Canton, special mention must be made of the groundbreaking work by Paul Arthur Van Dyke on the economic, sociological, and historical framework of the Canton Trade System and the role played by Macao within this system. His research offers an in-depth analysis of the

⁴ KAUFMANN, Thomas daCosta; DOSSIN, Catherine; and JOYEUX-PRUNETT, Béatrice. Introduction: Reintroducing Circulations: Historiography and the Project of Global Art History'. In KAUFMANN, Thomas daCosta; DOSSIN, Catherine; and JOYEUX-PRUNETT, Béatrice. (ed.). *Circulations in the Global History of Art*. New York: Routledge, 2015, p. 1.

economic, sociological, and historical framework of the Canton Trade System and the significant role that Macao played within this system⁵.

In 2016, Frédéric Vidal pioneered the scholarly interest for the emergence of Macao and Canton as centres of international tourism in the mid-19th century through extensive recourse to The Canton Register. This newspaper, the first English-language publication in Canton, Macao, and later Hong Kong (from 1827 and between 1842 and 1844, respectively), serves as an invaluable source of information about the daily life and leisure habits of Western communities in South China⁶.

A wealth of primary sources – travelogues, descriptions, letters, and diaries by merchants, residents, and visitors of Macao - abound with information relevant to this case study. The American William Maxwell Wood (1808-1890), who served as Fleet Surgeon with the East India Squadron (the American fleet that protected the country's interests in the Far East) from 1856 to 1858, associated Macau with two geniuses. The first was Luís de Camões (c. 1524-1580), who, according to a rather legendary tradition, wrote the last part of the Lusíadas in a grotto in Macau. The English artist George Chinnery (1774-1852) was the second⁷. When Chinnery escaped debts from England to India in 1802

⁵ Paul Arthur Van Dyke is a prominent scholar whose work has significantly enhanced the multifaceted understanding of Canton Trade System, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of trade and its sociological ties between Western merchants and Chinese enterprises from the 18th to the early 19th centuries. In his various monographs on the Canton Trade System publications, he examines the roles of Western and Chinese merchants, the influence of colonial policies, and the sociological dynamics that emerged through trade, thereby providing valuable insights into the complexities of this unique historical period and the role played by Macao within this system. (VAN DYKE, Paul Arthur. *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700-1845.* Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007; VAN DYKE, Paul Arthur. *Merchants of Canton and Macau. Politics and Strategies in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Trade.* Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011; VAN DYKE. Paul Arthur. *Merchants of Canton and Macao. Success and Failure in the Eighteenth- Century*

Chinese Trade. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016).

6 VIDAL, Frédéric. OS PRIMÓRDIOS DO TURISMO EM MACAU E CANTÃO NO SÉCULO XIX: DO TERRITÓRIO DE FRONTEIRA AO LUGAR URBANO. In Plural – Revista de Ciências Sociais Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, vol. 23, n. 2, pp. 17-23, 2016. ISSN 2176-8099 (digital). Available at: https://www.revistas.usp.br/plural/article/view/125108. Accessed on the 17th of April of 2025.

⁷ WOOD, William Maxwell. *Fankwei; or the San Jacinto in the Seas of India, China and Japan*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1859, p. 291.

and in 1825 to Macao, he was an affirmed painter with a world reputation. In Macao, where he settled down or the rest of his life, he created the first and only known Western painting school mainly formed of expatriates and involved with Macau Trade Paintings⁸.

Most commissions for these paintings were private, and they were exchanged and circulated through private channels⁹. The meticulous and detailed diary of American spinster and amateur painter Harriet Low Hillard (1809-1877), who lived in Macao between 1829 and 1833, contains references to several portraits that her mentor, George Chinnery, was painting at the time, allowing for their respective dating. Chinnery finished her portrait in August 1833, and the portrait of the Grant family along with their helper, Ayah, in December 1832. Furthermore, he completed the portraits of Dr. College and his wife in March and April 1833, respectively¹⁰.

The 1999 handover of Macau to China and the preceding preparations sparked general interest in studying this small territory and its rich cultural and historic diverse past heritage. A consistent program of exhibitions, monographs, and special editions of the Review of Culture— a trilingual journal published in Chinese and Portuguese— has been dedicated to the unique historical and artistic legacy of Macau since the 1990s. In particular, the governmental agency Fundação de Macau sponsored the research and the publication of a monograph by Rogério Manuel Puga in 2023, being the first comprehensive inventory of

⁸ The monograph by Patrick CONNOR. *George Chinnery*, 1774-1852: artist of India and the China Coast. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 1993 contains a detailed list of mostly expatriate and amateur artists, whom George Chinnery influenced during their stay or visit to Macao.

⁹ VAN DER POEL, Rosalien. Made for trade - Made in China. Chinese export paintings in Dutch collections: art and commodity. PhD Thesis presented at the Universiteit Leiden, 2016, p. 243.

¹⁰ HILLARD, Harriet Low. *Lights and Shadows of a Macau Life: The Journal of Harriett Low, London: Travelling Spinster Paperback, 2002, vol. I, p. 231; p. 467 and p. 471; and vol. II, p. 469; p. 529–530; and p. 539.*

visual evidence of Macao (paintings, drawings, and sketches, in addition to furniture and various objects) in a public collection¹¹.

The extensive consultation of catalogues from the leading auction houses—Christie's (particularly within the topographical paintings department dedicated to works by traveling artists worldwide), Sotheby's, and Bonhams—as well as the Martyn Gregory Gallery, which claims to be 'the world's leading authority on the art of the China Trade,' enabled the establishment of the economic significance of these artworks in early 21st century art markets. Additionally, the websites artnet artprice and invaluable provided further support for this analysis by generating general auction statistics and thereby of main trends concerning these painters.

2. The Canton Trade System – the connected narratives of the history of Canton and Macao

Macao Trade Paintings are an artistic, cultural, and sociological by-product of the city's close connection to the economic flourishing of Canton under the Canton Trade System. In 1700, the Chinese authorities restricted the activity of the European trade companies, such as the British East India Company (EIC) and the Dutch East India Company (VOC), and of Western private merchants to Canton and Macao, creating the Canton Trade System¹².

As early as during his fourth year of his rule, in 1741, the Qianlong Emperor prohibited foreigners to reside in Canton beyond the official trading season lasting approximately from January to August. Curiously, Qianlong's restrictions led to a decisive input to the economic, cultural, and social flourishing of Macao. Western firms operating in Canton opened a branch in

¹¹ PUGA, Rogério Manuel. To the Farthest Gulf for the wealth of India – Representações de Macau no Peabody Essex Museum (Salem). Macau: Fundação de Macau, 2023.

¹² VAN DYKE. Merchants of Canton and Macao, p. XXIX.

Macao. Most merchants preferred to enjoy a pleasant, long summer pause of up to six months alone or with their families in Macao, rather than travelling back to Europe and America during the off-season¹³.

The arrival and concentration of Western merchants, missionaries, adventurers, and Sinophile Westerners in Canton and Macao gave rise to two interconnected yet distinct art markets. Well-established Chinese workshops in Canton are credited with producing numerous paintings and painted fans that depict Macao. For example, Canton workshops created the popular sets of watercolors and painted fans that date back to before the end of the First Opium War and the establishment of Hong Kong in 1842. These works often feature scenes from key locations along the West to East trade route, including Whampoa Anchorage, Canton, Boca Tigris Fort, and Macao.

A very popular iconographic prototype shows the Praia Grande from the South-East, perhaps a counterpart to the Canton harbour view. A painting of Praia Grande attributed to Sunqua (active 1830–1870) features buildings resembling the typical artistic prototype of the 'hongs' (foreign factories) found in Cantonese architecture. Similar to the harbour views of Canton, several paintings of Macao's Praia Grande also depict ships, boats, and steamships adorned with the flags of nations involved in the China Trade¹⁴.

The shared iconographic elements, including architectural features and these depictions of China Trade vessels, suggest these works may have been created by the same artist or workshop.

In 1844, shops in Canton and Macao were copying pictures and charts of the two cities with one or two venturing into portrait painting¹⁵. Arguably, the two reputed Chinese painters involved with both China Trade Painting and

¹³ VAN DYKE. The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700- 1845, p. 12.

¹⁴CONNER, Patrick. Canton and Macau: early Chinese images of the European Settlements. In HARDING, Richard, JARVIS, Adrian, and KENNERLEY, Alston (ed.). *British ships in the China seas: 1700 to the present day.* Liverpool: National Museums Liverpool, 2004, pp. 249-255, figs. 1.5-1.7; and figs. 2.15-2.18.

¹⁵ MORRISON, John Robert. *A Chinese Commercial Guide*. Macao: Samuel Wells Williams, 1844, p. 138.

Macao Trade Painting Lam Qua (active before 1810 until probably shortly to his death c. 1860), and Sunqua (active circa 1830 - 1870) were perhaps not the only two painters running workshops in both Canton and Macao, following in the wake of their respective patrons¹⁶.

The Treaty of Nanjing, signed on August 29, 1842, between China and Great Britain, was a significant event, marking the end of the First Opium War (1839-1842), and thereby of the Canton Trade System. Under this treaty, certain Chinese coastal cities opened for British trade, and crucially, Hong Kong was ceded to Great – Britain, thereby putting an end to the Canton Trade System.

The end of the Canton Trade System had a decisive impact on the artistic scene. In the steps of the actual and potential patrons, artists such as the celebrated Macaense António Marciano Baptista, moved to Hong Kong in the 1850; however, he continued to paint his beloved hometown Macao¹⁷. By the mid 1850's, Hong Kong had supplanted Macao as a centre for painting¹⁸.

3. The emergence of Macao's leisure and touristic vocation: enjoying nature, history, exoticism, and a stimulating cultural and social life

Art expresses and reflects a certain way of life. Indeed, Macao Trade Paintings capture the social dynamics of the upper classes as only wealthy people can afford to be tourists and enjoy of extended periods of leisure and recreation. The subjects depicted by these paintings are bound to the emergence of Macau as

¹⁶ITIER, Mr. Jules. *Journal d'un voyage en Chine en 1843, 1844, 1845, 1846*. À Paris, chez Dauvin et Fontaine, 1848, vol. II, p. 74; GRIFFIN, Katherine H. and DRUMMEY, Peter. Manuscripts on the American China Trade at the Massachusetts Historical Society. In *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings*. Boston, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1988, vol. 100, pp. 128-139. ISBN: 0934909261

¹⁷GUILLÉN-NUÑEZ, César, and PIRES, António Pedro. 翻譯 馬西安諾.巴普蒂斯塔與他的藝術 = Marciano Baptista e a sua arte = Marciano Baptista and his art. Macau: Museum of Art, 1990.

¹⁸ WILLIAMS, Samuel Wells. A Chinese Commercial Guide: Consisting of a Collection of Details and Regulations Respecting Foreign Trade with China, Sailing Directions, Tables, & c. Canton: Office of the Chinese, 1856, p. 36.

a place for recreation and leisure for the wealthy classes worldwide from the early - mid 19th century.

In contrast to the densely urbanized and inhabited early 21st century reality, 18th and 19th century Macao still contained an abundance of wild gardens and other green areas surroundings it's various bays with their large sandy expanses. At the time, Macao offered a unique blend of beautiful landscapes, historical sites, and social events, making it a perfect tourist destination.

Macau Trade Paintings are accordingly replete with cultural, social, and anthropological connotations defining the character of this city during the 18th and 19th century. They refer to both the domestic life of European patrons and elites as of the picturesque and exotic local Chinese population from a Western regard. Scenes, such as maritime scenes, port-scenes, and harbour views, also a few single ships, topographic views, views of Chinese buildings, Portuguese colonial architecture, daily life city scenes, religious festivals, and daily activities (fishery), and zoological and botanic elements provide a broad and colourful insight into the city's life stimulating the interest of foreigners for the city's unique exoticism and its unique blend of East and West cultures and civilizations.

The English naturalist John Reeves (1774-1856), who served as assistant tea inspector for the East India Company in Canton in the early 19th century, sent back thousands of drawings and watercolours with plants he collected from Macau gardens¹⁹. The legendary story of the Camões grotto certainly contributed to the fact that this spot remains relatively untouched. Located from 1835 within the gardens of a private property of the Family Pereira Marques, it combined the advantages of its romantic wild scenery, refreshing air, and undisturbed isolation. Thus, writers, poets, and artists, generously set down their moments of solitude and contemplation in this bucolic, leafy, isolated hill with pencil and brush, "an

¹⁹ BAILEY, Kate; BELLESIA, Sonia and BURGIO, Lucia. Chinese export paintings. In *V & A Conservation Journal*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum. Autumn 2014, issue 62, Autumn 2014. ISSN *0967-2273*. *Available at:* http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/autumn-2014-issue-62/chinese-export-paintings/. Accessed: 17th April 2025.

impertinent profanation that vanity inflicts on monuments consecrated by his [Camões] genius" in the words of the French Charles – Hubert Lavolée (1823-1913)²⁰.

In a watercolor on paper of Praia Grande attributed to the Macaense Marciano António Baptista (c. 1856), trees offer shade to those wandering along the promenade, enjoying the pleasant sea breeze. Groups of people are seen strolling or sitting together, while courting couples seek refuge from the sun under parasols. Sports fishing and dogs playing further illustrate the leisurely moments enjoyed by the affluent foreign community on the Praia Grande promenade. Maritime *vedute* and landscapes capture the extraordinary beauty of this diminutive Portuguese colony. Foreign visitors to Macau, in particular, were struck by the views of Praia Grande Bay, with its hills, churches, fortifications, and colorful houses arranged like an amphitheater, which the British surgeon who travelled to China in the early 1830s Charles Toogood Downing described as "strikingly like that of Naples"²¹.

The most distinguished painters were allowed to participate in the professional meetings and share the most intimate family moments of the upper-class Western families. For example, a painting by Lam Qua dated 1842 that displays the house of the American merchant Mr. Nathaniel Kinsman's (1798-1847) in the Praia Grande Bay has a veranda surrounded by a garden evoking dreamy, beautiful landscapes. Its pendant, completed by the same painter, and also in 1842, illustrates a room opening onto the sea with a gentleman handling a telescope and another gentleman, dressed in a white summer suit, lazily reading his newspaper under the same columned veranda opening onto a garden with vases and orange trees and a beautiful view of the bay.

LAVOLLÉE, Charles - Hubert. Voyage en Chine: Ténériffe.-- Rio-Janeiro.--Le cap.—
 Ille Borbon.--Malacca.--Singapore.--Manille.--Macau.--Canton. — Ports chinois.- Cochinchine.— Java. Paris: Just Rouvier and A. Ledoyen, 1852, p. 2.

²¹ DOWNING, Charles Togwood. The Fan-qui in China: or the Fan-Qui's visit to the Celestial Empire in 1836 – 7. Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1838, p. 82.

The portrait of the British opium dealer Mr. Lancelot Dent (1799-1853) by George Chinnery depicts three gentlemen in conversation. The map and the instruments hanging on the living room wall may symbolize the intercontinental trade and navigation in which these men engaged. By contrast, the relaxed posture of the men and the dogs at their feet evoke leisure and entertainment of stylish guests.

Music was a favourite hobby during the intimate leisure moments of the British families in Macao as illustrated by these three Chinnery portraits. A guitar and a piece of sheet music lie on the floor in the left of the painting of a British family dated 1853. Josiah Andrew Huddleston, an Anglo- Irish civil servant, guitarist, and composer, who visited his younger brother Robert Burdon Huddleston in Macao in 1832, is the guitar in a painting dating from that same year while, in an oil painting from 1835, Dr. Thomas Richardson Colledge (1797-1879) listens to his wife playing the harp.

This rather lengthy iconographic discourse describes a core aspect embodied by these images. They interconnect with the vocation of Macao as a place of leisure and recreation in its role as a satellite city to Canton within the Canton Trade System. Macao was the year-round residence for the families of Western merchants in keeping with how women were banned from entering the 'hongs' (foreign trading establishments, also known as factories) in Canton. Practically from the outset of the East-West maritime trade, Macao was the location where foreigners chose to rest. They often owned a residence in Macao and moved there on retirement from business²².

As mentionned above, most merchants preferred to enjoy a long and pleasant summer break of up to six months whether alone or with their families in Macao, instead of travelling back to Europe and America in the off-season²³. This ritual may have led to a significant number of the large-scale oil portraits of merchants engaged in the South China trade, especially those of their families having been produced in Macao.

²² Van Dyke. Merchants of Canton and Macao, p. XXII.

²³ Van Dyke. *The Canton Trade*, p. 12

4. On transculturality

Early 18th century Macao was already a hundred-and-fifty-year-old transcultural contact zone, *i.e.* 'a space of colonial encounters where peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relationships'²⁴. This city was a cosmopolitan and multiethnic city. Its upper class consisted of merchants, diplomats, and scientists, and their families from overseas (including both America and Europe), as well as from various Asian regions, alongside Chinese merchants

From the end of the same century, it was fashionable for European and American artists to visit East Asia, mostly in attendance of businessmen, diplomats, militaries, scientific missions, or for pure personal reasons of delight and tourism. Before the age of photography, travelling artists tended to report all aspects of their travels, fixing their impression in sketches, drawings and in paintings. Thomas Daniell (1749-1840) and his nephew William Daniell (1769-1837), who were the first professional English travelling artists to visit Asia, specialized in the illustration of Western factories and Chinese junks at the Pearl River. William, a painter at the Royal Academy, also reproduced his uncle's sketches and drawings in oil paintings²⁵.

Disparate interactions in contact zones often reflect the 'asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination' among the 'colonizers and colonized, or travellers and travellees' ²⁶. Indeed, the relative abundance of lavish portraits in oil on canvas both depicting Western and Asian merchants symbolize how this dynamic applies to their economic relevance in China Trade, this naturally reflecting in their societal status.

²⁴ PRATT, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003, p. 6.

²⁵ PERDUE, Peter C. The Rise and Fall of the Canton Trade System - III Canton & Hong Kong. Massachusetts Institute of Technology— Visualizing Cultures. Available at: https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/rise_fall_canton_01/pdf/cw03_essay.pdf. Accessed: 16th April 2025.

²⁶ PRATT, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 4 and p. 7.

Aligning with the Chinese practice of gift-giving and the rituals associated with trade partnerships, Chinese merchants presented portraits to their Western counterparts, while Western merchants commissioned portraits of their Chinese partners as expressions of gratitude and mementos of their successful business relationships²⁷. The commissioning of such artworks illustrated both the individual success of the subjects depicted and the economic influence of their national communities, with the majority of the portraits featuring British or American individuals and their families.

The Parsee community of Bombay engaged with China – India trade since the early 19th century, establishing a bank in Canton before 1819. Jules Itier, who visited Macao in 1843, echoed their local reputation as very intelligent and respected merchants for their integrity. Such a perception is indeed best illustrated in visual arts by the Parsee Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy (1783-1859), who was portrayed by Chinnery and possibly by Lam Qua. Sir Jamsetjee, as a sixteenth years old orphan boy travelled to China, and became soon noted for his engagement in fair trade connecting China, Sumatra and Great Britain²⁸.

Conversely, these commissions also exemplify the principle of transculturality, which spans the appropriation and adaptation of foreign objects and techniques for local purposes. Large-scale, lavish portraits in oil on canvas had formed a popular European artistic typology signifying the possession of wealth ever since the 16th century.

Interestingly, it took around two centuries to decentre this typology to South China. The first known commission of an oil on canvas portrait painting in Macao dates to 1791. As he described in his logbook, the British Captain John McCluer requested the Chinese itinerant painter Spoilum (active between 1765)

²⁷ CONNER, Patrick. *The flamboyant Chinnery: an English artist in India and in China*. Bangkok: River Books, 2011, p. 50; and DOBKIN, Josephine C. 'Chinnery and Houqua: Questions of Attribution', *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 48, 2013, pp. 205 – 216.

²⁸ VAN DYKE, Paul Arthur and SCHOPP, Susan. Introduction. In VAN DYKE, Paul Arthur and SCHOPP, Susan (ed.). *The Private Side of the Canton Trade*, 1700–1840 Beyond the Companies (廣州貿易史(1700–1840):公司與商行以外的私營商人. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018, p. 2.

and 1805) to travel from Canton to Macao to paint his portrait alongside those of three fellow travellers from the Palau Islands during their brief visit to Macao. McCluer further observes that various Western residents in Macao had copies made of this portrait²⁹.

Unsurprisingly, *vedute* (realistic and factually conceived paintings, drawings, or etchings depicting a city, a town) and landscapes abound featuring references to the hundred- and fifty-year old Portuguese administration and presence, depicting the flags of the Portuguese monarchy fluttering from European fortifications, churches, and boats. Like other overseas Portuguese cities and towns, Macao's urban profile and architecture bear the imprint of the military and the proselytizing religious character of the Portuguese Empire. This explains why notable structures such as the Jesuit College of Saint Paul, the Cathedral, the Church of Penha, the crowning hills, and the fortifications protecting the city feature prominently in Macao Trade Paintings. In turn, the prevalence of port scenes, harbour views, and the handful of individual ships clearly reflects the city's primary role as a maritime trade centre.

The Virginian merchant William C. Hunter (1812-1891), who resided in China for sixteen years between 1824 and the 1840s, referred to Macao as 'the paradise of debtors and tankas'³⁰. Thomas Daniell (1749–1840) and his nephew William Daniell (1769–1837), who were the first professional British travelling artists to visit South China in either late 1785 or early 1786, fondly illustrated the junks and *tankas* characteristic of the Pearl River ports. William, a painter at the Royal Academy, replicated his uncle's sketches and drawings in oil paintings³¹.

George Chinnery drew much of his reputation from his numerous studies of common folk, such as vegetable sellers, street traders, farm labourers and fishermen, gamblers, and, in particular, the women or girls, by norm operating

²⁹ BRITISH LIBRARY, Add. Ms. 19,301.

³⁰ HUNTER, William C. Bits of Old China. London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co, 1885, p. 272.

³¹ PERDUE, Peter C. The Rise and Fall of the Canton Trade System.

the *tanka* boats. Two *tanka* females, Assor and Alloy, were his favourite female models.

The French travelling artist August Borget (1808 – 1877) enjoyed visiting the Ma-Kok, or A-Ma temple during his unusually long stay of nine months in South China, primarily in Macao, between 1838 and 1839. Thus, this subject also piqued the interest of his followers. The temple's ancestry, along with the tradition that the Portuguese name 'Macau' may have originated from the temple's name, underlies its popularity in the written and visual arts of the 18th and 19th centuries³².

Lam Qua, reportedly a student of Chinnery, was naturally influenced by the British painting tradition established both in Macao and South China by 'his master'. Particularly illustrative, when the American Osmond Tiffany (1823 – 1895) visited the Lam Qua's workshop in Macao during his leisure trip in 1844, he was especially amazed that

his [the painter's] walls are decorated with his own copies of English paintings, and he possesses the engraved works of several British artists. His admiration for Sir Thomas Lawrence is profound³³.

Indeed, George Chinnery was the only Western painter to move for good to South China before the founding of Hong Kong in 1842. Moreover, he created the only Western painting school in Macao with a focus on Macao Trade Paintings. Therefore, Western clients instead relied on numerous Chinese painters and craftsmen, working quickly and for a good price, capable of faithfully following instructions³⁴.

Chinese painters and their workshops they had already developed a longstanding familiarity with Western painting techniques, specifically oil painting and glass reverse painting, which had been introduced two centuries earlier by the Jesuits. While appropriating these Western techniques and materials, their

³² GUILLÉN-NUÑEZ, and PIRES. 巴普蒂斯塔與他的藝術, p. 89.

³³ TIFFANY. The Canton Chinese, or The American's sojourn in the Celestial empire, p. 85.

³⁴WILLIAMS, Samuel Wells. The Chinese Commercial Guide, Containing Treaties, Tariffs, Regulations, Tables, Etc: Useful in the Trade to China & Eastern Asia: with an Appendix of Sailing Directions for Those Seas and Coasts. Hong Kong: Shortrede, 1863, p. 132.

paintings also contain a prominent variety of features reflecting the backgrounds of these artists. For instance, a profusion of details and a flattening of surfaces mark the marine scenes.

In 1791, the British Captain John McCluer (c. 1759 – 1795) sailed together with a prince and two women from the Palau Islands to Macau. During their short stay in Macau, McCluer commissioned the Chinese painter Spoilum (active 1765 - 1805) to come from Canton to depict his portrait and a portrait of the Palau group in oil on canvas. McCluer's officers also commissioned copies of the Palau group portrait³⁵. This commission is the first documented commission of an oil on canvas portrait made in Macao and depicting three visitors from abroad.

This transculturality is particularly evident in the contentious attribution of paintings either to European or to Chinese painters and workshops. In addition to the European prints, Chinese painters and artists naturally profusely copied George Chinnery. The Scottish missionary William Charles Milnes, who lived in China from 1812 to 1832, noted that Chinese artists had been incessantly copying George Chinnery for many years³⁶.

The association between Howqua's portraits and George Chinnery only underwent deconstruction in recent years. The historian of painting Josephine C. Dobkin attributes Howqua's portrait at the Metropolitan Museum of Art to the American painter Esther Speakman (1823–1875), who may have used a prototype brought from China by her patron Benjamin Chew Wilcocks (176-1845). The latter was an American merchant who lived for extended periods in South China, and developed a close friendship with George Chinnery³⁷.

The British painter Robert Burford, known for his panoramic paintings, also never visited China. However, in 1840, he exhibited a large panorama in

³⁵ British Library, Add. Ms. 19 301; and ETPISON, Mandy Thijssen, and DUPONT, Constance. *Palau in Europe*. Palau: Etpison Museum, 2017, p. 11.

³⁶ MILNES, William Charles. *Life in China*. London: Routledge, 1857, p. 20.

³⁷ DOBKIN, Josephine C. 'Chinnery and Houqua: Questions of Attribution', *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 48, 2013, pp. 205 – 216.

London consisting of twenty oil paintings depicting Praia Grande, an event highlighted by a booklet printed for the occasion³⁸. This panorama illustrated 56 public buildings from both European and Chinese cultures (no. 24), as well as private Western residences (nos. 6-9, 12-15, 22, 27-29, 32-36) and the waters around Macao, where local *tankas* or egg-house boats (no. 21) and junks (no. 50) thrived alongside Portuguese *lorchas* (no. 56) and Western schooners (no. 45).

The Chinese painter Sunqua (active 1830–1870) may have provided the painting that Burford adopted as a model for his Macao panorama as Burford had already produced a panorama of Canton in London, based on a painting by Sunqua, in 1838³⁹. The reference to Esther Speakman's portrait of Howqua and Burford's panorama shall illustrate an important aspect of the global transcultural discourse entangled in these artworks: the involvement of Western artists beyond Macao in producing Trade Paintings through utilizing Chinese prototypes.

5. Circulating, collecting, displaying, and buying

Placing Macao Trade Paintings within the broader study of art consumption in a global context from the late 18th century to the 21st century highlights their global importance as display objects and public collectibles. These paintings are featured in the collections of some of the world's most prestigious museums, including the British Museum, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, the Guangdong Museum of Art, and the Asian Civilizations Museum in Singapore, the Hong Kong Museum of Art, thereby achieving recognition as 'objets d'art.'

³⁸ BURFORD, Robert. Description of a view of Macao in China: now exhibiting at the Panorama, Leicester Square; painted by the proprietor Robert Burford. London: Geo Nichols, 1840.

³⁹ CONNER, Patrick. George Chinnery: 1774-1852, p. 31.

The Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, holds the largest collection of Asian art exported for the Western market. This collection primarily consists of objects sold and collected by Americans involved in the China Trade and was initially deposited at the India Marine Society Museum in Salem, founded in 1799 to showcase America's leadership in world trade⁴⁰.

Exploring the trajectory of these paintings as objects for public fruition observes how the exhibitions showcasing works by artists based in China and travelling artists in Western countries date back to the artists' own lifetimes. In 1829, The Boston Athenaeum publicly displayed a portrait of 'Houqua, Chief of the Hong Merchants, Canton', attributed to George Chinnery and which may have found its way into this collection in 1827 via the American merchant John Perkins Cushing (1787 - 1862)⁴¹.

Nathan Dunn's Chinese Museum was indeed a significant cultural institution displaying Chinese art, artifacts, and culture. After Nathan Dunn's Chinese Museum relocated from Philadelphia to London in 1842, it attracted over 100,000 visitors during its exhibition at iconic Hyde Park, demonstrating a strong interest in Chinese culture among the Western public.

He visited Macao only shortly in 1830. Nevertheless, his museum's collection included items that highlighted the beauty of the city's landscapes, including oil on canvas and aquarelle paintings depicting harbor views and gardens⁴².

As a matter of interest, a number of exhibitions fostered collection practices and new markets for Macao Trade Paintings. The British painter John Webber (1750- 1793), who visited Macao between December 1799 and

⁴⁰ WINES, Enoch Cobb. A peep at China in Mr. Dunn's Chinese Collection with miscellaneous notices relating to the institutions and customs of the Chinese and their intercourse with them. Philadelphia: Nathan Dunn,1839, pp. 245-246; and LANGDON, William B. "Ten thousand Chinese things." A descriptive catalogue of the Chinese Collection, now exhibiting at St. George's Place, Hyde Park Corner; with condensed accounts of the genius, government, history, literature, agriculture, arts, trade, manners, customs, and social life of the people of the Celestial empire. London: Printed for the proprietor [N. Dunn], p. 128.

⁴¹ Catalogue of pictures in the Athenaeum Gallery. Boston: Athenaeum Gallery, 1829.

⁴² HADDAD, John Roggers. *The Romance of China: excursions to China in U. S. culture, 1776-1878.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, p. 141.

January 1780, exhibited four views of the city at the prestigious Royal Academyin London, between 1785 and 1788⁴³.

The artistic production that resulted from the trip of the French travelling artist August Borget (1808-1877) to China immediately encountered the general appraisal of the public in France. Selected scenes illustrating China were published and with Borget invited to exhibit his works at the annual salons held in Paris. King Louis–Philipp (1773-1850) purchased the finished oil version of the Ama-Temple and had it hung at the Château de Neuilly. This painting is presently on display in the Musée du Berry in Bourges, the town where Borget spent the final years of his life. A painting with the same subject and clearly displaying his influence is attributed to a 19th century French follower of Borghet⁴⁴.

George Chinnery was already a reputed artist before leaving London, firstly for India and eventually arriving in Macao in 1825, which he made his home through to his death in 1852. His early reputation and connections in all likelihood acted as an asset in fuelling the interest of his countrymen in his work.

The artworks that he had with him at the time of his death were sold to settle his debts and subsequently dispersed, leaving very few remaining in Macao. From the outset, most paintings and related artworks depicting the city were not preserved locally, as Western patrons and buyers took them home as souvenirs of their visits or their stay in Macao. Shortly thereafter, collectors began commissioning travelers to return with such objects.

Consequently, the first collections of Macao Trade Paintings were primarily established in the countries most patrons hailed from: the United States, Great Britain, and, to a lesser extent, the Netherlands. Interestingly, interest in South China among local collectors did not emerge until the mid-20th

⁴³ TILLOTSON. Gilles Henry Rupert. Fan Kwae pictures: Paintings and drawings by George Chinnery and other artists in the collection of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation. London: Spink for the Corporation, 1987, pp. 20-21.

⁴⁴ GREGORY, Martyn. Revealing the East: historical pictures by Chinese and Western artists (1750 – 1950). London: The Martyn Gregory Gallery, 2013-2014, p. 14.

century, largely through the benevolence of Sir Robert Ho Tung (1915-1955) and Sir Paul Chater (1846-1926), who donated their collections of paintings, photographs, maps and engravings depicting the Pearl River Delta and Chinese coastline scenes in the 18th and 19th centuries to the cities of Macao and Hong Kong, respectively⁴⁵.

Some general references concern the prices charged by Canton workshops involved in the mass production of paintings upon mostly the commission by foreigners, employing two thousand to three thousand artists and craftsmen The quality and pricing of paintings therefore varied. In 1844, Canton workshops sold Macao port views and other South China ports in oil on cotton framed with yellow wood for as little as \$4 or \$5⁴⁶. Between 1844 and 1848, a hundred rice paper paintings cost \$5, corresponding to the average price of one large oil painting, and with South America providing their main market⁴⁷. Thus, questioning the equation between markets and these artworks, Osmond Tiffany rightly asserted that their economic evaluation in South China primary market was generally much lower than abroad due both to the low cost of local labour and the incidence of mass production⁴⁸.

Albeit the fact that Lam Qua wasn't able to cope with the amount of commissions, his yearly earnings were low, circa \$500. In the 1830s his portraits were sold for \$20. By the end of the 1840s his rather small portraits were sold for \$30⁴⁹. He charged much lower prices, around one third of the cost of "his master"

⁴⁵ VAN DER POEL. Made for trade - Made in China, p. 26 and p. 106; and ORANGE, John. The Chater collection pictures relating to China, Hong Kong, Macao, 1655-1860; with historical and descriptive letterpresses. London: Thornton Butterworth, 1924.

⁴⁶ WILLIAMS, Samuel Wells. The Middle Kingdom: A Survey of the Geography, Government, Education, Social Life, Arts, Religion, etc. of the Chinese Empire and its inhabitants. New York: Wiley and Putman, 1848, vol. 2, p. 175; and HEDDE, Isidore. Étude Pratique du Commerce d'exportation de la Chine. Paris: Ed. Renard, A. Haussmann and N. Rondot. 1848, p. 177.

⁴⁷ MORRISON, A Chinese Commercial Guide, p. 177; and Morrison, Chinese commercial guide: consisting of a collection of details and regulations respecting foreign trade in China, p. 168.

⁴⁸ TIFFANY, The Canton Chinese, or The American's sojourn in the Celestial empire, pp. 86-87.

⁴⁹ DOWNING, *The Fan-qui in China*, vol. I, p. 25, and pp. 222-223.

George Chinnery. In 1840 and 1841, the British trading company Jardine Matheson bought a lot of paintings from Lam Qua amounting to around \$34 and \$60 each, while paying George Chinnery between \$150 and \$250 per painting⁵⁰.

As is often the case, their trading in the secondary markets of Western countries reached a significantly higher scale. In 1799, Christie's auctioned a collection of Chinese paintings and other Chinese art objects that had been assembled by the Dutch merchant Andreas Everardus Van Braam (1739 – 1801), who operated in Canton and Macao from 1783 to 1791⁵¹. This auction marked a pivotal moment in the transformation of mass-produced objects into luxury commodities within the global art market. This shift significantly influenced the pricing of works produced by the prominent artists and reputable South China workshops involved with such paintings, in particular, oil on canvas portraits, resulting in a notable increase in their value. For example, during the 1830s, Lam Qua was selling his portraits for \$20 apiece; however, by the late 1840s, the value of his smaller portraits had risen to \$30 apiece⁵².

Macau Trade Paintings are relevant commodities in the early 21st century art market, in particular, in England, USA, and Hong Kong. Paintings of Macao in oil on canvas, in watercolours, gouache and pith on paper, as well as included in sets of Chinese ports in watercolours and gouache on pith paper can be easily found at auctions.

Artnet registers 909 auctions of works by George Chinnery, including 309 paintings. Such paintings include mainly oil on canvas portraits of notable

⁵⁰ CONNER, Patrick. *The China trade, 1600-1860.* London: Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery and Museum, 1986, p. 54.

⁵¹ CHRISTIE, James. A catalogue of a capital, and truly valuable assemblage of Chinese drawings, paintings, natural and artificial curiosities: the property of A. E. Van Braam, Esq.: Chief of the direction of the Dutch East India Company at Canton, and second in the Dutch Embassy, to the Court of Pekin, in the years 1794 and 1795, of which, Mr. Van Braam will speedily publish an authentic account: the whole of which will be sold by auction, by Mr. Christie, at his Great Room, Pall Mall, on Friday, February the 15th, 1799, at one o'clock. London: Mr. Christie, 1799.

⁵² DOWNING, *The Fan-qui in China*, vol. I, p. 25; and pp. 222-223.

Westerners of his time and several street scenes and landscapes of Macao⁵³. According to Artprice, he ranks 3050 among the best-sold artists at auctions, and the United Kingdom continues to be the main market for his art⁵⁴.

On the 26th of January of 2020, the London Auction House Bonhams 'Travel and Exploration Sale' auctioned the two rare landscapes of Macao that were 'A view looking towards the gardens of the Casa, with figures in the foregrounds', and 'The Grotto of Camões, Macao' by George Chinnery. They formed the top lot of this sale, reaching one of the highest values ever achieved by Chinnery's paintings: £93,813 and £87,563, respectively⁵⁵.

Artprice lists twelve auctions with works by Marciano António Baptista, mostly in the category of drawing/ watercolor, between 1988 and 2023⁵⁶. His oil on canvas painting of the Chinese Tanka girl with Chinese figures in the background after George Chinnery sold in 2017 reached + 149% above the midestimate price⁵⁷.

South China port views in gouache on paper attributed to Tingqua (also called Guan Liangchan or Tingua, 1809 – 1870) and his workshop have been

Artnet – George Chinnery. Available at: https://www.artnet.com/artists/george-chinnery/3?type=paintings. Accessed: 17th April 2025.

Artprice – George Chinnery. Available at: https://www.artprice.com/artist/5623/george-chinnery?cl=en#. Accessed: 17th April 2025.

⁵⁵ Bonhams –Travel & Exploration/ Lot 93 George Chinnery RHA – A view of Macau looking towards the gardens of the Casa, with figures in the foreground. Available at: <a href="https://www.bonhams.com/auction/25707/lot/93/george-chinnery-rha-tipperary-1774-1852-macau-a-view-of-macau-looking-towards-the-gardens-of-the-casa-with-figures-in-the-foreground/. Accessed: 17th April 2025; and Bonhams –Travel & Exploration/ Lot 94 George Chinnery RHA – Macau the Grotto of Camões. Available at: https://www.bonhams.com/auction/25707/lot/94/george-chinnery-rha-tipperary-1774-1852-macau-the-grotto-of-camoes-macau/. Accessed: 17th April 2025.

Artprice – Marciano António Baptista. Available at: https://www.artprice.com/artist/74975/marciano-antonio-baptista. Accessed: 17th April 2025.

Trade Paintings: Selections from the Kelton Collection. Lam Qua after George Chinnery, A Sampam Girl of Macao. Available at: https://www.christies.com/lot/lamqua-f11820-1860-after-george-chinnery-a-sampan-6231150/?intObjectID=6231150&lid=1. Accessed: 17th April 2025.

regularly offered to sale since 1988^{58} . In 2024, a view Macao from the north and dated 1845 - 1855 was sold for \$2500⁵⁹.

In January 2020 Sotheby's – Paris auctioned the rare and impressive painting of Praia Grande attributed to Sunqua. Its final price was \$112,500, more than doubling the estimated highest price of \$50,000⁶⁰. More recently, in November 2024 Bonhams - London sold Sunqua's oil on canvas painting depicting an eye bird's view of Macao dated around 1830 for \$15 323,79⁶¹.

Conclusion

To conclude, Macao Trade Paintings represent a small yet significant collection of artworks created over a relatively brief period of fifty years. They serve as a unique example of glocalized art, with Western patrons involved in the China Trade—particularly Americans, British, and Dutch— acting as main patrons. Members of the Chinese and other well-off communities in Macao followed suit. While the Portuguese imprint in iconography is characteristic of these paintings, the interest from Portuguese patrons in commissioning these pieces remained, nevertheless, marginal. Their complex fusion of Western cultural and artistic traditions, along with diverse subjects, owes much to

⁵⁸ Invaluable-Tingqua sold at Auction prices. https://www.invaluable.com/artist/tingqua-4z0qi4zecu/sold-at-auction-prices/?srsltid=AfmBOooF0ZN0R1IMdTFhj4_piw7cGCIx-rx03bzAi5WJUCSn1Ye2BnXY. Accessed: 17th April 2025;

⁵⁹ Arrader Galleries – Tingqua and his Studio. View of Macao from the north. Gouache on paper, c. 1845 - 1855. Available at https://aradergalleries.com/products/tingua-and-his-studio-macao-from-the-north?srsltid=AfmBOopq6CIvyA2506qRU61BIL-GitYUvsZVpdkjKhVMtDDYs wpBqAQ. Accessed 17th April 2025.

⁶⁰ Sotheby's. Sunqua (attr.). (1830- 1870). Macao counter views. Qing dynasty, middle of the 19th century;| 清十九世紀中期(傳) 新呱 (1830-

¹⁸⁷⁰⁾ 澳門商行景 布面. Available at:https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/asian -arts-5000-years/attributed-to- sunqua-1830-1870-macao-counters-view (Accessed: 12 September 2024).

⁶¹ Bonhams. Lot 153. Sunqua. Macau: a bird's eye view. Available at: https://www.bonhams.com/auction/29424/lot/153/sunqua-active-1830-1870-macau-a-birds-eye-view-circa-1830/. Accessed: 17th April 2025.

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commissions and artists operating beyond Macao, a phenomenon that warrants

deeper research.

The production and circulation of Macao Trade Paintings were intricately

bound up with Macao's role as a satellite city of Canton within the context of the

Canton Trade System. This quite small number of paintings constitutes a

fascinating multidisciplinary record of the West-East historical, sociological,

cultural, and artistic exchange created by trade involving China and Europe and

China and USA between the 18th and the 19th centuries.

Paintings by artists such as George Chinnery, reputed Chinese painters

and workshops, as well as Western travel artists and those who never visited

Macao decisively to glocalize this production, exhibiting them during their

lifetimes and achieved successful sales. Thus, Macao Trade Paintings entered

global art circuits that interconnected Asia with the West, including Europe, the

United States, and even South America, serving as both trade commodities and

souvenirs. This global circulation and production marked a shift from peripheral

art creation to a new centrality within the art world. Moreover, these paintings

continue to hold significant value in the early 21st - century art market.

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