

伊凡·威廉斯捐赠十九世纪广州外销通草纸水彩画

西方人眼里的中国情调

Views from the West

Collection of nineteenth century pith paper watercolours
donated by Mr Ifan Williams to the
City of Guangzhou

中山大学历史系 编
广州博物馆

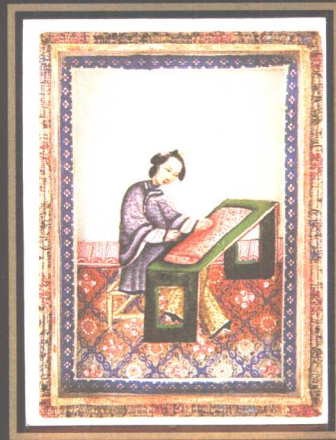


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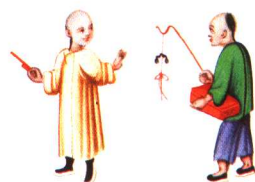
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序言

陈玉环



1995年夏，承蒙牛津大学中国研究所科大卫博士邀请，我在牛津小住了一个月。在牛津大学博德利恩图书馆(Bodleian Library)里，我看到了许多18、19世纪在广州为西方人制作出口到欧美各地的绘画。在此之前，我对这类外销画的了解，除了参阅书本上印刷的图版之外，就只有在香港艺术馆见过一些原件，那些多是大幅的油画或水彩画。而我在牛津见到的，则与我一向熟悉的外销画不同。这些画，面积最大不超过两三个巴掌，看上去笔法虽然有点幼稚，却着色夺目，凹凸有致，质感效果几近刺绣；且题材繁多，花鸟虫鱼，小桥庭园，市井百态，美不胜收。第一次接触这种绘画，我便被它吸引住，毫不犹豫地向图书馆订造了一批幻灯片，寄回国内，期望将来有机会作进一步研究和展览之用。

几年后，我在牛津的这一经历，竟引出了一段意想不到的缘分。一位来自英国约克郡的老先生，为了看这批绘画，也造访了博德利恩图书馆。当初我在博德利恩图书馆调阅这些绘画时，在图书馆的登记册内留下了名字，大抵通过那个登记册，他了解到我曾经复制过这些绘画，知道我对这批绘画有着和他相同的兴趣。后来，他发现自己原来认识我一位北京的同行，通过那位朋友，老先生主动写信给我，表示他对这种绘画情有独钟，正在编撰有关目录和进行一些初步的研究，希望有机会到广州时，能看看我手上的幻灯片。知道一位异国他邦的老人对两百年前的广州绘画有如此浓厚的兴趣，我自然大为欣喜，赶快复信表示欢迎他到广州看看。

1999年12月，这位名叫伊凡·威廉斯的先生到中国桂林旅游，经广州转机，在等候转机的几个小时的间隙，他让太太随旅行团参观，自己



独自跑到中山大学，匆匆忙忙和我们会面，与我们分享了他在欧洲各博物馆搜罗这种绘画的收获和研究心得。他给我们看了他自己收藏的这种绘画的照片，我也把在牛津大学和剑桥大学复制的幻灯片展示给他看。我们看得忘乎所以，中午仅以快餐盒饭款待这位素未谋面的远方来客。就是在这一次，我才知道这种绘画的用纸叫“通草纸”。

没想到，这短短几个小时的会面，便建立了我们和威廉斯先生的友谊和信任。2000年初，威廉斯先生和我们以电子邮件通信，先是探讨在广州筹办一次通草纸画展览的可能性，后来，又决定从他的私人收藏中，挑出六十张不同题材的通草纸水彩画捐赠给广州博物馆。他明确地说，因为这批通草纸画所见证的是19世纪广州的社会与文化历史，让它们存放在广州博物馆中，是再适合不过的了。接到这个电子邮件，我着实惊喜不已，马上把这项捐赠和展览的事列入工作议程。9月，威廉斯先生亲自带来了这批通草纸画，我们尽地主之谊，带他游览广州。他热切地希望寻找当年广州十三行的遗迹，可惜沧海桑田，我们现在能够让他看见的广州历史，还不如他在绘画上看见的来得具体和真实。

威廉斯先生不是专业的文物或历史研究人员，收藏和研究通草纸画，只是他的业余兴趣，也可以说是他退休后才能专心致志的个人嗜好，但他的工作态度和 spirit，却比专业人员更专业。为了了解欧洲各地公藏通草纸画的现状，他跑了欧洲许多博物馆，购买了不少有关的书籍，在互联网上找寻资料，甚至亲自到香港和广州——要知道，这都是他在没有什么研究经费的情况下独立完成的。

在约克郡，有一个名为“博物馆之友”的团体，威廉斯先生是该组



织中的热心人士。2000年冬，我们访问英国时，在他的热心安排下，得以和约克郡各公立、私营博物馆以及画廊、大学的考古学系、民间自发的历史文物组织，进行深入和诚恳的交流，并应邀到威廉斯先生家做客。威廉斯先生的家是一栋18世纪建造的房子，一进门，我们就为这个充满了艺术氛围的家庭所陶醉。我们见到门廊里挂着一套相当精美的以花卉蝴蝶为题材的通草纸画，马上被吸引住了。在我们细细地欣赏这套绘画的时候，威廉斯太太给我们讲了这套画的来历。于是，我们知道了过去和中国毫无关系的威廉斯先生，与通草纸水彩画结下的不解之缘，是从一件令人感动的小事开始的。

那还是在20世纪70年代。一天，威廉斯太太在剑桥大学的露天市场闲逛，正嘀咕着要不要花钱买下一件钟爱的大衣时，瞥见另一个摊贩正摆卖着几幅以花卉蝴蝶为题材的通草纸水彩画。深悉丈夫对各种艺术品的兴趣，威廉斯太太放弃了买大衣的念头，把那套花卉蝴蝶绘画买下，送给丈夫。这几只伏在约克郡一个寻常人家的墙上几近三十年的蝴蝶，让我想到过去广州工艺生产和贸易的辉煌历史，也体会到今天西方人士的艺术情趣和文化修养。18世纪至20世纪初，广州作为中西海上贸易中心之一，制作了无数的绘画和工艺品，远销欧美，培育了不少无名的画师和工匠，开创了多少有别于中国传统艺术的类型和技巧。这段历史后来中断了，以致我们今天回味起来，还有一种梦幻的感觉。最令人遗憾的是，关于这些绘画，虽然外国的研究专著和图册都已经汗牛充栋，但作为中国外销画发源地和最重要的生产与出口地的广州，各公藏机构却连一幅原作品也没有。





威廉斯先生这次捐赠，标志着一个饶有意义的开始——广州终于拥有第一批外销画藏品了。收到这批藏品后，广州博物馆的同事们也意识到这类通草纸水彩画的艺术和社会史价值，积极收购了另一些作品入藏。于是，我们想到了可以举办一次展览，不但是为了彰显威廉斯先生的义举，更期望以此唤起广州人民对自己城市一段几乎被遗忘的历史的记忆。18、19 世纪的广州，在一批无名工匠手中，诞生了无数的艺术品，无论是绘画还是雕刻，直到今天仍是欧洲和北美各大博物馆及许多收藏家手中的珍品。虽然我们不应该指望，当时从广州外销欧美的其他艺术品，都会如这批通草纸画一样重回广州，但我们希望通过向国人介绍这些目前散处在世界各地的中国艺术品，唤起我们对自身的历史的认识，也借此和外国友人建立起长远而坚实的友谊，分享彼此对历史和文化的体会与反省。作为一个文物工作者，我们是多么地希望，在不远的将来，广州的市民也能够像威廉斯夫妇和我们在约克郡所见的其他博物馆之友一样，热爱自己生活的家园，重视自己的历史，珍惜自己的文物，对生活的艺术，能够细心品味而不盲从“品位”。只有这样，我相信，我们的下一代才能放眼天下，了解广州以至中国在世界史上的角色，并且对普世的真善美的价值观有真诚的追求。



PREFACE



Chen Yuhuan

In the summer of 1995, invited by Dr David Faure of the Institute for Chinese Studies of Oxford University, I paid a short visit to Oxford for a month. In the Bodleian Library in which a huge amount of early manuscripts and paintings are collected, I looked at a variety of export paintings produced in Guangzhou in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for Western markets. I knew little about Chinese export paintings except for having seen some printed works in books and a few originals in the Hong Kong Museum of Art, which are in most cases large watercolours or oil on Western paper or canvas. What I saw in Oxford was very different from these works. They are small in size and the drawing techniques applied seems a bit childlike. Yet these paintings are tremendously colourful and bright, and the texture expressed by the use of colouring comes close to embroidery. Moreover, the themes of the paintings are abundant—flowers, birds, insects, fishes, buildings and gardens, common people and street scenes, etc. I was so attracted by such paintings that immediately I decided to order a set of slides of them and sent them back to China for future exhibitions and further researches.

I did not realize that such an encounter in Oxford would lead to a sequence of events which would in turn bring into being this



exhibition and the publication of this volume. Soon afterwards a gentleman from Yorkshire visited Bodleian Library and looked at these paintings. As my name was left in the registration book of the Bodleian Library, this gentleman knew that somebody from China had also been interested in the same set of paintings. He then realized that he knew one of my friends who was an archaeologist from Beijing. Through this common friend, this gentleman wrote me a letter explaining his interest in these paintings and that he was compiling an annotated catalogue and conducting some preliminary researches. He also expressed his wish to come to Guangzhou to look at the slides I ordered from the Bodleian. I was so delighted to learn that a foreign gentleman was so interested in the paintings produced in Guangzhou nearly two centuries ago. Immediately I sent him a reply and said that he was most welcome to come to Guangzhou.

In December 1999, this gentleman—Mr Ifan Williams—was on his way to Guilin and stopped at Guangzhou for a few hours. He left his wife in the company of other members of the tour party and came on his own to Zhongshan(Sun Yat-sen)University for a brief meeting with us. He shared with us what he had seen and what he knew of this kind of painting in the museums and libraries of Britain and other



parts of Europe. He also showed us photographs of many of the paintings he had seen and personally collected, and looked at the slides we ordered from Oxford and Cambridge. We were so excited by such an encounter that we forgot to treat this foreign visitor with a decent meal—we only had lunch boxes from fast food restaurant for lunch. It was on that occasion that I realized the paper of that kind of paintings was called “pith paper”, or in Chinese, “*tongcao zhi*”.

Our meeting was hasty, and yet it established a long term friendship and mutual trust between Mr Williams and ourselves. In the spring of 2000, Mr Williams wrote me an email exploring the possibility of holding a small exhibition of pith paper watercolours in Guangzhou. Before long he sent me another email saying that he decided to select 60 pieces of pith paper watercolours from his personal collection and send to Guangzhou as a gift. He suggested that because these paintings witnessed the social and cultural history of nineteenth century Guangzhou, the Guangzhou Museum would be their best permanent home. I was most delighted by such a message, and immediately I put the pith paper watercolours exhibition and the donation ceremony onto my official agenda. In September, Mr Williams brought with him 60 pieces of pith paper watercolours to



our museum in person. We showed him around the city of Guangzhou, visiting with him a number of museums and art galleries. Having been interested in pith paper watercolours and other forms of Chinese export art for years, Mr Williams was eager to search for any single trace of hongks and factories—the agents which dealt with Sino-European trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Guangzhou. Unfortunately, Guangzhou has changed so much that few eighteenth and nineteenth century historical relics remain and we could not entirely satisfy our foreign visitor. The scene of old Canton can only be imagined by looking at the export paintings and commodities of various sorts.

We should perhaps bear in mind that Mr Williams is not a professional researcher. Collecting and studying pith paper watercolours is only his amateur pursuit which could not be fully taken up until he retired. Yet this did not deter him from delving into the subject as seriously as a professional. To understand the current state of the collection of pith paper watercolours, he has visited as many museums, libraries, and galleries as possible. He has purchased any book relating to this subject as long as he can afford. He tried his best to search for any possible information on the internet. He even went to Hong Kong



and Guangzhou at his own expenses—all these are done without research funding at all.

Back in Yorkshire, Mr Williams is a keen member of several groups of Friends of Museums. During our trip to Yorkshire in the winter of 2000 he personally arranged for us a number of visits to local museums, galleries, voluntary associations concerning local culture and history, and the archaeology department of York University. With his thoughtful arrangement, we were able to communicate with the staff of these institutions in an in-depth and sincere manner. Mr Williams also kindly invited us to pay a visit to his home—an eighteenth century house containing a variety of works of art. While we were being attracted by a set of pith paper watercolours of flowers and butterflies hung in his house, Mrs Williams told us the story about this set of paintings and thus the origin of Mr Williams' interest in pith paper watercolours. We then realized the bond between Mr Williams, a Welsh gentleman who previously had nothing to do with China at all, and the little Chinese pith paper watercolours, was tied by an apparently trivial but touching occurrence.

Back in the early 1970s, while wandering in an open market in Cambridge, Mrs Williams was thinking whether she should buy the



coat she spotted. Around the same time, she was attracted by a set of watercolours of flowers and butterflies. Immediately she decided she would give up the coat and buy the watercolours for her husband who always showed an interest in different kinds of artwork. This is how these butterflies “flying” to an ordinary Yorkshire family and from then on they have been resting there for thirty years. They remind us the remarkable history of the Sino-European trade and the production of art and craft which used to take place in Guangzhou. They also remind us the artistic and cultural taste of Western people in the past and present. From the eighteenth to the early twentieth century, as one of the most important centres of Sino-Western maritime trade, numerous art and craft works were produced in Guangzhou and exported to Europe and America. A large number of anonymous artists and craftsmen, becoming familiar with new genre and drawing techniques, were also nourished as a result. For various reasons such a history of Sino-Western exchanges has been retarded or even suspended. Without adequate objects or relics as evidence, such a history seems like a dream which is unimaginable to most of the Chinese people. More regretful is that none of the public collections of Guangzhou possessed a single example of such watercolours, despite the fact that



Guangzhou used to be the largest producer and exporter of Chinese export art and craft works, and that large amount of researches on this subject have been conducted by local and foreign scholars.

The donation by Mr Williams marks a significant beginning—the City of Guangzhou finally possesses its first collection of Chinese export paintings. My colleagues at Guangzhou Museum immediately became aware of the artistic and social historical value of pith paper watercolours, and have purchased a number of works of such to add to the collection. We therefore consider holding an exhibition not only to express our gratefulness for the kind gift of Mr Williams, but also to bring to the mind of Guangzhou citizen the history of their city, which has been bit by bit fading away from their memories. To this day, a large part of this history can only be recalled by visiting the museums and antique markets of Europe and North America, where numerous paintings and artworks produced by anonymous artists in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Guangzhou are collected or sold. We should not expect these collections, like the pith paper watercolours donated by Mr Williams, to be “returned” to Guangzhou—they are just too abundant and in most cases highly regarded where they are. By introducing to our citizens the collections of Chinese artworks kept in