Santander Art and Culture Law Review 2/2019 (5): 233-244
DOI: 10.4467/2450050XSNR.19.022.11570

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The Old Summer Palace and the Rhetoric of National Treasures

Abstract: Among the European missionary groups in China, only the Jesuits established themselves firmly at court, first in the late Ming and then under the succeeding Qing dynasty. The Milanese painter and lay brother Giuseppe Castiglione (Ch. Lang Shining) served three successive Manchu emperors, designing a suite of late Baroque buildings for the Yuanmingyuan, an imperial palace to the north-west of Beijing. When the palace was looted and burned during the Second Opium War, a set of bronze zodiacal water spouts designed by Castiglione disappeared from Beijing, only to re-appear publicly at auction during the last 30 years. Ai Weiwei has replicated the set, both in bronze and gilt bronze, questioning its Chinese pedigree and, more broadly, whether objects commissioned by an occupying power can be regarded as national treasures, an issue especially relevant to China since large parts of the country were under foreign rule for almost a third of its imperial history. Castiglione is now regarded in China and Taiwan as a highly significant figure in Chinese painting history.

Keywords: China, Castiglione, looting, Ai Weiwei, national treasure

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The Yuanmingyuan

Early in the 12th century, Nüzhen (Jurchen) armies from present-day Manchuria overran the northern half of China. After sacking the Song dynasty capital they established the Jin dynasty, which for a century coexisted – often contentiously – with the Southern Song. The succeeding, slightly shorter-lived Mongol Yuan dynasty was followed by a native house, the Ming, but after three hundred years the whole of Chinese territory was again under Manchu control. For almost a third of its over two millennia of imperial history, half or more of the country has been ruled by foreigners, with relatively small populations subordinating a vastly larger one by means of military force.[1] The present paper focuses on the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), the last such alien dynasty prior to the Japanese Occupation in the 20th century.

Like other foreign dynasties before them, the Manchus rapidly assimilated indigenous practices while maintaining a certain distance, drawing on Chinese literati to carry out much of the administration. In order to command a country that, for the most part, was ethnically Han, the Qing court understood the benefit of sinicizing, yet also felt a competing strategic need to maintain the high level of equine skill that made conquest possible.[2] However, when it came to social classes China had, unlike contemporary European states, long derogated military excellence in favor of literary accomplishment. Indeed, as far back as the 11th century a signal mark of elite Chinese identity was the mastery not only of classical texts but also of the calligraphic ability to comment on them. Horsemanship gave the new rulers no social cache, hence part of the process of dynastic acculturation for the Qing was to publicly demonstrate indigenous taste and literati skills. Early in the 18th century the second emperor, Kangxi, laid out plans for a new Qing palace that would follow well-established Chinese architectural and garden styles.

Sited some 20 kilometers north-west of the Forbidden City, the Yuanmingyuan (Garden of Perfect Brilliance) eventually spread over almost 900 acres, evolving under the Yongzheng and Qianlong emperors into the imperial court's primary residence and the locus of administrative power.[3] One consequence of this was a diminished role of the old Ming palace at the heart of Beijing, which became employed only for grand ceremonial affairs, as the court's residence during the coldest winter months, and for storing the bulk of the imperial collection. By the 19th century, the Yuanmingyuan had acquired an alternative name –

[1] The Xianbei Wei dynasty and succeeding Northern Qi dynasty ruled north China from 386-577.

[2] The Qing reminded all Han men of their subject status by demanding that they shave and braid their hair in Nüzhen style.

[3] Or Perfect and Brilliant Garden: "Yuanming" is a Buddhist descriptor attributed to the Tang dynasty monk Xuan Zang, see Y. Wong, *A Paradise Lost: The Imperial Garden Yuanmingyuan*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 2001, p. 1.

the Old Summer Palace – to distinguish it from the smaller Yiheyuan, an adjacent garden created in 1750.[4]

Having inherited its magnificent buildings and grounds, the Qianlong emperor (r. 1735-1796) initiated a unique chapter in Chinese architectural history. In the 1740s, his fascination with printed images of European fountains initiated a radical addition to Kangxi's summer retreat: a suite of western style buildings, gardens, and water features that would echo the splendour of Versailles. The principal source and beneficiary of Qianlong's interest was a Jesuit lay brother, Giuseppe Castiglione.

The Jesuits had integrated themselves into Chinese court life since the beginning of the 17th century, when Father Matteo Ricci attracted the attention of the late Ming court for his accurate calendrical and astronomical predictions, and also his cartographic knowledge. Having mastered classical and vernacular Chinese, his willingness to engage with the Beijing elite became a model for the Jesuit community in succeeding generations.[5] Following the Manchu conquest, Jesuits in Beijing eventually regained their privileged position, with Ferdinand Verbiest re-equipping the Imperial Observatory in 1673 at Kangxi's personal request.

In his native Milan, Castiglione had been privately trained both in the humanities and painting, and then joined the Society of Jesus in Genoa at the age of 19.[6] One of his acknowledged influences was the painter Andrea Pozzo, himself a Jesuit, who had worked both in Milan and Genoa.[7] When Castiglione arrived in the Chinese capital in 1715, it was to serve the Order not as a missionary, but as a highly skilled artist. He admirably negotiated two entirely different modes of cultural practice and thereby found favor with three emperors: Kangxi, his son Yongzheng, and grandson Qianlong, with Qianlong personally handwriting Castiglione's obituary in 1766. Known in China as Lang Shining (pronounced shi'ning), he has long been celebrated for his remarkable melding of European and Chinese media and styles. For someone trained to paint in oils, acquiring that degree of fluency in aqueous media was a considerable measure of his ability.

4 The Yiheyuan was designed for the Qianlong emperor's mother and enlarged at the end of the 19th century by the Dowager Empress Cixi.

5 The Metropolitan Museum possesses Rubens' 1617 sketch of Ricci's editor Nicholas Trigault wearing Ming literati robes and a Korean cap.

6 M. Musillo, *Reconciling Two Careers: The Jesuit Memoir of Giuseppe Castiglione Lay Brother and Qing Imperial Painter*, "Eighteenth-Century Studies" 2008, Vol. 42(1), p. 51.

7 See H. Rogers, S. E. Lee, *Masterworks of Ming and Qing Painting from the Forbidden City*, International Arts Council, Lansdale 1988, p. 182. Interestingly, an adaptation of Pozzo's *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum* (1693) was published by the Jesuits in Chinese, M. Sullivan, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art. From the Sixteenth Century to the Present Day*, Thames and Hudson; New York Graphic Society, London 1973, p. 60.

In preparation for the Yuanmingyuan project, Qianlong elevated Castiglione to the post of Chief Minister at the Imperial Parks Administration.[8] The artist responded to the palace's *genius loci* with a variety of elegant, but not overbearing, late Baroque buildings and gardens. To put them in context, it should be noted that Qianlong's European-style halls were never employed as actual residences, and only occupied a very small percentage of the overall acreage, sited at the north-eastern edge.[9] Building the exotic was hardly confined to China since, conversely, Chinoiserie was the very rage in contemporary Europe at that time. Architect William Chambers visited south China during the 1740s and went on to produce London's own pagoda in the grounds of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.

Among Castiglione's array of novel structures was the Haiyantang, Hall of Calm Seas, fronted by an elaborate zodiacal water-clock engineered by his French Jesuit colleague Michel Benoist. In designing the twelve spouts, each with a bronze zodiacal animal-head mounted on the marble body of a human official, cast and carved by Chinese craftsmen in the imperial workshops, Castiglione followed a long-standing Chinese visual convention, his imagination impressively balancing the two worlds that he straddled (Fig. 1).[10] Up to Benoist's death in 1774 the Haiyantang spouts discharged sequentially into a fan-shaped pool, every two hours, and all together at noon.[11]

1860 and After

The destruction of the Yuanmingyuan during the Second Opium War has generated a considerable literature, both within and beyond China. The deadly dance between China, Britain, and France – with Russia and America in the background – occurred within the larger context of western imperial and commercial ambitions. On the ground, the situation was exacerbated by mutual misunderstanding of diplomatic codes, second guessing, and a general suspicion of treachery by both sides. In August 1860, Lord Elgin (whose father removed sculpture from the Parthenon) was sent by London to impose ratification of the Treaty of Tianjin, signed under

[8] E. S. Rawski, J. Rawson (eds.), *China: The Three Emperors, 1662-1795*, Royal Academy of Arts, London 2005, p. 80.

[9] In assessing Castiglione's architectural achievement, Daniel Rabreau and Marie-Raphaël Paupe argued for its "exceptional plastic value, highly symbolic and of a great formal beauty, that relies upon a sort of aesthetic *compromise*, unique in its time", with the term "compromise" to be understood in a positive way as a unification of two notionally disparate tastes, D. Rabreau, M.-R. Paupe, *Un style original ou les "goûts réunis"*, in: P. Guillemin (ed.), *Le Yuanmingyuan: jeux d'eau et palais européens du XVIIIe siècle à la cour de Chine*, A.D.P.F., Paris 1987, p. 14.

[10] Tomb sets of twelve such figures, with the heads of zodiacal animals and bodies of court officials, survive from the Northern Wei (4th-6th c.).

[11] According to Sullivan, following Benoist's death the Yuanmingyuan fountains' hydraulic systems were no longer maintained and water was supplied only on special occasions by chains of men passing buckets, M. Sullivan, op. cit., p. 72.

duress two years earlier. A force of 11,000 British and Indian soldiers was joined shortly after landing in China by more than 6,000 French troops, and together the alliance marched on Beijing.[12] The diplomatic moves and military skirmishes of both sides over the next two months are too complex to relate here, but the end result was the plundering of the Yuanmingyuan in October, with the French and the British blaming each other for starting it.

Looted objects were subsequently commandeered by the generals and auctioned off to benefit a common pool of the soldiery, being laundered as legitimate war booty rather than as theft, which was outlawed under military code. The British Museum possesses a copy of the *Yuanmingyuan European Palaces* album inscribed "Taken out of the Emperors Summer Palace Pekin by me [Henry] Brooke A […] Oct 19.1860".[13] That Elgin's men were able to inflict such humiliation wasn't because the Manchu, Mongolian, and Chinese troops lacked a martial commitment: they were literally outgunned. Thomas Bowlby, a *Times* journalist embedded with the troops, wrote that the new Armstrong field gun "smashes whatever it comes into contact with".

Prohibition of looting during times of war wasn't internationally enforced until ratification of the Hague Convention in 1899 (revised in 1907 and again in 1954), which evolved from Francis Lieber's Code, signed by Lincoln in 1863. Since even the looting of Benin City occurred two years prior to the first Hague convention, international law has little to offer with regard to these 19th century acts, and so, as I argued in *The Idea of Cultural Heritage*, demands for restitution of material taken without clear title under 18th and 19th century colonial rule and/or duress are moral rather than legal claims, with certain works becoming symbols of national self-determination against outside intervention.[14] President Macron's public commitment to return many African pieces in French state collections, made in Burkina Faso in 2017, took this moral form. A relatively new movement to decolonize museums marks a real departure from the previous institutional silence. Without generally committing to actual restitution, curators seek to clarify for visitors the political and military circumstances by which works came into the collections, and

[12] This was about enforced ratification. The Qing court noted at the time that if the foreign powers wanted merely to ratify a treaty, why send twenty warships, over a hundred guns and several thousand soldiers? See Y. Wong, op. cit., p. 134.

[13] N. Pearce, *From the Summer Palace 1860: Provenance and Politics*, in: L. Tythacott (ed.), *Collecting and Displaying China's "Summer Palace" in the West: The Yuanmingyuan in Britain and France*, Routledge, New York – London 2018, pp. 39-40. Pearce wonders whether the spouts may have been removed after the first phase of looting, given that they were fixed to the marble bodies, and also notes theories about their possible prior removal during the Daoguang or Xianfeng periods (the spouts are, however, depicted *in situ* in Godefroy Durand's engraving of the looting for "L'Illustration", 22 December 1860).

[14] For an overview of the evolution of international laws on plunder during the 18th and 19th centuries, see W. Sandholtz, *Plunder, Restitution, and International Law*, "International Journal of Cultural Property" 2010, Vol. 17(2), pp. 149-155; D. Gillman, *The Idea of Cultural Heritage*, 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2010, pp. 19 and 22.

publicly recognize the often massive imbalances of power. Following discussions held within the Benin Dialogue Group (established in 2007), museums from five European nations will lend, but not gift, material to the new Benin Royal Museum in Nigeria.[15]

The Yuanmingyuan situation might have rested with the looting, tragic though that was, but it escalated with the handing back of survivors from a kidnapped British negotiating party, together with the corpses of 20 Britons and Indians who had been subject to *lingchi*, the so-called "death by a thousand cuts". Bowlby, the *Times* correspondent, was among the dead. Elgin determined this to be an atrocious crime that required not only a huge cash compensation, but also revenge on the emperor himself through the torching of his principal residence. Although French soldiers had been the more fervent looters, their commanders balked at taking this next step, so Elgin proceeded using British troops alone, reportedly later saying to a French commander "What would the *Times* say of me if I did not avenge its correspondent?"[16] The irony is that, after further destruction during the Boxer Rebellion, the most visible remains of the Yuanmingyuan's 3,000 separate structures are toppled stones from the European palaces: marble doesn't burn (Fig. 2).[17]

I first encountered surviving material from Qianlong's baroque halls as a student in Beijing in the mid-1970s, when the Yuanmingyuan was largely deserted, and then later in 1991 under unusual circumstances. I'd visited Bergen's Museum of Decorative Art (Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum), now the KODE Museum, in order to assess a suite of Buddhist marble sculptures, collected by Johann Munthe in Beijing in the early 20th century. Down in the museum's storage area were a number of quite different, elaborately decorated white marble plinths combining European and Chinese elements, one of which supported an inscribed luohan figure from the Buddhist group.[18] Over 20 years later, in 2014, the KODE Museum accepted a gift of 10 million kroner (then about US$ 1.6 million) from the Zhongkun Group, a Beijing developer, and placed seven of the 21 architectural pieces on long-term loan to Peking University, whose campus is partly built over the Yuanmingyuan site. Zhongkun's chairman, Huang Nubo, is quoted as saying "The moment I saw the columns, my eyes teared up. After all, the lost relics from Yuanmingyuan repre-

15 C. Hickley, *Nigeria Plans Museum for Art Looted from Benin*, "The Art Newspaper", 22 October 2018.

16 C. Bowlby, *The Palace of Shame that Makes China Angry*, "BBC Magazine", 2 February 2015.

17 Structures included palaces, halls, pavilions, temples, land boats, and bridges; see L. Tythacott, *The Yuanmingyuan and Its Objects*, in: eadem (ed.), *Collecting and Displaying China's "Summer Palace" in the West: The Yuanmingyuan in Britain and France*, Routledge, New York – London 2018, p. 6; and Z. Liu, *The Case for Repatriating China's Cultural Objects*, Springer, Singapore 2016, pp. 8-10.

18 The Munthe Buddhist group had recently been dismissed as fake, hence the visit. In the article that resulted, I wrote of the plinths: "I suspect that all were made for the Old Summer Palace in north-west Peking, obliterated during the Second Opium War", D. Gillman, *General Munthe's Chinese Buddhist Sculpture: An Embarrassment of Riches?*, "The Buddhist Forum" 1996, Vol. 4, p. 105.

sent an indelible history for all Chinese".[19] Leaves from the *Yuanmingyuan European Palaces* album make it clear that these were newel posts, set between staircase balusters.

From the early 1990s, the Beijing government has deployed the Yuanmingyuan as a symbol of national humiliation, and a reminder that such a thing simply can't be allowed to happen again.[20] Among its ruins, the Haiyantang took on additional significance when the zodiacal bronze heads began to re-emerge. Seven of the twelve have now re-appeared, beginning with the pig in 1987. Auctions in Hong Kong in 2000 drew protests, but the sales nonetheless proceeded. Jiang Yingchun, a Poly Art Museum curator, stated at the time that "We decided to buy these things because they belong to us, they're part of the Chinese people's national treasure".[21] While the term national treasure (*guobao*) is used as a descriptor in Chinese heritage discourse, it isn't an actual category within the official ranking system, which divides valuable material culture on Chinese territory into three levels, the highest of which, class one, represents things of "especially important historical, artistic, or scientific value".[22]

The most dramatic turn of events came in spring 2009. After a February sale of the Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé Collection at Christie's Paris, at which the rabbit and rat heads were each auctioned for US$ 18 million, their buyer, Cai Mingchao, made it clear that he had no intention of paying for the two pieces and that they should instead be gifted to China, saying: "I think any Chinese person would have stood up at that moment […] I want to emphasize that the money won't be paid".[23] As far as Cai and other protesters were concerned, the animal heads were evidently equivalent to class one objects. Beijing's Cultural Heritage Bureau told state media that the auction had "harmed the cultural rights and national feeling of the Chinese people" and that it would "have a serious impact on [Christie's] development in China". Furthermore, it was reported that officials had been ordered

19 M. Jia, *Old Palace Columns Coming Home*, "China Daily", 12 February 2014.

20 H. Lee, *The Ruins of Yuanmingyuan*, in: M. A. Matten (ed.), *Places of Memory in Modern China: History, Politics and Identity*, Brill, Leiden 2012, pp. 209-211. See also A.-M. Broudehoux, *The Making and Selling of Post-Mao Beijing*, Routledge, New York 2004, pp. 69-70.

21 E. Eckholm, M. Landler, *State Bidder Buys Relics for China*, "The New York Times", 3 May 2000.

22 For Chinese discourse on heritage, see L. Guolong, *The Emergence of 'Cultural Heritage' in Modern China: A Historical and Legal Perspective*, in: A. Matsude, L. Mengoni, *Reconsidering Cultural Heritage in East Asia*, Ubiquity Press, London 2016, p. 50. For the ranking system, see T. Lau, *The Grading of Cultural Relics in Chinese Law*, "International Journal of Cultural Property" 2011, Vol. 18(1), p. 2; and also M. L. Dutra, *Sir, How Much is that Ming Vase in the Window? Protecting Cultural Relics in the People's Republic of China*, "Asian-Pacific Law & Policy Journal" 2004, Vol. 5, reprinted in A. J. Connolly (ed.), *Cultural Heritage Rights*, Routledge, New York 2016, pp. 161-200.

23 M. McDonald, C. Vogel, *Twist in Sale of Relics Has China Winking*, "The New York Times", 2 March 2009; H. Eakin, *The Affair of the Chinese Bronze Heads*, "The New York Review of Books", 14 May 2009; H. Zhong, *China, Cultural Heritage, and International Law*, Routledge, New York 2018, pp. 1-2, 21-22. The sale was held on 23-25 February.

to "scrutinise the auction house's imports and exports from China".[24] Four years later, Christie's held its first-ever sale in China in September 2013, and it surely hadn't hurt the auction house that in June, at a ceremony in the National Museum of China, the rabbit and rat heads were formally gifted to China by François-Henri Pinault, whose family owned Christie's. The two are now exhibited in the National Museum's *Fuxing zhi lu* (*Road to Rejuvenation*) gallery, with four of the other five also displayed in Beijing, at the Poly Art Museum.

As noted above, under circumstances where national self-determination is being affirmed, or is in question, cultural objects can take on a symbolic role. Zuozhen Liu writes the following about the water spouts, which are now formally designated class one relics: "These objects have become symbols of the national stigma and tragedy. So when the bronze heads are auctioned in the market, China feels provoked".[25] Hui Zhong notes the use of words such as grievance, pain, national disaster, and cultural tragedy within Chinese discourse around the loss of cultural heritage.[26]

National Treasures and Cultural Pluralism

A question has been raised by Ai Weiwei as to whether the zodiac heads commissioned from Castiglione by Qianlong can even be considered Chinese. In 2011 the artist unveiled his own set of bronzes, larger than the originals, imaginatively recreating the missing five, not least because of his interest in "dealing with the fake and the real, and the true value of the authentic".[27] *Circle of Animals* was first installed at New York's Pulitzer Fountain, at the south-east corner of Central Park, NY, whose acreage is roughly equivalent to the Yuanmingyuan during Qianlong's reign.[28] The artist then cast a smaller-scale edition in gilt-bronze which, like the first version, has been displayed at numerous venues in America and Europe. Ai had this to say about Castiglione and Benoist's water clock: "I don't think that's [a] national treasure, it's nothing to do with [a] national treasure; it was designed by an Italian, made by a French[man] for a Qing dynasty emperor, which actually is somebody who invaded China, so if we're talking about national treasure, which nation are we talking about?"[29] So one may ask what Ai's recreation and completion of the set, and his installing it as public art at different places in the West, tell us about national

[24] T. Branigan, *Jackie Chan Wades into Row over Looted Chinese Relics*, "The Guardian", 26 February 2009.

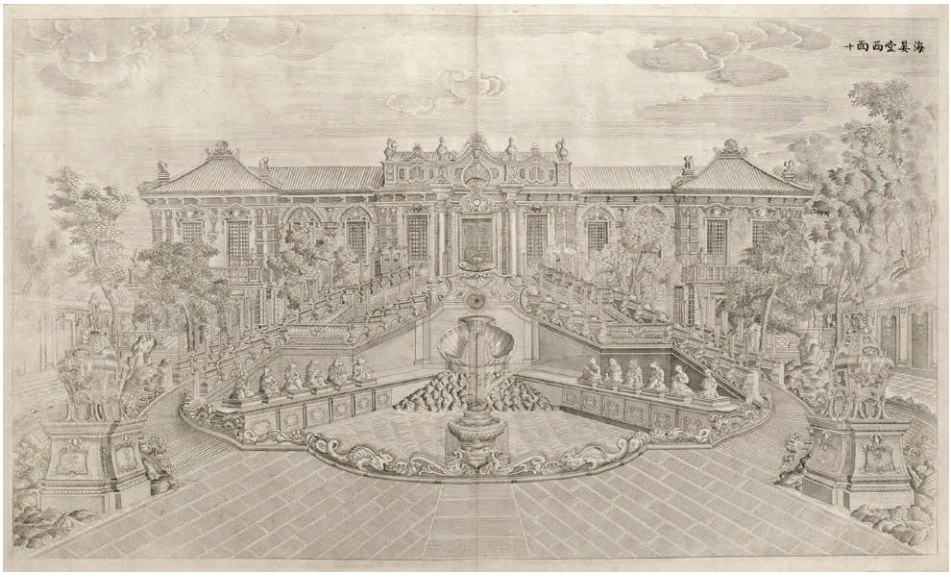
[25] Z. Liu, op. cit., p. 163.

[26] H. Zhong, op. cit., p. 23. I discuss cultural objects and vulnerability in *Heritage, Value and Vulnerability* (遗产, 价值与脆弱性), "Yichan" (遗产) 2019, Vol. 1(1), pp. 3-14.

[27] Zodiacheads.com/about_exhibition_bronze.html.

[28] The first completed set was sold at Phillips London in 2015 for £3.4 million. On the comparative size of Central Park and the Yuanmingyuan, see L. Tythacott, op. cit., p. 6.

[29] Zodiacheads.com/about_exhibition_bronze.html.



1. Yi Lantai, *West façade of the Haiyantang*, from *The Twenty Views of the European Palaces of the Yuanmingyuan*, ca. 1783-1786, copperplate engraving, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

2. Ruins of the Yuanmingyuan European Halls in 1976, photograph: the author

treasures? It was a response not to the Qianlong emperor as occupier, nor to Castiglione as foreigner, but rather to what he saw as an effort "to generate some sort of public opinion for propaganda purposes, to gain some kind of national pride or, at the same time, anger about what happened 100 years ago". To him, this project was "quite an ironic act".[30]

Despite its dominant Han majority, China has always been ethnically complex. Qianlong, unsurprisingly, defined China pluralistically to include non-Han peoples. As Zhao Gang puts it: "While asserting his right to the term China, [...] [Qianlong] refused to exclude non-Han peoples from its scope. By redefining China, the Manchu emperors not only legitimated their own rule but also opened the way for the Banner armies to conquer and incorporate a range of ethnically diverse peoples into the imperium".[31] As Manchus adopted Chinese practices and as China geographically embraced Manchuria, a formerly clear ethno-linguistic boundary became blurred, throwing the alien European invaders into sharper contrast. In the 21st century, Chinese citizens of Manchu descent comprise the nation's fifth largest ethnic group.

Let me conclude by returning to Castiglione. To commemorate the tercentenary of his arrival in the capital, the Palace Museum in Beijing lent a substantial body of his works to the Taibei Palace Museum for a major exhibition that included the magisterial handscroll *One Hundred Horses*, a national treasure in Taiwan, which the "Shanghai Daily" called "among the top 10 masterpieces of traditional Chinese painting".[32] These steeds may, *prima facie*, seem quite western, but in fact they represent a subtle reworking of Zhao Mengfu's *Bathing Horses* in the Palace Museum, Beijing – a splendid late 13th century "blue-green style" painting from the imperial collection, in which grooms and horses are an old trope for nurturing the empire's scholarly talent.

One can understand why Castiglione would have been encouraged by the Manchu emperor to engage with antiquities by Zhao Mengfu and his family. Not only was Zhao a descendant of the Song imperial family, a career civil servant, connoisseur, and one of the greatest painters and calligraphers in Chinese history, but he also had a particular resonance for Qianlong, having agreed to serve the Mongol invaders, in contrast to many of his literati peers.[33] There is a nice irony

[30] E. Wong, *Ai Weiwei's Animal Heads Offer Critique of Chinese Nationalism*, "The New York Times", 10 August 2016.

[31] Z. Gang, *Reinventing China: Imperial Qing Ideology and the Rise of Modern Chinese National Identity in the Early Twentieth Century*, "Modern China" 2006, Vol. 32(3), p. 12.

[32] *Portrayals from a Brush Divine*, National Palace Museum, Taibei, 6 October 2015 – 4 January 2016; P. Zhang, *One Hundred Horses*, "Shanghai Daily", 15 May 2016.

[33] See S. McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu: Calligraphy and Painting for Khubilai's China*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong 2011, pp. 179-183, and pp. 244-246 for Qianlong's response to Zhao's service at the Yuan court as an official in the Ministry of War and as director of the Hanlin Academy. *Five Horses* by Zhao Yong, Zhao Mengfu's second son, is designated a national treasure in Taiwan. Qianlong prided himself on his cal-

here in that, by the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368), the palette used for *Bathing Horses* had a highly-regarded archaic flavor associated with early Chinese painting. The opaque blue-green colours were, however, an introduction from Central Asia, which should remind us that material culture, and indeed culture in general, is rarely immune to outside influences.[34]

Although Castiglione/Lang Shining was indeed an Italian, as Ai Weiwei points out, and a faithful servant of the Jesuit Order, we should see him as more than both of those. Working under his Chinese name, he developed a unique approach that imaginatively reconciled the cunning of European illusionism and the materiality of Chinese painting, mastering and amalgamating two technically quite different practices. It is reassuring to me that he is viewed not as an oddity in the People's Republic and Taiwan, but as an extraordinarily accomplished artist. Successfully bridging cultures is also to be treasured.

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Hickley C., *Nigeria Plans Museum for Art Looted from Benin*, "The Art Newspaper", 22 October 2018.

ligraphic inscriptions which, together with his many large seals, he liberally applied to major works in the imperial collection, including *Bathing Horses*.

[34] The palette is especially associated with Li Sixun and Li Zhaodao, father and son, working during the late 7th-8th centuries.

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