S-118 – Between Art and Knowledge: New Perspectives on Qing Scientific Drawings

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Abstract:
These new perspectives reconstruct the various forms and the formative progress of Qing scientific images/imagery shaped by the introduction of European medical/anatomical, botanical, and optical drawings, a sub-area of Renaissance knowledge that was situated at the intersection of art and science. The panel brings together scholars whose approaches draw from the fields of art history, cultural studies and history of science and explores the global dimension and forms of Qing scientific pictures. Based on De Fabrica, Tian S. Liang pays attention to the (mis)depiction of skin and body in the translated European anatomical books, and compares it with their representations in Chinese figure painting in the long eighteenth century, and considers how the body was scientifically assessed and artistically represented across paintings and printed images in early modern China. Lianming Wang addresses the pictorial dimension of Jesuit botany by focusing on Pierre Nicolas d’Incarville (1706-1757), a prominent figure at the Qing/imperial gardens who passionately engaged in the transmission of Sino-European knowledge on plants. Liu Lihong explores the forms of European optical knowledge and ways of seeing embodied within the Qing palace interior. Shifting the focus to the local, Ching-ling Wang discusses a newly discovered Guangdong album on fishes that was circulated among the elites in port cities and examines the artistic interaction between the early modern court and the frontier.

Keywords: Global – Natural Science – Europe – China Early – Modern Period.

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