Press Release

Imagining Qianlong: Louis XV’s Chinese Emperor Tapestries and Battle Scene Prints at the Imperial Court in Beijing
--- Chinese and French Imperial Collections exhibited at UMAG

March 14, 2017

The University Museum and Art Gallery (UMAG) of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) will present Imagining Qianlong: Louis XV’s Chinese Emperor Tapestries and Battle Scene Prints at the Imperial Court in Beijing from March 15 to May 28, 2017.

This unprecedented exhibition highlights four of the magnificent chinoiserie tapestries of Chinese Emperor Qianlong, woven after designs by François Boucher at the famous Beauvais manufactory from 1758–1760. The large and well-preserved textiles form part of the royal French commission by King Louis XV, part of which was presented to Qianlong in 1766. These celebrated tapestries are joined by another historic set of culturally related depictions in print. Conquests of the Qianlong Emperor were ordered by Qianlong and drawn by Jesuit painters at the Imperial Court in Beijing, and then printed in Paris 1769–1774. The ‘culture’ of these prints follows King Louis XIV’s influential images of the Histoire du Roi and presents Qianlong as both a war hero and the undisputed leader of China in the mid-eighteenth century.

An opening ceremony of the exhibition was held at UMAG today (March 14, 2017). Officiating guests included Chairman of the Board of Le French May Dr Andrew S. Yuen; Chief Executive Officer of Le French May Mr Julien-Loïc Garin; Patron of the HKU Museum Society Dr Christina Mathieson and Director of UMAG Dr Florian Knothe.

These depictions date to the exact same time period, one that coincides with the high demand for chinoiserie in France—culminating in the world-famous designs by Boucher—and the Imperial Court of China’s interest in French design and culture. Despite their world-renowned fame, these groups of images previously have not been shown together.

Imagining Qianlong presents one of the rare topics to celebrate the court cultures in both France and China, at a time when the empires idolised each other and cultural influences and exchanges were highly significant and supported by well-established and prosperous monarchs during an increasingly enlightened eighteenth century.

In order to highlight the cross-cultural aspects of this project, Professor Pascal Bertrand from Université Bordeaux Montaigne, Professor Nicholas Pearce from the University of Glasgow and Professor Kristel Smentek from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, were specially invited by the organisers to contribute essays to a scholarly publication detailing the sociocultural history of the tapestries and prints. Each scholar is an expert in their fields and well-versed lecturers on Chinese art in France and on French and European Jesuit culture in China.
Details of the Exhibition

Period: March 15, 2017 (Wednesday) to May 28 2017 (Sunday)

Opening Hours:
09:30 – 18:00 (Monday to Saturday)
13:00 – 18:00 (Sunday)
Closed on University and Public Holidays

Venue: 1/F, T.T. Tsui Building, UMAG, 90 Bonham Road, Pokfulam

Tel/Email: (852) 2241 5500 (General Enquiry) / museum@hku.hk

Admission: Free

Website: http://www.umag.hku.hk/en/

Connect with UMAG on social media:
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/umag.hku
Twitter: https://twitter.com/UMAG_HKU
Instagram: #Qianlong, #Tapestries, #BattleScenePrints
Weibo: @香港大學美術博物館 UMAG

About University Museum and Art Gallery of the University of Hong Kong (UMAG)
UMAG was founded in 1953 as the Fung Ping Shan Museum. It was originally established as the Fung Ping Shan Library in 1932 in honour of its benefactor. For more information on UMAG, please click here.

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