



San Francisco Ceramic Circle

An Affiliate of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

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P.O. Box 26773, San Francisco, CA 94126

www.patricianantiques.com/sfcc.html

SFCC JANUARY LECTURE

Sunday, JANUARY 21, 2017

9:45 a.m., doors open for social time

10:25 a.m., program begins

Gunn Theater, Legion of Honor

William Alexander and the Macartney Diplomatic Mission: Chinese Scenes on Transferware

Michael Sack

Independent Scholar and Collector, San Francisco

About the lecture: The lecture will concentrate on scenes of China based on the work of William Alexander, an artist who traveled in the 1790s with a diplomatic mission from King George III of England to the Qianlong Emperor of China. Many of those scenes were copied onto transferware by British potters in the early 1800s.

About the speaker: Michael Sack has lived in San Francisco since 1967. Notwithstanding a degree in hotel administration from Cornell, he found accounting irresistible and practiced as a certified public accountant before retiring in 2014. Michael has served as a board member of the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, San Francisco Performances, Young Audiences, the San Francisco Ceramic Circle, the Transferware Collectors Club, American Friends of the Spode Museum, and the Wallis Foundation which supports a wide variety of non-profits. He became interested in transferware with exotic scenes after hearing a lecture on the subject at an SFCC meeting in 1997. In 2009 he self-published *India on Transferware*, a compendium of all the scenes of India then known on transferware, with their source prints.

This month, our Facebook page will show ceramics adapted from Chinese models or representing Chinese subjects.



James & Ralph Clews, Staffordshire, c. 1818-34
Platter with *View of the Suburbs of a Chinese City*,
after William Alexander, c. 1820
Earthenware with transfer printing, 16 3/4 x 14 inches
San Francisco, Collection of Michael Sack

SFCC Upcoming Lectures

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25 (note date change!), Gunn Theater: "A Glittering Occasion: Reflections on Dining in the 18th Century." Dr. Christopher Maxwell, Curator of European Glass, Corning Museum of Glass; former Assistant Curator of Ceramics, Victoria and Albert Museum, and author of the V&A's handbook on 18th-century French porcelain. The talk will be in conjunction with *Casanova: The Seduction of Europe*, on view at the Legion of Honor February 10 - May 28, 2018.

SUNDAY, MARCH 18, Gunn Theater: t.b.a., or Glenn Berry's talk now scheduled for May 20.

SUNDAY, APRIL 15, Gunn Theater: Sally Kevill-Davies, cataloguer of the English porcelain at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, will speak on Chelsea porcelain figures. The talk will follow up on SFCC's donation of the Chelsea *Carpenter with his tools* to the Legion of Honor in 2016.

SUNDAY, MAY 20, Gunn Theater: SFCC member and former Vice President Glenn Berry, distinguished collector of neoclassical porcelain, "Porcelain Plaques: A New Type of Canvas, An Elevation of an Art Form."



An 18th-century dessert setting at Rienzi, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

In memoriam: Warren Wachs, 1920-2017

Past SFCC member Warren Wachs died at home in San Francisco on November 6. He had given a collection of Japanese ceramics to the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. He was a veteran of World War II and practiced architecture before his retirement in 1983.

JANUARY LECTURE BACKGROUND: CHINA ON CHINA

Though Europe's vaunted "Age of Exploration" began around 1500, Europeans at large had little idea of what China looked like until well into the 1600s. They knew, or knew of, Chinese blue and white porcelain, but the rare examples showed ornament more than scenes or figures. Faenza developed an *alla porzellana* style in the early 1500s with loosely adapted floral scrolls or other plant motifs in blue on white. The models may have been Persian or Ottoman intermediaries.

Francesco de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, sponsored the first serious European effort to recreate Chinese porcelain between about 1575 and 1587. The Florentines supposed that ground glass must be the key ingredient, and they developed a "soft paste" body that was unstable in firing. Much of the decoration was purely European, but some pieces pay homage to China.



Unknown maker, Faenza
Large storage jar, c. 1510

Tin-glazed earthenware
Brno, Museum of Applied Arts (photo: SFCC)



Medici porcelain workshop, Florence
Ewer, c. 1575-87

Soft-paste porcelain, height 20.3 cm
New York City, Metropolitan Museum of Art (photo: museum)

Soon after its founding in 1602, the Dutch East India Company transformed the European ceramics market with plentiful imports of Chinese porcelain. A blue-and-white fashion prevailed by mid-century, but direct competition with China was almost pointless until the end of the Ming dynasty in 1644 disrupted Chinese output. Delft potters then pushed to improve their techniques. The material was still tin-glazed earthenware, but with lustrous glazing and sometimes direct copies of Chinese ceramics. Delftware provided the first great wave of Chinoiserie.



Samuel van Eenhorn (1655 – c. 1686) maker,
at De Grieksche A manufactory (1658-1722), Delft
Tazza (footed serving dish), c. 1678-86
Tin-glazed earthenware, diameter 18.8 cm.
San Francisco, Legion of Honor,
gift of the Golden Gate Collectors (photo: museum)



Meissen Porcelain Manufactory, Germany, est. 1710
 Teabowl & saucer with Chinoiserie scenes, c. 1723-24
Hard-paste porcelain
 San Francisco, Collection of Malcolm Gutter (photo: SFCC)

By 1700, Europeans had engravings based on drawings by people who had been to China. 18th-century Chinoiserie was fantastic not from ignorance but to meet a demand for imaginary subjects such as poetic European shepherds as well as East Asians. As to technique, in the 1720s Meissen's true porcelain introduced meticulous painting and new colors that even the Chinese had to imitate.

Then, the Industrial Revolution and transfer printed ceramics flooded the dining table with images: it was a content revolution as we understand such things. The factories began by adapting the upmarket fashion for imaginary scenes. The Blue Willow pattern, still with us, is a British concoction based on Chinese sources. But Michael Sack explores what the 1800s brought to bear: a thirst for facts of history, geography, and ethnography that far exceeded their earlier appearances. Those facts were still adjusted for viewing pleasure and viewer prejudice, but transferware scenes brought millions of people a sense of engagement with the world.



Unknown maker, Staffordshire
 "Thomasine Willey" plate, c. 1818
Earthenware
 Stoke-on-Trent, The Potteries Museum (photo: SFCC)
 The earliest dated print of the Willow Pattern, though prototypes date to the late 1700s.



Unknown maker, Jingdezhen
 Plate with a river scene, 1700s
Hard-paste porcelain
 Stoke-on-Trent, The Potteries Museum (photo: SFCC)