


SPECIAL ARTICLE

Harbour of Confluence: Macao Trade Paintings and East–West Exchange

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores Macao Trade Paintings as a new artistic category within global art history, a new topic under Macaology. It firstly outlines the historical background and research lineage of the emergence of China Trade Paintings. Secondly, it defines its concept and proposes three research hypotheses. Evidence for the research hypotheses is collected through micro and macro case studies. That is, the differences of Macao Trade Paintings regarding China Trade Paintings are analysed through artistic aspects, content, historical, economic, and sociological perspectives, thereby emphasising the uniqueness of Macao Trade Paintings. Comparisons of the paintings reveal how Macao Trade Paintings map out Macao's pictorial image and purpose of creation; and through the analysis of the representative painters and their works, content, style, and taste, it is elaborated that Macao Trade Paintings are a unique artistic and cultural product of the exchange between Chinese and Western cultures, and therefore should not be categorised as China Trade Paintings. These transcultural painted artworks reflect a unique phase of a 'glocalization' process.

1 | Introduction

With the advent of the Age of Sail, trade and cultural exchange between China and the West grew substantially. Chinese porcelain, silk, lacquerware, and, to a lesser extent, paintings met burgeoning European and American demand for artistic and luxury goods, facilitating large-scale commission and export. These commodities played a crucial role in documenting China's foreign trade and its resulting social and cultural transformations, significantly influencing Sino-Western cultural exchange.

The European quest for Chinese rarities or *rarity*, commonly referred to as *sinica*, coupled with the lucrative profits they generated, prompted the Portuguese to initiate a half-century-long

smuggling trade after they arrived on the South China Coast in the early 16th century. Nevertheless, it was not until 1557 that the Ming government (r. 1368–1644) permitted the Portuguese to engage in direct trade with China in Macao ("Letter from Susa to Prince Louis, 1556", in Zhang 1981, 249).

The implementation of this policy marked the opening of the port of Macao to European trade, thereby establishing the foundation for cultural exchange between East and West. After 1567, trade between China and Europe entered its heyday, and the importance of Macao as a trading port became more prominent. Owing to its strategic geographical location and trade significance, Macao emerged as a crucial bridge between China and the West (Zhang 1981, 131).

However, the phenomenon of Macao Trade Paintings did not emerge until two centuries later, following the arrival and establishment of a small but significant community of Western merchants, including the British, Dutch, French, and later the Americans.¹ This elite group of foreign Westerners was the main actor in the China Trade under the Canton Trade System, it is generally understood.

Under the designation of Canton Trade System, it is generally defined as the restrictive policy followed by the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912) and limiting all foreign trade in China to the Port of Canton between 1757 and 1842. Foreign merchants were compelled to work and live in a segregated area, the 13 Factories (*hongs*). Only foreign males were allowed to enter Canton during this period. Rather than travelling back to Europe or the USA, many merchants preferred to spend the off season in nearby Macao, where they could often join the company of their families in a friendly environment (on the economic, historical, and sociological aspects of the Canton Trade System, see, in particular, Van Dyke 2007, 2011 and Van Dyke 2016).

This paper identifies Macao Trade Paintings as the central theme of research, positioning it within the broader field of Macaology. It provides a systematic compilation and summary of Macao Trade Paintings, as an independent art category, to correct the literature's long-standing fallacy of considering them together as China Trade Paintings, and to critically examine their own position and role both in comparison to China Trade Paintings, and as a global art object, a crucial area of focus in the art historiography (Kaufmann et al. 2015). At the same time, it explores how these paintings have undergone a transformation from a mimetic fringe art producer to an exporter based on innovative local archetypes and themes, facilitating a broader understanding of their appeal.

In this regard, this introduction constitutes the first section. The second conceptualises Macao Trade Paintings and examines their historical and artistic development, formulating hypotheses based on their distinct categories. The third section gathers evidence to validate these hypotheses. The fourth presents the validation results, leading to the paper's conclusion. Two tables summarise information on painters associated with Macao Trade Paintings mentioned throughout the paper and the differences between Macao Trade Paintings and China Trade Paintings, respectively.

2 | History of the Development of Macao Trade Paintings and Research Hypotheses and Methodology

2.1 | Development History of Macao Trade Paintings

Macao Trade Paintings constitute a small array of circa 300 paintings dated to a short period of time between the end of the 18th century and the mid-19th century. In addition to oil on canvas portraits, watercolours, gouache, and to a lesser extent glass reverse paintings, the Chinese rice on paper paintings depict Macao's urban and architectural specificities, seaports, harbour views, rural landscapes, different religious rituals, and

the everyday life of its multi-ethnic population. In addition to the 'depicted souvenirs' created by Chinese painters and craftsmen, paintings, sketches, etchings, and drawings produced by Western residents, visitors, and artists working at home using prototypes taken from China and book illustrations by travellers as prototypes provided unique opportunities for the development of this genre of painting (Table 1).

These paintings are not mere artistic representations. They symbolize a pivotal moment in history where global trade, cultural exchange, and artistic expression intersected. In Chinese history, the coastal city of Macao was an important port of entry for the Qing government. The opening of this port and the establishment of the first Catholic missionaries enhanced the cultural and artistic exchanges between the East and the West, leading to the rise of a phenomenon known as 'China Fever' in Europe, which significantly influenced Western thought and culture.

This wave of interest prompted Westerners with artistic skills, primarily sent by Catholic orders, to journey eastward. In 1579, the Italian Jesuit Michele Ruggieri (1543–1607) introduced religious oil imagery to Macao. In 1614, another Italian Jesuit, Giovanni Cola (1560–1626), the founder of the Western academy of painting in Japan, along with some of his pupils, fled persecution in Japan, relocating to Macao, where they continued their artistic endeavours (Osswald 2020).

Nonetheless, the origin and flourishing of Macao Trade Paintings occurred two centuries later and are closely linked to the historical context in which foreign, specifically Western, merchants were required to leave Canton and prohibited from re-entering the city after their seasonal trading activities (Van Dyke 2016). It was the interaction and exchange of local and imported ideas and cultures prompted by foreigners visiting and staying that led to the birth of this painting typology as an artistic product of a 'contact zone', situated on the 'margins of China and Chineseness but within China' (Pratt 2003; and Shie 2007).

(Figure 1)² Since the 16th century, large-scale oil portraits on canvas had become a popular art form in Europe, symbolizing wealth and status. However, the first known commission of a secular oil portrait in Macao dates only to 1791. According to his logbook, British Captain John McCluer (c. 1759–1795) hired the Chinese itinerant painter Guan Zuolin (known as Spoilum, active 1770–1805) to paint portraits of his three companions from the Palau Islands during their brief stay in Macao in May 1790. McCluer also noted that several Western residents in Macao later commissioned copies of the portrait (British Library, Add. Ms. 19 301).

Western artists in late 18th century Macao also began producing watercolours depicting the city's harbours and rural landscapes, which grew into a major genre. As the only place in China where foreign expatriates and their families could reside—and a growing international tourist destination—Macao attracted strong Western interest in its scenery, social life, and human landscapes (Vidal 2016).

The English painter and draughtsman George Chinnery (1774–1852) undoubtedly had a profound influence on the artistic

TABLE 1 | List of artists.

Artist identification	Nationality	Place of residence	Material supports	Subjects	Additional information
Thomas Daniell (1749–1840)	English	Travelling artist between 1785 and 1785/86	Oil on canvas	Landscape and marine paintings	Thomas and his nephew William felt a special attraction for <i>tanka</i> boats
William Daniell (1769–1837)	English	Travelling artist between 1785 and 1785/86	Watercolour on paper	Landscape and marine paintings	
Guan Zuolin, known as Spoilum among the Westerners (act. 1770–1805)	Chinese	Canton	Oil on canvas and reverse paintings on glass	Portraits and port views	First Chinese painter of oil on canvas portraits depicting foreign seamen and merchants
George Chinnery (1774–1852)	English	Macao after 1825	Watercolour on paper, oil on canvas, and gouache	Large portraits of Western members of the local elite, life of the Chinese community, landscape paintings	Introduced the flamboyant picturesque style to Macao and South China
Robert Burford (1791/1792–1861)	English	London	Oil on canvas	Cities' panoramas	Visual glorification of the English Empire
Auguste Borget (1808–1877)	French	Stayed in Macao between 1838 and 1839	Watercolour on paper	A-Ma Temple and <i>tankas</i>	Influence of Chinnery
Eduard Hildebrandt (1818–1868)	German	Travelling artist in the 1860s	Watercolour on paper and oil on canvas	Landscape paintings	Especially attracted by A- Ma Temple
Guan Qiaochang (Lam Qua), (active 1820–1855)	Chinese	Mainly in Canton, but had a studio in Macao	Oil on canvas	Outstanding portraitist	Chinnery's most famous Chinese student
Francisco Augusto Metrass (1825–1861)	Portuguese	Portugal	Oil on canvas	History painter	Romantic painter with a focus on dramatic events and exploring the sense of nostalgia
Marciano António Baptista (1826–1896)	Portuguese born in Macao	Macao until he moved to Hong Kong before 1857	Watercolour on paper	Street scenes, landscape and port views paintings of Macao and later of Hong Kong and of the new ports open to foreign merchants	Chinnery's influence
Sunqua (active 1830–1870)	Chinese	Mainly in Canton, but had a studio in Macao	Oil on canvas	Port views and landscapes	Reputed trade painter



FIGURE 1 | Guan Zuolin (Spoilum), Palau, oil on canvas, 1791, British Museum, Oc2006, London. Credits: The Trustees of the British Museum. Available at: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/de/Portrait_of_three_Micronesians_-_Kokuaki_and_his_sisters.jpg (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

landscape of Macao and beyond. Cicero, the anonymous author of journal entry “The Chinese Painter”, compared Chinnery to “Sir Thomas Lawrence of China”, the English leading portrait painter of the 19th century (Cicero 1835).

(Figure 2) Chinnery earned his living mainly by creating large oil portraits. His expertise in this medium aligned well with the demands of Macao’s affluent foreign merchants, who sought expensive portraits of themselves and their families for posterity. For instance, Harriet Low Hillard (1809–1877), daughter of the American merchant William H. Low (1795–1834), lived in Macao between 1829 and 1834. She was an amateur painter who took lessons from Chinnery and had her portrait painted by him (Hillard 2002, I, p. 134).

(Figures 3 and 4) The life of the Macao Chinese community epitomizes Chinnery’s art in his street scenes, depicting them eating, working, and gambling. Indeed, his popularity was also much due to his prolific output and careful study of the everyday life of the local Chinese community.

Therefore, the policy restrictions imposed by the Qing government on Canton provided Western artists with the



FIGURE 2 | George Chinnery, Portrait of Harriet Low Hillard, oil on canvas, 1833, The Peabody Essex Museum—Salem, Massachusetts. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harriet_Low#/media/File:Harriet_Low_by_George_Chinnery,_India_and_China,_1833,_oil_on_canvas_-_Peabody_Essex_Museum_-_DSC07304.jpg (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



FIGURE 3 | George Chinnery, Chinese street scene at Macao, oil on canvas, 1825–1852, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:George_Chinnery_\(1774-1852\),_Street_scene_,_Macao_,_with_pigs._Oil_on_canvas,_20.6_x_24.4_cm_Victoria_and_Albert_Museum,_London.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:George_Chinnery_(1774-1852),_Street_scene_,_Macao_,_with_pigs._Oil_on_canvas,_20.6_x_24.4_cm_Victoria_and_Albert_Museum,_London.jpg) (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

opportunity to gain a closer understanding of Chinese culture, the lives of the Chinese people, and traditional customs in Macao, thereby enhancing Western knowledge of Chinese culture (Conner 1993, 203).



FIGURE 4 | George Chinnery, Macau street scene with Saint Dominic Church, watercolour on paper, 1840–1845. Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Macao_Street_Scene.jpg (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.com)]

(Figure 5) Chinnery introduced his interpretation of the English Picturesque Style, often referred to as ‘Flamboyant’—marked by an emphasis on rural landscapes, dynamic lines, multi-angular compositions, vivid colour, and stark contrast, all evident in his most famous self-portrait. His innovative approach set a new standard for trade paintings and artists.

(Figure 6) In doing so, he influenced a new generation of painters, including both amateur Western artists and professional Chinese painters and workshops, who integrated this English style with local subject matter. For example, the characteristic façades viewed from angles and the clouds spread irregularly in the watercolours by the Macao-born and professional painter Marciano António Baptista (1826–1890) evoke the Picturesque Style exemplified by his master, George Chinnery (George Chinnery 1985; and Conner 1990).

(Figure 7) Guan Qiaochang, better known as Lam Qua (1801–1860), was a professional Chinese painter whose workshop was regarded by Western visitors as a model for art studios in Southern China (Lavollée 1852, p 134). He was an expert painter in creating sensitive and richly coloured oil portraits, maintaining precise lines and attention to detail characteristic of Chinese tradition.

Lam Qua and Sunqua (active 1830–1870) were maybe not the only two artists who ran a workshop both in Canton and in Macao (Itier 1848–1853; Griffin and Drummey 1988). As all



FIGURE 5 | George Chinnery, George Chinnery, oil on canvas, c. 1840. National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG779. Available at: (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.com)]

foreigners, Western artists were prohibited from settling permanently in Canton. As a result, many large-scale, time-consuming oil portraits of merchants involved in the South China trade and their families were likely produced in Macao, where Westerners resided during the off-season.

Following the defeat in the First Opium War in 1842, the Qing government was compelled to open new ports—Hong Kong, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai—to Western merchants. This led to the economic stagnation of Canton and Macao, with a decrease in the number of foreigners living in Macao. In the footprints of their patrons, artists such as Lam Qua and Marciano Baptista also relocated to Hong Kong (‘Anúncios’, 5 November Anúncios 1857). By the mid-1850s, Hong Kong and Shanghai gradually replaced Canton and Macao as the bridgeheads between East and West and the hub of global trade, so that both Canton’s and Macao’s trade and painting industry began to decline.

2.2 | Research Hypotheses

2.2.1 | Macao Trade Categories Are a Special Category Distinguished From China Trade Paintings

Due to the various restrictions imposed by the Qing government on foreign merchants, Canton and Macao were attributed distinct roles under the Canton Trade System. This made the



FIGURE 6 | Marciano António Baptista, the Fortress of S. Tiago da Macao, Macao, watercolour on paper over pencil sketch, c. 1875–1880. The Macao Museum of Art. A-PW1998-000137. Credits: Macao Cultural Institute. (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]



FIGURE 7 | Lam Qua, The Hong Merchant Mouqua, oil on canvas, c. 1840. Peabody Essex Museum, M20450. Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mouqua_by_Lam_Qua.jpg (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

social, human, and urban landscape of Macao significantly different from that of Canton, and the artistic aspects, the content, and the style of the paintings also differ. Therefore, this paper proposes the hypothesis: Macao Trade Paintings are a category of paintings different from China Trade Paintings that illustrate mainly Canton but also the ports of Whampoa and Ningbo, where Westerners conducted trade under the Canton Trade System (Table 2).

As the Qianlong Emperor (1711–1799, r. 1736–1799) prohibited foreigners from staying in Canton outside the official trading season (January to August) and confined them to the 13 Factories district, paintings from Canton are limited in subject matter (Mo 2013). In contrast, Macao's patrons—often long-term residents—frequently commissioned idealised visions of an Oriental paradise, reflecting their deep integration into local culture. This preference for exoticism, combined with Macao's multi-ethnic and multi-religious population, produced a social, urban, and architectural landscape far more diverse than that of Canton.

2.2.2 | Macao Trade Paintings Reflect the Portuguese Long Presence and Rule

(Figures 4, 6, 8, and 9) This paper posits that the iconography of Macao Trade Paintings strongly differs from the iconography of China Trade Paintings, primarily due to the Portuguese presence and rule of Macao. This distinction is evident in the representation of military and Catholic architecture and national symbols; in particular, the Camões Grotto.

TABLE 2 | Differences between macao trade paintings and China trade paintings.

Comparison			Historical, economical and sociological framework	
	Artists	Artistic aspects	Content	
Macao Trade Paintings	Mainly individual creation by Western and Chinese painters, in particular, George Chinnery and his Sino-Western 'school'; Western travelling artists and artists living in the West	Predominant use of Western materials (oil on canvas, watercolours and gouache), techniques and style	The multi-ethnic and multi-cultural population of Macao, their everyday and religious rituals and leisure habits; architectural and urban framework determined by the 200years old Portuguese presence and rule; natural beauty of Macao; the Chinese community in their everyday	The long Portuguese presence and rule; the stable presence of a foreign rich community of mainly merchants and their families due to the Canton Trade System; the emergence of the Macao tourism vocation
China Trade Paintings	Centred on Chinese painters and the Canton well established and hierarchically organised workshops	Integrate Western materials and techniques, but retain more the traditional Chinese elements, such as the material supports of silk, rice on paper and porcelain; keeps the conventional stylistic Chinese characteristics of frontal perspective; a tendency for detail, flatness, frontal views, and delicacy in the illustration of the subjects depicted	A limited subject matter consisting in repetitive port views and related trade dynamics, the production and sale of commodities for the Western markets (workshops of silk, porcelain); and the architecture and urbanism of the 13 Factories	The Canton Trade System and its seasonal functioning centred geographically on the 13 Factories' area



FIGURE 8 | George Chinnery, The Praya Grande, Macao, from the south, with St Peter's Fort to the left, watercolour on paper, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. Available at: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2a/George_Chinnery_-_The_Praya_Grande%2C_Macao%2C_from_the_south%2C_with_St_Peter%27s_Fort_to_the_left_-_1953P104_-_Birmingham_Museums_Trust.jpg (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]



FIGURE 9 | Francisco Augusto Metrass, Camões at the grotto in Macao, oil on canvas, 1853. Chiado Museum, Lisbon. Available at: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Metrass-Camões-Cave.jpg> (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

2.2.3 | Macao Trade Painting Are a Transcultural 'Glocalization' Artistic Phenomenon

The emergence of trade painting in Macao occurred over a brief period, from the late 18th to the mid-19th centuries. As a crucial hub of trade under the Canton Trade System, Macao attracted numerous Western residents and tourists, whose interest in local Chinese culture and lifestyle stimulated the creation of these transcultural artistic objects. From the beginning, most paintings were taken abroad by Westerners returning home.

On the one hand, the localization of Western painting materials and techniques by Chinese artists and workshops led to the creation of new painting styles and creative concepts (see, for example, the emphasis on three-dimensionality and spatial depth, while nevertheless maintaining the Chinese taste for detail). On the other hand, European and American painters and artists who never visited Macao were drawn to its exoticism. They depicted it, using models and prototypes created by traveling artists and their Chinese counterparts, ultimately resulting in the creation of a global art object. This understudied phenomenon is exemplified by the London-based panorama painter Robert Burford (1781–1861).

Therefore, this paper proposes a third hypothesis: Macao Trade Paintings should be interpreted as a transcultural art object that emerged from a unique process of 'glocalization'.

2.3 | Research Methodology

A considerable body of literature addresses the broader subject of this paper. In 1924, James Orange's catalogue of the Chater collection established categories—such as harbour views and ship portraits—that remain influential among scholars (Orange 1924). In 1972, Carl L. Crossman established the term China Trade Paintings within the broader category of China Trade Art. He also refined Orange's chronological framework for these paintings (Crossman 1972).

Current authors, following Orange and Crossman, treat paintings of Macao as merely “derivative” of Canton productions, framing both as products meant to satisfy Western collectors' interest in “Chinese objects.” This perspective overlooks key distinctions: while Canton's paintings largely catered to short-term merchants seeking exotic souvenirs with repetitive themes, Macao's works—shaped by the long-term residence of both artists and patrons—focused more on representing the local multicultural society.

Existing categorizations tend to emphasize superficial similarities in imagery while neglecting Macao's unique artistic and socio-cultural context. For instance, Maria Kar-wing Mok (2014) juxtaposes Macao's Praia Grande with the 13 Factories scenes but does not consider symbols of Portuguese colonial governance—such as the Portuguese Pavilion or Catholic churches—or elements reflecting Macao's emergence as an international tourism hub, thereby implicitly reinforcing the homogeneity of the two regions' paintings. Furthermore, she overlooks the technical, artistic, and stylistic specificities.

The study of the role of Macao Trade Paintings as a globalization phenomenon is at its beginning. The impact of these paintings and of the stream of illustrated travel reports in Western art and in relation to East West broader framework remains practically *terra incognita*. It remains bound to Chinnery's local circle (George Chinnery 1985). Therefore, the positioning of Burford's panorama of Macao as an ideological tool of the British within the geopolitical framework of the Opium Wars and the British presence in China constitutes a challenging starting point to globalize historiography (Puga 2023b).

Major auction houses such as Christie's, Sotheby's, and Bonhams regularly put Macao Trade Paintings up for sale, providing a valuable body of visual sources for this study. Following the hand-over of Macao to China, a consistent program of exhibitions, monographs, and special editions of the *Review of Culture*—a trilingual journal published in Chinese, Portuguese, and English—has been dedicated to the unique historic and artistic legacy of Macao. Additionally, notable bibliographies on star artists are worth mentioning. A search of the online catalogue of Macao public libraries yielded 66 items related to George Chinnery alone. The lives and careers of Marciano António Baptista and August Borget are also quite well known (馬西安諾 1990; 浮光掠影 2016). Rogério Miguel Puga published, in 2023, a commented inventory of artworks depicting Macao at the Peabody Essex Museum, representing the first comprehensive work on a public collection of such artworks (Puga 2023a).

The integrated analysis of visual and written reports is limited to a few brief and fragmentary papers. César Guillén-Nuñez briefly

discussed 19th century literature and painting in a short book chapter (Guillén-Nuñez 1987). Kimberly Sayre Alexander analysed Macao's international architecture, based on detailed descriptions of domestic, public, and religious structures provided by Rebecca Kinsman, a resident of the city from 1843 to 1847 (Alexander 2014). Puga authored a short paper on Chinnery's paintings and the final period of Harriet Low's life in Macao (Puga 1999).

Indeed, travelling artists, such as the American landscape painters William Daniell (1769–1837) and his nephew Thomas Daniell (1749–1840), and Auguste Borget (1808–1877; he stayed for an uncommonly long period of 9 months in South China, primarily in Macao, between 1838 and 1839), published highly illustrated reports of their trips (Daniell and Daniell 1810; and Borget 1845). The *Chinese Repository* had a column on painting. Frederic Vidal based his study on the emergence of the tourism vocation of Macao by the mid-19th century on information gathered mainly in the *Canton Register* (Vidal 2016).

Paul Van Dyke's work *The Canton Trade System* is a major resource for the study of related subjects. It highlights the importance of the *Chinese Commercial Guide*, which was designed to inform and assist Western merchants in South China, serving as a primary source of information on the prices and production dynamics of trade goods. For example, between 1844 and 1848, ~100 rice paper paintings cost \$5, which was equivalent to the price of a large oil painting (Morrison 1848, p 167 and p 177, 1848 p 168).

To fill gaps in historiography, contemporaneous exhibition and sales catalogues were also examined. The 1844 catalogue of the largest Chinese Collection, which was assembled by the American merchant Nathan Dunn (1782–1844), refers to a curious and probably unique painting of a trial accusing a French crew of piracy in Macao (Langdon 1844, 83, cat. 910; and 94; 1064–1067).

(Figures 10 and 11) A letter of February 24, 1829, from Protestant missionary Dr. Robert Morrison (1782–1834) notes that Chinnery had completed an oil portrait showing him with his two Chinese assistants translating the Bible (馬禮遜回憶錄 2008, 424–425). Harriet Low, a frequent visitor to Chinnery's studio, observed work on notable commissions, such as the portrait of Dr. Thomas Richardson Colledge (1797–1879) and his assistant Afun in their ophthalmic hospital from 1833. Such private records serve as reliable sources for dating paintings, especially when the originals are no longer extant.

3 | A Comparative Study of China Trade Paintings and Macao Trade Paintings

3.1 | Artistic Aspects

China Trade Paintings had strong commodity attributes. Westerners found these depictions of Chinese customs novel and valuable, and bought them in large quantities, at times, for later sale. For example, the Dutch-American merchant and collector Andres van Braam Houckgeest (1739–1801) acquired over 1800 paintings in Canton upon his return to China in 1795, later



FIGURE 10 | George Chinnery, Rev. Morrison translating the Bible in Chinese, oil on canvas, after 1829 (copy). Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Morrison_translating_the_Bible.png (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



FIGURE 11 | Dr. Thomas Richardson Colledge and his assistant Afun in their Ophthalmic Hospital, Macao, 1833. Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dr._Thomas_Colledge_with_Patients.jpg (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

auctioning his collection at the recently established Christie's in 1799 (Haddad 2008, 30).

As a result, more than 10,000 China Trade Paintings survive today. This scale of output reflects the historic capacity of Canton workshops to produce paintings as inexpensive commodities rather than purely artistic creations. Recognising the market opportunity, skilled Chinese painters established studios, hired craftsmen and apprentices, and fulfilled large-scale orders tailored to the demands of predominantly Western clients (Ding 1982; Chen 2013).

Commercial records indicate that during the peak of the Canton Trade System, over 30 shops—employing more than 2000 painters and artisans—produced mainly low-cost watercolours and rice paper paintings (Morrison 1848, p 167). These operations efficiently met the demand among long-term and, especially, short-term visitors in South China for cheap, accurate, and contemporary souvenirs of their Asian travels.

Western clients frequently commissioned Lam Qua with the expectation of reselling the works for profit upon returning home. Lam Qua demonstrated sharp business acumen. He charged half of Chinnery's rates for oil portraits. In 1840 and 1841, the British trading company Jardine Matheson bought paintings from Lam Qua for between \$34 and \$60 each, while paying George Chinnery between \$150 and \$250 per painting (Dobkin 2013, p 12).

Thus, Chinese artists and workshops prioritized economic gain, emphasizing elements of “Chineseness” to appeal to audiences eager for exoticism and facilitate mass production and sales. The fundamental purpose they pursued was not artistic but commercial profit, and the commercial attributes of the trade paintings far outweighed their artistic value (Zhao 2014).

Marciano Baptista was especially reputed for his watercolour landscapes, port views, and street scenes. He and Chinnery were the only two Western professional painters living permanently in South China before the founding of Hong Kong in 1842. However, in addition to Chinese professional painters, amateur Western artists living in Macao and beyond, and Western professional and amateur travelling artists filled the gap, providing a rich source of material and inspiration for the creation of Macao Trade Paintings. The predominance of Western materials and techniques and styles in Macao Trade Paintings refers to the relevant role played by Western artists in their production.

(Figures 12 and 13) The Chinese conventional frontal perspective would be considered a composition and space error from a Western viewpoint. China Trade Paintings are characterised by the Chinese tendency for detail, flatness, frontal views, and the capacity to depict subjects with delicacy, without the Western spontaneity of brushstroke and subtle tonal nuances (Mok 2014, 25–26). (Figure 14) Being primarily conceived as commodities, inexpensive materials such as silk, rice paper, and porcelain were favoured. The extensive involvement of Chinese artists and craftsmen is also evident in the techniques and stylistic features of their works.

In contrast to China Trade Paintings, Macao Trade Paintings constitute a small production of around 300 works, primarily in oil on canvas, watercolours on paper, and gouache. Technically, they rely heavily on Western materials and stylistically on perspective-based methods that emphasise three-dimensionality and spatial depth. (Figure 15) Unlike the flat, decorative style characteristic of China Trade Paintings—which is grounded in traditional Chinese aesthetics—Macao Trade Paintings frequently represent scenes from multiple viewpoints.



FIGURE 12 | Canton workshops, *View of the foreign factories at Canton*. Oil paint, watercolour, gouache, glass, enamel Asia, c. 1805. Available at: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c6/Canton_factories.jpg (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



FIGURE 13 | Canton workshop, *View of Guangzhou, China*, ivory, paint, gold, 1750–1800. Peabody Essex Museum—DSC07371.jpg Available at: https://pt.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:View_of_Guangzhou,_China,_1750-1800,_ivory,_paint,_gold_-_Peabody_Essex_Museum_-_DSC07371.jpg (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



FIGURE 14 | Sunqua, a painting on silk paper, Adilnor Collection, Sweden. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunqua#/media/File:Pith_painting_by_Sunqua.jpg (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]



FIGURE 15 | Marciano António Baptista, Street scene of a picnic in Macao, watercolour on paper. Credits to Macao Cultural Institute. (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

3.2 | Canton and Macao: A Complementary, Yet Different Role

(Figure 16a–c) Canton workshops are recognized for their popular sets of watercolours, including depictions of key stops along the West–East trade route. Mention should also be made of

shared iconographic elements, suggesting these works may have been created by the same artist or workshop.

(Figures 17 and 18) Balustrades and colonnades characterized the architecture of thirteen factories and of the houses surrounding Praia Grande Bay. The harbour views of Canton



FIGURE 16 | (a–c) Anonymus, Three views of the Pearl River: Canton, Macao, and Whampoa, oil on paper, c. 1780, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, SK-C-1722. Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:View_of_Canton_Roadstead_Chinese_School_Rijksmuseum_Amsterdam_SK-C-1724.jpg; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:View_on_Macau_Chinese_School_Rijksmuseum_Amsterdam_SK-C-1722.jpg, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:View_of_Whampoa_Roadstead_Chinese_School_Rijksmuseum_Amsterdam_SK-C-1723.jpg (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

and Macao show ships and vessels adorned with flags from various countries engaged in trade with China, capturing the intense atmosphere of maritime commerce during that period.

The iconographic, artistic, and stylistic distinctiveness of Macao Trade Paintings stemmed from the motivations of their patrons, the backgrounds of the artists, and the specific socio-economic and historical setting, in addition to the appeal of exoticism felt by residents, which was often based in their own life experience. (Figure 19) In contrast, China Trade Paintings are deeply rooted in Canton, reflecting the local aspects of and the Sino-Western commercial relations. Their subject matter focuses on port scenes, including detailed and vivid depictions of the production and trade of Chinese commodities like tea, porcelain, and silk—themes (Ding 1982).

(Figure 20) China Trade Paintings employ a realistic and detailed painting style that vividly captures moments of Sino-foreign trade and cultural exchange during the Qing Dynasty. In a close-view oil painting of Canton's Foreign Factories c. 1807, two Western figures are likely shown observing the lively scene below from a factory window.

Set in the 13 Factories merchant district, it faithfully reconstructs a specific historical setting. Western architectural

features—such as arches and cloisters—blend with the attire and ceremonial objects of Chinese officials and common people, illustrating the collision and integration of Chinese and Western cultures under Canton's “single port trade” system. Interactions in front of the factories, whether negotiating trade or observing rituals, reflect daily patterns of economic and cultural exchange centered around the 13 Factories as a trading hub. The painting serves as visual testimony to the prosperity brought by East–West trade to Canton in the Qing era.

(Figures 16b and 21) As an important trading port, second in rank after Canton, Macao's commercial activities were extremely active, and its busy harbours, the Praia Grande and the Porto Exterior, were depicted together. This reflects the state of urban development and the economic prosperity of Macao during the 18th and 19th centuries.

3.3 | Macao Trade Paintings—A Reflection on Macao Multicultural Society and Its Natural Beauty

Since the mid-16th century, Macao developed as a Portuguese settlement, explaining the frequent depiction of landmarks like the Jesuit College of Saint Paul, the Church of the Mother of God,



FIGURE 17 | Sunqua, The port of Canton, oil on canvas, c. 1830. Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Port_of_Canton.jpg (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]



FIGURE 18 | Unknown painter, Praia Grande, Macao, oil on canvas, c. 1860. Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Macao,_Praya_Grande,_circa_1860.jpg (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]



FIGURE 19 | Unknown Chinese Artist, Tea production in China, Canton, detail, oil on canvas, c. 1800. Peabody Essex Museum—Salem, MA. Available at: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/51/Tea_production_in_China%2C_Guangzhou%2C_detail%2C_c._1800_AD%2C_oil_on_canvas_-_Peabody_Essex_Museum_-_Salem%2C_MA_-_DSC05280.jpg (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]



FIGURE 20 | Chinese painter, Close view of the 13 Factories, oil on canvas, c. 1807, Hong Kong Museum of History, Hong Kong. Available at: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2a/A_close_view_of_the_Foreign_Factories_in_Guangzhou%2C_circa_1807%2C_artist_unknown_-_Hong_Kong_Museum_of_History_-_An (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]



FIGURE 21 | Unknown painter, Central Macao from Penha Hill, oil on canvas, late 18th century, Hong Kong Museum of History, Hong Kong. Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:View_of_Macau_as_seen_from_Penha_Hill,_late_18th_century,_artist_unknown_-_Hong_Kong_Museum_of_History_-_DSC00998.JPG (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

the cathedral, Guia Chapel, and defensive fortifications in Macao Trade Paintings (Figure 22). British painter of panoramas Robert Burford (1791/1792–1861), who never visited China, exhibited a large—though now lost—oil panorama of Macao in London in 1840. This work is documented through a 12-page booklet published by the artist at the time, which contains both a detailed description of the panorama and a sketch showing public and private structures. The booklet serves as a key visual and written source for analysing popular paintings of the same subject (Burford 1840).

(Figure 23) The ‘Gentiloni painting offers a rare visual synthesis of trade, agriculture, and maritime activity in late 18th-century Macao’. It vividly depicts the prosperity and vibrant economic activity and the varied society of Macao during the late 18th, illustrating both the city’s economic vitality and its blend of Chinese and Western cultures. The painting features a total of 210 people, including Western merchants and their families, seamen, and religious figures such as Jesuits, Franciscans, and nuns, alongside Chinese individuals engaged in various activities (Lo 2025).

(Figures 16b, 21, and 24) In contrast to the densely urbanised and inhabited early 21st century reality, the landscape of 18th and 19th century Macao was characterised by wild gardens and hills surrounding its various bays, which featured expansive sandy shores. Maritime *vedute* and natural bucolic landscapes displayed the extraordinary beauty of this miniscule Portuguese colony.

(Figure 25) Foreign visitors to Macao especially amazed at the views of Praia Grande Bay with its hills, churches, fortifications, and the colourful painted houses set out like an amphitheatre, “strikingly like that of Naples”, according to Charles Toogood Downing 1838, II, p. 82. (Figures 26 and 27) Westerners strolled, sat, and chatted, and couples courted along the Praia Grande promenade in their moments of leisure.

(Figure 28) Spacious houses with elegant verandas, surrounded by enchanting gardens, framed Praia Grande Bay, the preferred residence area for the foreign trader’s elite. While probably discussing business, the three gentlemen in Chinnery’s Dent’s veranda (c. 1840) enjoyed the refreshing sea breeze and a stunning view.

(Figure 29) Like Chinnery, many Westerners were particularly fascinated by Macao’s *tanka* (also called egg-boats) fishing community, leading to a distinct anthropological and sociological representation of Chinese exoticism in 18th and 19th century literature and visual arts. British diplomat and scholar William C. Hunter, who lived in China from 1824 until the 1840s, described Macao as “the paradise of debtors and *tankas*” (Hunter 1885, p 272).

(Figure 30) Thomas Daniell (1749–1840) and his nephew William Daniell (1769–1837), who were the first professional British traveling artists to visit South China in either late 1785 or early 1786, fondly illustrated the *tankas* characteristic of the Pearl River ports (Perdue 2009).

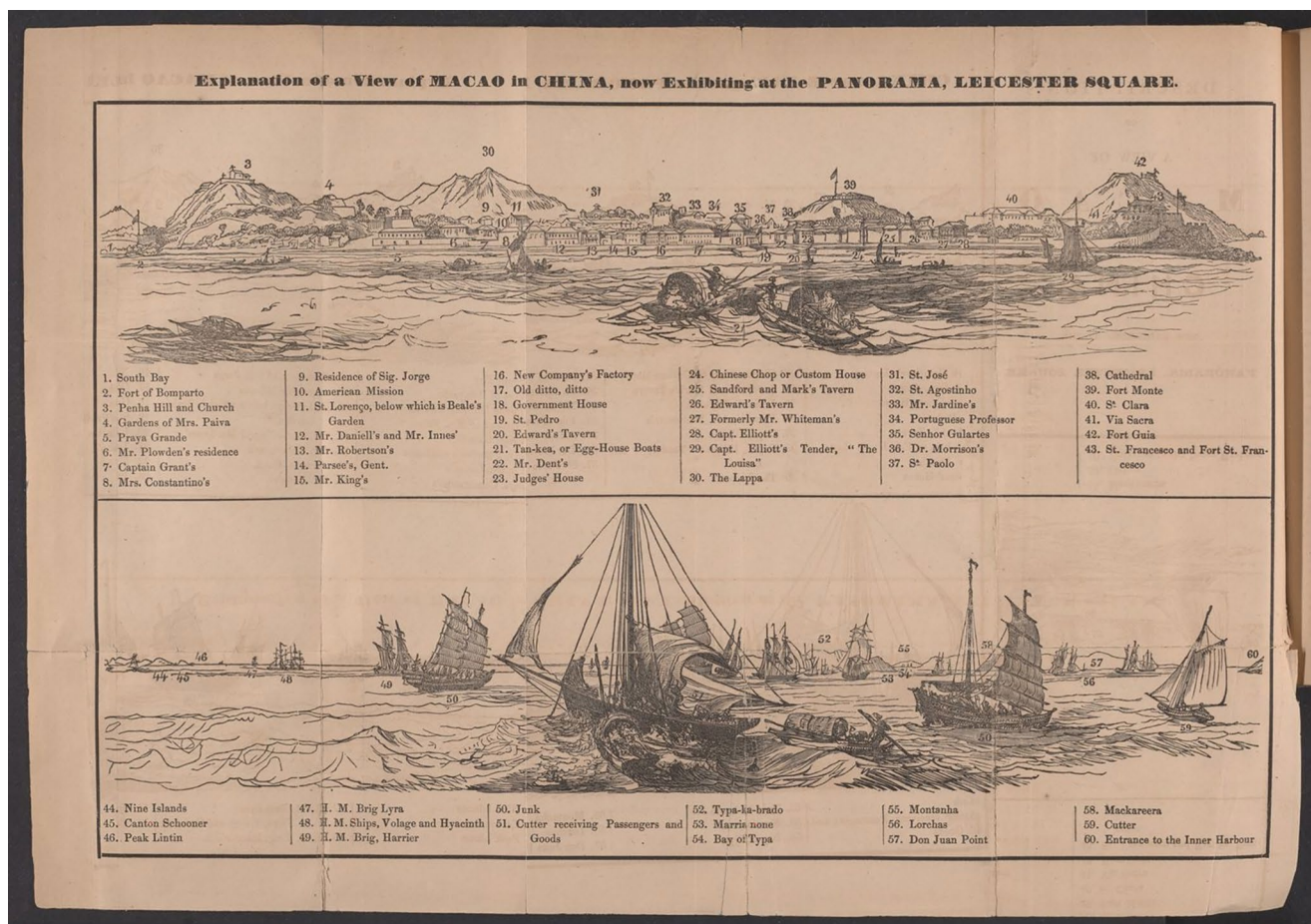


FIGURE 22 | Robert Burford, *Description of a view of Macao in China: Now exhibiting at the Panorama, Leicester Square*, painted by the proprietor, Robert Burford, London: Printed by Geo. Nichols, 1840. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund. Available at: <https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/catalog/orbis:583394> (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



FIGURE 23 | Chinese Painter or Workshop, *The Gentiloni Painting, Macao*, watercolour and gouache on paper, late 18th century, The Hong Kong Maritime Museum of Art. Credits: Hong Kong Maritime Museum. Available at: <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/gentiloni-painting-macao-late-18th-century/sgGqEzgTbWYQSA?hl=en> (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



FIGURE 24 | Unknown artist, Praia Grande, oil on canvas, c. 1830. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Macau#/media/File:View_of_the_Praya_Grande,_Macau,_unknown_artist,_Guangzhou,_China,_c._1830,_oil_on_canvas_-_Peabody_Essex_Museum_-_DSC07303.jpg (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]



FIGURE 25 | Unknown artist, View of Praia Grande, oil on canvas, mid-19th century, Museu do Oriente, Lisbon. Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:View_of_Praia_Grande,_Macau,_unknown_artist,_probably_Macau,_mid_1800s,_oil_on_canvas_-_Museu_do_Oriente_-_Lisbon,_Portugal_-_DSC06832.JPG (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]



FIGURE 26 | Unknown painter, view of the Praia Grande, oil on canvas, c. 1840, Available at: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f7/Macao%2C_View_of_the_Praya_Grande%2C_circa_1840.jpg (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]



FIGURE 27 | Chinese school (?), View of the Praia Grande, oil on canvas, 19th century. Available at: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vista_da_Praia_Grande,_Macau_\(séc._XIX\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vista_da_Praia_Grande,_Macau_(séc._XIX).png) (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]



FIGURE 28 | George Chinnery, *Dent's veranda at Macao*: Three men in the gallery of the trade company Dent & Co; Mr. Durand, reclining on a long bamboo chair, Mr. Hunter, seated on a bamboo chair, and Captain Hall, leaning on the veranda rail against the column, oil on canvas, 1841–1843, private collection. Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dent%27s_verandah.png (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



FIGURE 29 | George Chinnery, *Tanka boat of Macao*, pencil and bodycolour on paper. Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:George_chinnery_tanka_boat_off_macao112616.jpg (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Foreign writers and artists visiting Macao were especially attracted by the A-Ma temple located in a privileged location combining a bucolic landscape with the seaside, and this combination also piqued the interest of the artists and patrons.

The temple's ancient origins, along with the tradition that the name “Macao” may derive from it, further contributed to its prominence in 18th and 19th century visual and written works.



FIGURE 30 | William Daniel, *Tanka or Egg Boats of Macao*, oil on canvas. Leicester Museum & Art Gallery, LF56.1955.O.O. Available at: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William_Daniell_\(1769-1837\)_attributed_to_-_Egg_Boats_off_Macao,_China_-_L.F56.1955.0.0_-_Leicester_Museum_%5E_Art_Gallery.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William_Daniell_(1769-1837)_attributed_to_-_Egg_Boats_off_Macao,_China_-_L.F56.1955.0.0_-_Leicester_Museum_%5E_Art_Gallery.jpg) (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



FIGURE 31 | Eduard Hildebrandt, *A-Ma Temple*, oil on canvas, 19th century. Credits: Macau Cultural Institute. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



FIGURE 32 | George Chinnery, *Camões in the Cave at Macau*, oil on canvas, 1853. Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Grotto_of_Camoes,_Macao_-_George_Chinnery_RHA.png (Accessed: 12 September 2025). [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

(Figure 31) Eduard Hildebrandt (1818–1868) evoked the birth-day of A-Ma Zu and the performance of a Sing—Song play in a temporary bamboo tent in front of the Ma Kok or A-Ma Temple in Macao, showing the open, tolerant spirit of Macao residents.

(Figure 32 and Figure 9) The likely legendary status of the Camões Grotto may have helped preserve this natural and cultural site amid Macao's intense urbanization. Located within the gardens of the Pereira Marques family's private estate, it offered a romantically wild setting, refreshing air, and undisturbed isolation.

4 | Conclusion

This paper proposes the new category of Macao Trade Paintings, and by analysing their historical development, its artistic characteristics, and role in cultural exchanges, it reveals the important position of this unique, but not anti-conformist, form of art in the course of history. In an in-depth and multidisciplinary analysis of Macao Trade Paintings, a glimpse was got of the rich and two-fold artistic exchange between East and West, that is, China, Europe, and the USA and the Pacific Area from the late 18th to the mid-19th century. Macao, as a contact zone or frontier between East and West at the margins of China, served as a gate of entrance for Western art and culture and for the export of Chinese art and cultural tradition, and also as a testing ground

for the fusion and innovation of Chinese and Western artistic styles. This painted imagery thereby shows regional cultural, sociological, and economic values intimately tied to Macao's role as a central node within the Canton Trade System and its emergence as an international tourism destination.

Macao Trade Paintings emerged from unique commercial and cultural interactions between East and West and are also an inseparable part of Chinese art history. The activities of Western and Chinese painters in Macao, alongside foreign appreciation and market demand for these works—coupled with the influence of Western travelling artists—highlighted this distinctive process of “glocalization”.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors hereby declare that they are the sole authors of this paper entitled ‘Harbour of Confluence: Macao Trade Paintings and East–West Exchange.’ They carefully fulfilled all ethical proceedings involved in scientific research and publication. They have no conflicts of interest.

Endnotes

¹ The Empress of China, the first official vessel sent by America to trade with China, arrived in Macao in 1784.

² This list indicates the object title of the works in public collections officially in use.

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