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Made for trade - Made in China. Chinese export paintings in Dutch collections: art and commodity

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Made for Trade - Made in China

Chinese export paintings in Dutch collections: art and commodity

Rosalien van der Poel



The dissertation *Made for Trade - Made in China. Chinese export paintings in Dutch collections: art and commodity* investigates eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Chinese export paintings in Dutch public collections. In order to draw conclusions about the appreciation of the extensive and historically valuable Dutch corpus, this research follows the entire trajectory of this specific transcultural painting genre in sixteen Dutch museums, from the production two centuries ago to the current position. At work in this trajectory are mechanisms between people, institutions and the paintings, which increase or, conversely, diminish the appreciation of this time- and place-specific art.

The starting point for this study is that for a large part of their existence, the paintings belonging to this genre have primarily been seen as export articles without intrinsic artistic value. This fact, and the fact that they cannot be unequivocally classified, explains why this genre has, for a long time, not received the attention it deserves. *Made for Trade* argues that the label 'exportware' does not exclude that these paintings can also be approached as 'art'. The paintings have an historic, an artistic, and a material value and are closely related to the overseas trade between China and several European countries and America in the period 1770-1870. These integrated economic relations produced, among other things, integrated (art) objects, such as Chinese export paintings, which, as a result of their representative and social functions, over time formed a special artistic phenomenon, a shared cultural visual repertoire with its own (Eurasian) character.

By asserting that Chinese export painting should not be treated as an inferior art form, and with all the implications of this, but rather as an independent art form with its

own artistic value, the purpose of *Made for Trade*, with its new knowledge and insights into this specific artistic phenomenon, is to bring about a change in thinking in respect of Chinese export painting. This subject deserves a higher priority on the agenda of decision-makers within Dutch museums, in order to optimize the visibility of these valuable collections.

With 264 illustrations and 3 appendices.

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