

Press Release

Frankfurt am Main, 28.9.2022

亞歐堂 meet asian art: Peking Glass 29 September 2022 – 4 June 2023

Press Preview/Opening: Wednesday, 28 September 2022, 12 – 8 pm

With 亞歐堂 meet asian art: Peking Glass, the Museum Angewandte Kunst turns to a topic that is rather unknown even among collectors of Asian art: Peking glass, named after its primary place of origin. In China, unlike in the Middle East and Europe, the production of glass has been documented for around 2 ½ thousand years, but for a long time it remained in the shadows. This did not change until the late 17th century, when Emperor Kangxi commissioned Jesuit scholars, who had been working as scientific advisors at the Beijing court, to establish an imperial glassworks. Previously, the emperor had received gifts from them in the form of a telescope, a hand mirror, and two European-made glass vases; objects that apparently left a deep impression on the monarch.

Kilian Stumpf (1655-1720), a Jesuit priest from Würzburg who was familiar with glassmaking, became a key figure in the glass workshop set up in the western part of the Forbidden City. Chinese craftsmen worked in it, for whom Kilian Stumpf and his friars, who were skilled in glassmaking, acted as advisors. From the beginning, there seems to have been a close exchange with a glassworks in Boshan, southeast of Beijing in the province of Shandong, which can be traced back to the Song period (12th/13th century).

As far as the technical innovation of glass is concerned, the expertise of the patrons was undoubtedly of great importance. But when it came to design, the Chinese workshops pursued their own path. They developed a distinctly different formal language that had little to do with concurrent stylistic developments in Europe. In addition to bowls and bottles, the imperial glassworks also produced many miniature snuff bottles. These were especially popular as imperial gifts and thus served an important protocol purpose for the imperial family. Under Emperor Qianlong (r. 1736-95), Chinese glass art flourished, but it further persisted into the 19th and 20th centuries.

The glass technology brought to China from Europe by the Jesuits was the beginning of the glass production of the imperial workshop in Beijing. But from the late 19th century onwards, by contrast, Peking glass acquired a considerable influence on Europe: the multicolored flashed glass from China found significant resonance in European Art Nouveau, especially in the work of Émile Gallé, who verifiably studied Chinese glass intensively. In addition, monochrome Peking glass from the 18th and 19th centuries often amazes with forms that already antedate Bauhaus modernism in their reduced and clear formal language. It is therefore hardly surprising that especially in China's republic period (1911 - 1949) many Peking glass objects were created in the style of the Qianlong period (1736 - 1795). One could almost describe it as a Chinese Bauhaus style with a more or less clear link to the forms of the 18th century.

This show presents masterpieces from the Museum Angewandte Kunst's Peking glass collection, which comprises over one hundred works and is one of the most important of its kind in Europe.

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Special thanks to Shelly Xue from the Corning Museum of Glass in Upstate New York, one of the world's leading experts on Peking glass. Thanks to her extensive support, many of the descriptions and dates of the exhibits have been updated to the current standard of research.

Curator: Dr. Stephan von der Schulenburg

Director

Prof. Matthias Wagner K

Location

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Information

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Opening hours

Tue, Thu-Fri 12 noon – 6 pm, Wed 12 noon – 8 pm, Sat-Sun 10 am – 6 pm

Admission

12 EUR, reduced 6 EUR

Children and adolescents under the age of 18 as well as students from the Goethe Universität Frankfurt, the Städelschule, the Frankfurt University of Applied Science, the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Frankfurt and the HfG Offenbach are free

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Press downloads

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