

Court Arts of the Qing Dynasty: Continuity and Innovation

Dates	Wednesday 23 and Thursday 24 February 2022
Times	14.00-16.00 BST
Location	Zoom Webinar
Tutor	Dr Helen Glaister
Level	All Levels



Unknown Maker, *Gold Cup of Eternal Stability*, 1739-1740 (detail)

Course Description

Although small in number, the Chinese artworks in the Wallace Collection are remarkable for their rich materiality, artistic innovation and imperial provenance. They provide the starting point for a fascinating exploration of the arts of the Qing court, and their reception in Europe.

In this course we'll explore artworks in context, including the *Gold Cups of Eternal Stability*, which are exceptionally rare. They constitute two of an original set of four ritual vessels produced for the Qianlong Emperor (1736-95). Decorated with dragon handles and standing on elephant-headed feet, the gold cups are embellished with precious stones, coral, pearls and kingfisher feathers. We'll also look closely at a pair of large pagoda-shaped incense burners, produced in polychrome cloisonné – a technique for decorating metalwork – which once stood in palace buildings during the same period.

In Europe, Chinese porcelain and art objects had long been prized for their rare material properties and original aesthetic. Focusing on two pot-pourri vases in the Collection, we'll also learn how Chinese porcelain was repurposed to suit the demands of fashionable 18th-century society.

Session One - Chinese Tradition: Porcelain, Lacquer and Decorative Carvings

In our first session, we'll discover how the Qing rulers revived traditional Chinese crafts and supported production for court use. We'll discuss how the manufacture of imperial porcelain was restored by the Kangxi Emperor (1662-1722), recreating historic glazes and introducing new colours, decorative styles and motifs.

Lacquer has a long history in China. It enjoyed imperial patronage at this time, being a popular choice for the production of the key items of imperial rulership - thrones, screens and ritual items. The crafts of carving in jade and precious hardstones, bamboo, ivory and rhinoceros' horn had also been popular in earlier dynasties. We'll consider how specialist craftsmen were drawn from across the empire to Beijing, to produce high quality items.

Session Two - Foreign Influences: From West and East

During the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), contact between China and Europe flourished. Trade and diplomacy resulted in the introduction of a host of new materials and techniques at court. The activities of the Jesuits at the court workshops were instrumental in establishing glass and enamel workshops in Beijing. They were in close proximity to those manufacturing cloisonné, which also originated beyond the borders of China. The Manchu rulers favoured not only these new technologies from Europe, but a diverse range of art objects from elsewhere, including Japanese lacquer and Tibetan metalwork. In our second session, we'll see how the artistic influences from a host of foreign sources enriched the decorative repertoire within China, forging a new 'Qing' court style.

Course Tutor

Dr Helen Glaister is an art historian specialising in Chinese ceramics and decorative arts, with a particular interest in Sino-European cultural and artistic interactions during the long 18th century. Helen is currently the Course Director of the V&A Arts of Asia Course, and a Senior Teaching Fellow at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. Recent publications include 'The Picturesque in Peking: European Decoration at the Qing Court', in *Rhapsodic Objects* (De Gruyter, 2021) and 'Exotic Self-Reflections: Fashioning Chinese Porcelain for European Eyes' in *Pots, Prints and Politics*, (British Museum Press, 2021). Her forthcoming monologue, *Chinese Art Objects, Collecting and Interior Design in Twentieth Century Britain*, will be published by Routledge in 2022.

Previous Skills, Knowledge or Experience

None required. This course is designed as an introduction to the subject.

Joining Information and Format

This course will be taught through Zoom Webinar. For more information, including instructions on how to download and use the system, please visit www.zoom.us/support.

Each course session duration is 120 minutes, including a five-minute break and time for Q&A with the tutor.

Tickets are for both dates. Ticket holders will be emailed the Zoom link, Webinar ID and Passcode 24 hours in advance of the first course session, which should be retained for accessing both sessions of the course.

Course Recording

This course will be recorded. Within 48 hours of each course session, ticket holders will be emailed a link to view the recording, which will be available for one week only.
