

MEDIA RELEASE

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Visualizing a Culture for Strangers: Chinese Export Paintings of the 19th Century

October 24, 2014 to January 4, 2015

Founders Gallery
Barry Till, Asian Art Curator

Art Gallery of Greater Victoria
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Chinese Export Paintings Depict 19th Century China at AGGV

Beginning this month, you can see China through the eyes of a 19th century Westerner at an exhibition of nearly 100 Chinese export paintings. The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria is showcasing the paintings, the majority of which were from the collection of Sir James Brabazon Urmston, who worked in China for the British East India Company in the 1800s.

Visualizing a Culture for Strangers: Chinese Export Paintings of the 19th Century, opens October 24, 2014, and runs until January 4, 2015 in the AGGV's Founders Gallery.

"One of the paintings is among the Gallery's most important donations of 2013 because of its extreme rarity and its wonderful provenance," says Barry Till, the AGGV's Curator of Asian Art. The painting is of a Chinese Jewish trader or merchant, and dates to around 1820. "To the best of my knowledge, it is the earliest known painting of a Chinese Jewish individual," says Till.

Chinese export paintings were produced in trading ports for sale to Western customers and were imported to Europe and America in great quantities. They were how Westerners saw China.

A substantial number of the paintings were recently donated by the heirs of Sir James Brabazon Urms "It is an outstanding donation," says Till. "The paintings were given by Hugh Hamilton and his children of Vancouver, who inherited them from several family generations dating back to Sir Brabazon Urmston."

The pieces in the exhibition depict a range of life from urban and rural China through scenes of trade, production, agriculture, punishments and execution, festivals, religious activities, and portraits of royalty and the general population.

For more information, visit www.aggv.ca or call 250-384-4171.

Wednesday October 29, 2 p.m.

Curator's Tour with Barry Till | Chinese Export Painting

Curator of Asian Art Barry Till will give a behind the scenes tour of *Chinese Export Painting*, explaining the major themes, styles and art history of Chinese pith paintings produced for foreign markets during the 18th and 19th century.

Sunday November 23, 2-4 p.m.

Family Sunday | Chinese Export Painting

Try your hand at a variety of hands on projects inspired by *Chinese Export Painting* while absorbing art history with your little ones.

Thursday, November 27, 7 p.m.

**Community Café with Bruce Whyte: Tacky Tourist Trash or Meaningful Moment? : Art, Authenticity and Cultural Tourism
Chinese Export Painting**

The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria's exhibit *Visualizing a Culture for Strangers: Chinese Export Paintings* presents an opportunity for a discussion of the role of authenticity in art, and how that plays a role in the telling of a community's story through cultural tourism. How important is it for art to honestly reflect the reality of the host community? How important is it for artists in the host community to have the autonomy to control the kind of works they produce? Must we cater to the whims of the tourist trade, or are there other ways to 'visualize our culture for strangers'?

These are among the questions for a Community Cafe workshop, when Royal Roads University associate tourism professor Bruce Whyte will discuss work he's currently undertaking on these issues for his doctorate, and consider these questions through the lens of projects and initiatives in cultural tourism in BC he's been involved with over the past two decades as a tourism planner.

Participants in this Community Cafe should come prepared to learn a little about the ways art fits into the world of tourism, and to share a lot of their own thoughts and opinions on the important questions raised by the issues of art, authenticity and cultural tourism.

Bruce Whyte is an associate faculty member in the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management at Royal Roads University and is a Senior Tourism Development Officer, Tourism Branch, with the British Columbia Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training. A former newspaper journalist with more than 20 years' tourism development experience in government and as a consultant, Bruce is exploring tourism authenticity issues with Leeds Metropolitan University's Centre for Tourism and Cultural Change as a PhD candidate. Bruce instructs Sustainable Tourism and Tourism Product Development at Royal Roads University, and was editor/lead author for the Cultural and Heritage Tourism Development, Tourism Business Essentials guide, produced through Destination British Columbia, and the bilingual national publication, Culture & Heritage Tourism: A Guidebook for Community Champions, published by the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers of Culture and Heritage.