

MACKINNON FINE FURNITURE



A CHINESE MIRROR PAINTING

China, circa 1770

Starting in the 1750s, mirrors with Chinese painted scenes, the earlier examples often centring on a river, became hugely sought after in Europe. Although worked in Canton, the glass itself was usually imported from Europe, often from France, by agency of the Compagnie des Indes, as any large and flat locally produced glass of the time was apparently of poor quality. Generally fully silvered plates would be traced with design outlines, to indicate which areas of the mercury backing should be removed, before being painted with the beautiful landscape scenes.

A fine selection of related mirror paintings were sold from the celebrated Horlick collection at Sotheby's London, 5 June 2007.

In a letter from Brother Attiret, court painter of emperor Qianlong, 1741: " For over a year I have scarcely done anything else that paint on glass. A large number of beautiful large mirrors are brought from Europe, which the mandarins of Canton buy from the merchant ships and offer to the emperor....This type of painting is all the more beautiful because, when seen from a short distance, it seems as if the figures, animals, landscape or any other design is not painted on the mirror but reflected; one's face can be seen in the gaps left by the painting, whihc makes for very attractive variety. This type of painting would not find disfavour in Europe, especially if it were done in good taste".

A superb large 18th century Chinese reverse glass mirror painting, depicting a bucolic river landscape, the foreshore with an elegant maiden sitting on a rock with a man tending his flock of sheep, cattle and pigs, on the far bank a village landscape with pavilions and other buildings. Beautifully mounted in a giltwood frame with blue and white craquelure slips.

Literature:

Thierry Audric, *Chinese Reverse Glass Painting 1720 - 1820*

Height: 1' 4⁷/₈" in (43 cm)
Width: 2' 2⁵/₈" in (67.5 cm)

Stock Number

R05.88

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