

# Asian Lacquer

A Lasting Story  
of Fascination and Inspiration





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of Fascination  
and Inspiration



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INTRODUCTION

# Crossing Bridges: Lacquer in Global Trade and Style Transfer

MONIKA KOPPLIN



Lacquer has always occupied an exclusive position in the trade of luxury goods between East and West. The oldest known evidences of Chinese lacquer objects having reached the European periphery, via the Silk Road, are several Han dynasty lacquer boxes from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Fragments of these containers were unearthed in the late Scythian burial ground of Ust'-Al'ma in Crimea in 1996.<sup>1</sup> This important archaeological find suggests that Chinese lacquer reached Europe, not as a regularly traded commodity, but in individual pieces, as early as late antiquity.

However, trade in lacquer was not limited to lacquered and decorated objects, but also included the substance itself. The term 'lacquer' denotes a variety of materials that are related in their nature and effects, but does not refer solely to the bark secretion of the lacquer tree, which occurs in various species (*Rhus verniciflua*, *Rhus succedanea* and *Melanorrhoea usitata*) in East and Southeast Asia and developed into its own art form in China as *qi* and in Japan as *urushi*. Attempts in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries to import this lacquer to Europe in liquid form, with the aim of investigating its properties and using it locally, proved unsuccessful.<sup>2</sup> However, both the Chinese and the Dutch introduced the cheaper raw lacquer from Cambodia and Vietnam to Japan in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The term 'lacquer' also refers to shellac, obtained from the resinous secretions of the lacca insect (*Kerria lacca*), which is native to northern India and South East Asia. The excretions of this insect, which adhere to the host trees as reddish-brown crusts, were knocked off and, after the red dye had been largely extracted, sold as shellac. The word 'lacquer' (German *Lack*, French *laque*, and Italian *lacca*) was in turn derived from the ancient Indian word *lākṣā*, which refers to red tree lacquer, originally called 'the red [substance]'.<sup>3</sup> The word lacquer was therefore already an example of East-West transfer.

<sup>1</sup> Zajcev, 2013; Prüch, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Grand Duke Cosimo III de Medici had commissioned the polymath Giuseppe del Papa in 1690 to analyse imported East Asian lacquer. However, Del Papa failed and published his findings on the „vernice della China, venuta dall'India al Granduca" in a treatise printed in Florence in 1734: *Trattati vari fatti in diverse occasioni*. The Jesuit scholar Filippo Bonanni, by contrast, having received samples of the same delivery, describes in detail why the usage of *Cie* (Chinese lacquer) was impossible in Europe. This conclusion was based on his own experiments published in his *Trattato sopra la vernice detta comunemente cinese* in 1709 and 1720.

<sup>3</sup> Thieme, 1953, pp. 552-54.

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ESSAY

# Gujarati Lacquer for Tombs and Courts

BRUNO ALEXANDRE MORAIS



Before the arrival of the first European to Asia a significant maritime export trade was centred on the Indian Ocean port towns, with the Gujarat Sultanate (which in 1572 became part of the Mughal Empire) being one of the most important centres for the production of furniture. Sikandar Muhammad in his *Mirat-i-Sikandarin* (1611–1613), wrote that a century earlier, during the reign of Sultan Mahmūd Begada (1459–1511), specialised workshops for the production of various crafts already existed in the region: ‘Most of elegant handicrafts and ingenious arts now practiced in Gujarat were introduced under Mahmūd. Clever men from various distant cities were settled there; and people of Gujarat were this, by sultan’s exertions instructed in knowledge and practices of the conveniences and elegances of civilised life’.<sup>1</sup> Once the Portuguese, led by Governor Alfonso de Albuquerque (1453–1515), settled their state headquarters (*Estado da Índia*) in Goa (1510), Portuguese merchants travelled to Gujarat in order to participate actively in this luxury trade.

By the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, Gujarat was the main centre for the production of mother-of-pearl objects. This flourishing industry is described in a detailed contemporary report commissioned by Shaikh Abu’l Fazl ibn Mubarak (1551–1602), minister of state to the emperor Akbar (1556–1605). In his *Ain-i-Akbari* (Institutes of Akbar), Abu’l Fazl described *sarkar* Ahmedabad (the province of Ahmedabad) as a major centre for the manufacture of export goods, including mother-of-pearl objects.<sup>2</sup> Another reference to Gujarati craftsmanship is given by the Portuguese historian João de Barros, in the section of his *Décadas da Asia* covering the years 1529–38. He remarks that the people of Gujarat were ‘much given to work, be it agriculture or mechanical; and in this latter they are so skilled and industrious that with their work they enrich that kingdom

<sup>1</sup> Hadi, 2025, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> Jaffer, 2002, p. 24.

## 2 Casket

Teak, lac, mother-of-pearl  
(*turbo marmoratus*), and  
pigment; brass mounts

India, Gujarat, Mughal dynasty  
(1526–1858), second half of the  
16<sup>th</sup> century to early 17<sup>th</sup> century

H. 33 cm  
L. 51.5 cm  
W. 28 cm

A wide rectangular casket made of teak with a truncated bevelled lid hinged to open backwards, standing on a plinth with four short bracket feet at the corners. The front, reverse and sides of the casket are completely covered with black lac, which is almost entirely overlaid with small pieces of mother-of-pearl cut into vegetal and geometric motifs. The main decoration is contained inside rectangular panels and consists of a dense design of stylised flowers surrounded by delicate vegetal scrolls formed by small flowers and coma-shaped leaves. The angled sides of the lid are similarly decorated with stylised flowers reserved on a background of delicate vegetal scrolls, while the vertical sides of the lid and plinth display a hexagonal chequered pattern. The lid opens to reveal traces of two shallow lateral compartments, and the interior and underside of the casket are painted in red. In the centre of the front is a European gilt-brass lock plate cast in relief with a lion's head above a cherub supporting a heraldic shield decorated with two *putti*, one holding a small shield within which the keyhole is pierced, the latter inscribed with the letter 'N'. The corners and angular edges are mounted with brass fittings held by small metal pins with round heads. The handles on either side are also brass.

Two other finely executed caskets of similar form and decorated with Gujarati lac are preserved in Das Grüne Gewölbe in Dresden. One was acquired in 1589 by the Leipzig merchant, Veit Böttiger, and offered as a Christmas present by the Elector Christian I to his wife Sofia. After her death in 1622, the casket was added to the Dresden *kunstkammer*.<sup>1</sup> The second, also acquired through Böttiger, was purchased by Christian II at the Leipzig Easter fair in 1602.<sup>2</sup> Another example, now in the Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales in Madrid, holds the relics of Saint Margaret, given to the monastery by its founder, Joanna of Austria (1535–1573), mother of King Sebastião of Portugal (1554–1578).<sup>3</sup> It is not known when or how this rare casket arrived at the monastery.





ESSAY

# Lacquer from China: From the Tree Sap to Black-and-Gold Cantonese Lacquerware

MARIA JOÃO NUNES PETISCA

Asian lacquer has been used for thousands of years as a protective and decorative coating for manufactured and crafted objects in countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Thailand and Laos, among others. The material is derived from the sap of several species of trees indigenous to the Asian continent, and is a polymer of vegetal origin.<sup>1</sup> Asian lacquer is different from other substances that may also be called lacquer.

The word ‘lacquer’ has historically been used to designate lac, originating from the Sanskrit word *lākshā*, which is a different material from Asian lacquer. One interpretation of the word *lākshā* is ‘red’, in reference to the dark-red tree sap.<sup>2</sup> Another etymological origin suggests ‘one hundred thousand’, meaning innumerable, possibly on account of the high number of insects required to produce a unit of shellac.<sup>3</sup> Lac is a resinous secretion produced by several species of insects belonging to the genus *Metatrichia*, *Laccifer*, *Tachordiella* and others of the superfamily Coccoidea of the Homoptera order. The most commercially exploited variety is *Kerria lacca*. The female insects deposit a resinous substance on the twigs and new branches of several types of soapberry and acacia trees found in India, Thailand, Myanmar, South and southeast China. After several methods of refinement, from heating to bleaching, the final product is described as shellac, which has been used widely since the 19<sup>th</sup> century for finishing woodwork and is usually dissolved in denatured alcohol.<sup>4</sup> Resins like copal and rosin, among others, are some of the common materials used to imitate Asian lacquer, in a process known as ‘japanning’.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lu and Miyakoshi, 2015, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Kopplin, 2010, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> It is estimated that 50, 000 beetles are needed to produce one kilogram of shellac. Derry, 2012, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Horie, 2010, pp. 150–51.

<sup>5</sup> Resins are solid or highly viscous substances that can have a natural or synthetic origin. Natural resins are constituted of mixtures of volatile and non-volatile terpenes. Some of the most used natural resins are categorised as diterpenoids or triterpenoids, depending on their chemical composition. Diterpenoids encompass natural resins like rosin (colophony), Venice turpentine, sandarac, and copal. Dammar and mastic are classified as triterpenoids. The first varnishes used were natural resins dissolved in hot linseed oil. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century synthetic resins became available, although natural resins are still widely used today especially in traditional artistic practice.



## 11 Shoulao and Deer

Bronze, lacquer, mother-of-pearl (*haliotis*) and gold

China, Ming dynasty (1368-1644), 16<sup>th</sup> century

H. 23.5 cm  
L. 12.5 cm  
W. 16 cm

A finely cast bronze figure covered in black lacquer, richly finished in gold and inlaid with iridescent mother-of-pearl mosaics, representing Shoulao accompanied by a deer, both standing on an elaborate hexagonal pedestal. Shoulao is depicted with a long beard and wearing a flowing robe with wide sleeves and a cape, all decorated with cloud motifs in gold and fragments of mother-of-pearl inlay featuring clouds and cranes. A round medallion adorns the front of the robe, while the figure's tall official hat (*guan*) is set with a large mother-of-pearl disc on the front and top, and a lotus

flower on the back. He holds a scroll in his left hand and a *ruyi* sceptre in his right, and at his side stands a deer, its body partially gilded and inlaid with mother-of-pearl spots, which looks affectionately towards Shoulao with its head turned and raised. The pedestal is supported by an openwork short foot in the shape of various *ruyi*-heads in gold and red lacquer, and the sides display a meander-pattern frieze with scrolls covered in gold, framed by edges set with mother-of-pearl discs. The surface is embellished with gold waves and inlaid with scattered mother-of-pearl leaves.



ESSAY

Shimmering Surfaces:  
Material Innovation in  
*Laque Burgautée* Porcelain

MAGDALENA KOZAR



The fusion of porcelain with the decorative lacquer technique composed of inlaid motifs and landscapes drawn with numerous thin fragments of mother-of-pearl – in Europe commonly known as *laque burgauté* – represents a rare and technically complex achievement in the decorative arts. In French, *burgau*, meaning snail, most often refers to the shimmering, greenish-white shell of marine snails like *Turbo marmoratus* (green turban sea snail) or other *Turbo* species, which already gives an indication of the kind of material used for this technique.<sup>1</sup> In Chinese, the technique is known as *Lo-tien Tz'u* (螺鈿瓷), meaning ‘porcelain inlaid with shell’.<sup>2</sup> These rare works pushed the boundaries of material compatibility, combining the hardness and whiteness of porcelain with the gloss of black lacquer and iridescent shell inlay. Despite significant technical challenges – such as poor adhesion and thermal mismatch – the result was a surface of decorative richness unlike anything seen on lacquer or porcelain alone.

An understanding of this decorative method also requires looking at the material itself and the historical use of its name. The term ‘mother-of-pearl’ has existed in English since the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and refers to the lustrous, shimmering inner layers of shell molluscs. In France, as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, auction catalogues reveal that Parisian luxury goods’ dealers, *marchands-merciers*, made a clear distinction between two types of shell inlay on Asian lacquer: the opaque, milky-white *nacre* (mother-of-pearl), and the vividly iridescent, multi-coloured variety that uses very thin layers of translucent and fluorescent shell.<sup>3</sup> Over time, *laque burgauté* became the technical term for the second type. This terminology highlights a broader evolution in how Europeans began to categorise and differentiate previously unknown

<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to Dr Ulrike Körber (conservator of Asian lacquer, furniture, and objects) for valuable information regarding the shell types used in the *laque burgauté* technique infills (personal communication, August 2025).

<sup>2</sup> Bushell, 1981, p. 264.

<sup>3</sup> Kopplin, 2003, p. 21.

# 13 Bowl

Wood, lacquer, mother-of-pearl  
(*haliotis*) and gold; silver

China, Qing dynasty,  
Kangxi period (1662–1722)

H. 6 cm  
L. 10 cm  
W. 10 cm

A square bowl with sloping sides and sharply defined edges, raised on four short feet. The interior is fully lined with a sheet of silver, while the exterior is lacquered in black and inlaid with fragmented, iridescent mother-of-pearl mosaics in the *laque burgauté* technique, with additional accents in gold. Each side of the bowl is decorated with lozenge-shaped panels containing different narrative scenes, each featuring the same two figures, a scholar and a young attendant, probably depicting a story that unfolds across time and space. On one side, the two figures are seated beneath

a tree by a rocky lake shore, with the scholar gesturing towards a distant island, above which birds are seen flying. The other two opposing sides feature similar landscapes, with the pair standing beneath a willow tree and a sun or moon in the distance; in one panel the elder man points to the sun or moon, while in the other the boy gestures towards the horizon. The fourth side presents the figures in conversation. A lozenge-diaper border runs along the rim, and scrolling motifs surround the base. The underside and feet are lacquered in black.





ESSAY

Regarding *Kuancai*: Nine  
considerations on *kuancai*  
lacquer screens, the so-called  
Coromandel

XIALING LIU 劉夏凌

*Kuancai* lacquer screens, the so-called ‘Coromandel’, with their continuous unfolding leaves and monumental scale, create an imposing visual stage. Their circulation between East and West made them genuinely global and transcultural objects; today, most major national museums hold one or more examples. Yet, *kuancai* has attracted far less scholarly attention than porcelain and other works in the field of material culture with few comprehensive studies tracing its history systematically. As a result, the academic significance of *kuancai* lacquer has been substantially underestimated. This article draws on recent research and fieldwork to review *kuancai* lacquer screens, their terminology, technical origins, iconography, inscriptions, formats and dimensions, colour, chronology, conservation and prospects for future research.



## 22 Sixteen-Panel Screen

Wood, lacquer, pigments  
and gold; metal mounts

China, Qing dynasty,  
Kangxi period (1662–1722)

H. 117 cm  
L. 354 cm  
(open plan)

A sixteen-panel *kuancai* lacquer screen, notable for both its rare format and European hunting theme, seldom found among surviving examples. One side depicts a vivid hunting scene, while the reverse is finished in plain, undecorated lacquer. The composition unfolds across the central panels: the left-hand 2.5 panels depict a maritime scene with Western sailing ships on undulating waves, while the remaining 11.5 panels present a detailed and expansive landscape. At the heart of the narrative is a spirited hunting scene in the central 14 panels, where European figures are shown engaged in various stages of the hunt – pursuing, subduing and capturing prey – using traditional Chinese implements such as axes, flying claws, and hammers. This lively episode is set within a painterly arrangement of rocks, pine forest, and drifting clouds. A particularly detailed section in the fifth panel from the right features a central figure poised with a pipe, accompanied by a flag-bearing attendant.

Ahead, two riders sound horns, as if heralding the procession. Visually, the scene guides the viewer's eye from right to left, evoking a gradual movement from land toward the sea. In total, the screen includes fifty-seven figures: twenty-four on horseback, eleven of whom are armed with traditional cold weapons, twenty-two carry firearms, four man the ships at sea, and seven are on foot, accompanied by fourteen animals. At the upper right corner, the entrance to a fortress-like structure is visible, with a pontoon bridge below. The narrative panels are bordered by two narrow frames, an outer one decorated with floral motifs, and an inner frame featuring *grecques*.<sup>1</sup> The space between these two narrow frames is decorated with a rich array of imagery, including, on the left and right sides, four-clawed dragons, and in the upper section, a total of eighty-four motifs of Chinese antiquities, scholarly objects and flowers; the lower section is ornamented with eighteen mythical Chinese beasts, whose



ESSAY

# *Namban*-style Japanese Export Lacquer: Reception and Legacy

YAYOI KAWAMURA<sup>1</sup>



## JAPANESE LACQUER URUSHI

In Japanese culture, lacquered items, usually applied on a wooden substrate, were used constantly and have been discovered at different archaeological sites, with the oldest dated to around 4000 BCE.<sup>2</sup> Called *urushi*, Japanese lacquer has therefore been a commonly known material in Japan since prehistory, and is a gluey substance extracted from the sap of the tree *Toxicodendron vernicifluum*<sup>3</sup> (fig. 1). Once the sap has solidified, the wooden pieces become extremely hard – impermeable – and highly resistant to salts and acids, as well as to attack by xylophagous insects.

The *urushi* coating consists of many superimposed layers over the substrate, each of which needs to be cured and hardened in a wet environment because the main constituent, called *urushiol*, solidifies by oxidation. To attain this, the lacquer pieces are left inside a wooden cabinet with a wet interior, called a *furo*, for several days. Before applying another coating, the previous layer must be abraded with wet whetstone or charcoal to smooth the surface. The *urushi* layers create a glossy surface with a lustre that seems to rise from its depths, creating a mirror effect.

<sup>1</sup> Professor of History of Art in the University of Oviedo, member of the research project 'PID2022-137369NB-I00: Japón, España, México: relaciones artísticas y culturales' supported by the Agencia Nacional de Investigación of the Spanish Government and European Union.

<sup>2</sup> Kuraku, 1988. A *urushi* tree fragment from the Torihama shell mound in Obama city, Fukui prefecture, dated ca 10,000 BCE.

<sup>3</sup> The main constituent of the sap extracted from the *Toxicodendron vernicifluum* is a phenol named *urushiol* (C<sub>21</sub>H<sub>32</sub>O<sub>2</sub>), which has the particularity of hardening in a moist atmosphere on contact with oxygen. This tree's habitat is Japan, Korea, and China. Honda and Miyakoshi, 2012, pp. 233–35.

## 37 Sweetmeat Box

Wood, lacquer,  
gold and silver

Japan, Edo period  
(1615–1868), 1680–1730

H. 13.5 cm  
L. 60 cm

A wooden eight-lobed sweetmeat box, composed of a lower part and lid. The interior of the base is segmented into eight compartments that mimic the outer petal-shaped form and surround a central circular division. The box and cover are both lacquered in black and decorated with gold powder, metal foil, silver, and red lacquer. The cover depicts a landscape scene, showing, on the right, a large pavilion elevated on stilts above an extensive lake with waves, and two ducks in front of steep mountains with additional buildings, trees, and shrubbery; on the left, a large floral branch rises from a rock beneath three flying phoenixes. The scene is framed by a border in an endless-pearl pattern with a floral scroll around the edge. The sides of the box are decorated with panels with indented corners, each enclosing a different landscape showing buildings amid sprays of flowers and insects, all surrounded by an endless-pearl pattern. The interior is lacquered in black, while the rims are painted in gold.

The Dutch East India Company (*Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, or VOC) records documenting the company's lacquer exports from Japan in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century consistently remark on trends and the emergence of new forms and decorative styles.<sup>1</sup> Lacquered objects in the style of this box are typically decorated with landscapes, which, while varied in certain aspects, share common features. These include the image of an idyllic landscape with Asian architecture set in a mountainous environment, featuring bridges, streams, large pine and willow trees, rocks with blooming flowers, and flying birds or butterflies, a composition

very popular among European customers.<sup>2</sup> These new styles may have been inspired by Western typologies and design preferences, as well as copied from examples in other media available on the Asian export market. We should not rule out the possibility that this box was made for Thailand, which was then a relevant export market.



ESSAY

# Japanese Lacquered Porcelain for Europe

MIKI SAKURABA



## BACKGROUND TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PORCELAIN WITH LACQUER DECORATION

Since the Jomon period (ca. 12,500-400 BCE) in Japan, some 9,000 years ago, lacquer works such as jars and ornaments have been made by applying sap from the lacquer tree. During the Nara period (710-794), a limited number of high-ranking officials, such as nobles, began to use tableware, for example wooden plates and bowls, coated with *urushi* – that is, lacquerware. During the Middle Ages, the use of lacquerware expanded, and by the Edo period (1615-1868) it had extended to everyday utensils for a wide range of Japanese people, including wealthy farmers.<sup>1</sup>

*Urushi* was applied to diverse practical articles (tableware, furniture, cosmetic and smoking implements), as well as to architectural decorations for castles, temples and shrines, to sculptures, such as Buddhist statues, and to weapons, musical instruments and *kago* (palanquins). The base materials used to create these pieces included wood, cloth, leather, paper, woven bamboo baskets, metal and ceramics. The technique of high-quality lacquering involves an extremely large number of processes and stages, from preparation of the base and base coat, primer, middle coat, and final top coat, to the days needed for the lacquer to harden between each process, all resulting in a long production time.

<sup>1</sup> Chiba, 2017, pp. 26–33, 112–40, 240.

## 42 Dish

Porcelain decorated in  
underglaze cobalt blue,  
lacquer and gold

Japan, Arita, Edo period  
(1615–1868), 19<sup>th</sup> century

Ø 63 cm

A large, thickly potted porcelain dish with a rounded cavetto on a short foot, painted in underglaze cobalt blue, black lacquer and gold. The entire surface of the dish is decorated with a view of Itsukushima Shrine on Miyajima island in the western Inland Sea of Japan, all before steep mountains in the background. The main architectural complex shows several buildings connected to each other by elevated pathways and bridges, and is flanked by a wall on the left separating it from a pagoda and other smaller structures. In the foreground are two sailing ships with figures, and in the middle ground, behind the pagoda, wall and trees, are clouds and vegetation; behind the mountains are more clouds and vegetation, all rendered in gold on a black-lacquer ground. A scroll border encircles the scene, and the reverse of the dish is also lacquered, with three dispersed scrolls around the well.







## **Institutional Acquisitions**

**OUR WORKS OF ART HAVE BEEN  
ACQUIRED BY THE FOLLOWING  
MUSEUMS AND INSTITUTIONS:**

**Albuquerque Foundation**, Sintra

**Art Gallery of South Australia**, Adelaide

**Art Museum of the Chinese University of Hong Kong**, Shatin NT, Hong Kong

**Asian Civilisations Museum**, Singapore

**Baur Foundation, Museum of Far Eastern Art**, Geneva

**Casa Colombo — Museu de Porto Santo**, Porto Santo

**Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge**, Cambridge

**Foundation Gandur pour l'Art**, Geneva

**Fundação Carmona e Costa**, Lisbon

**Fundação Millenium BCP**, Lisbon

**Fundação Oriente**, Lisbon

**George Washington's Mount Vernon (Mount Vernon Ladies' Association)**, Virginia

**Groninger Museum**, Groningen

**Guanfu Classical Art Museum**, Chaoyang, Beijing

**Guangdong Museum**, Tianhe, Guangzhou

**Guwei Museum**, Hong Kong

**Hong Kong Maritime Museum**, Hong Kong

**Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art**, Himayatnagar, Hyderabad

**Jamestown — Yorktown Foundation**, Williamsburg, Virginia

**Kyushu National Museum**, Tokyo

**Louvre Abu Dhabi**, Abu Dhabi

**Macao Museum**, Macao

**Madeira Tecnopolo**, Funchal

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**Museu de Arte Sacra do Funchal**, Funchal

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**Shanghai Museum**, Shanghai

**Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden-Zwinger**, Dresden

**Stichting boot Aziatische Kunst en kunstnijverheid Anders Foundation**, Haren

**The Droom en Daad Foundation**, Rotterdam

**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**, New York City, New York

**The New Orleans Museum of Art**, New Orleans, Louisiana

**The Palace and Maritime Silk Road Museum**, Quanzhou, Shishi, Fujian Province

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*Casa Colombo — Museu de Porto Santo*, Madeira, May 2023

*Jogos Cruzados. Viagens entre Oriente e Ocidente*, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, 2022

*Japão e Portugal: Fusão das Artes e das Letras no Século XVI*, Biblioteca Geral da Universidade de Coimbra, Coimbra, 2021

*The Porcelain Room, Chinese Export Porcelain*, Fondazione Prada, Milan, 2020

*Um Rei e Três Imperadores - Portugal, a China e Macau no Tempo de D. João V*, Museu de São Roque, Lisbon, 2019

*Três Embaixadas Europeias à China*, Museu do Oriente, Lisbon, 2018

*Contar Áfricas!*, Padrão dos Descobrimentos, Lisbon, 2018

*Uma História de Assombro. Portugal — Japão, Séculos XVI a XX*, Galeria D. Luís, Palácio Nacional da Ajuda, Lisbon, 2018

*The Blue of the Seas, Dialogues between China, Persia and Europe*, Baur Foundation, Museum of Far Eastern Art, Geneva, 2017

*Portugal - Drawing the World*, Musée National d'Histoire et d'Art, Luxembourg, 2017

*A Cidade Global. Lisboa no Renascimento*, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, 2017

*Namban: os bárbaros do sul e o encontro de culturas*, Museu da Quinta das Cruzes, Funchal, 2016

*The dragon is dancing! Kangxi/China contemporary*, Hetjens-Museum, Düsseldorf Deutsches Keramikmuseum, Düsseldorf, 2015

«Onde os nossos livros se acabam, ali começam os seus...» — *O Japão em fontes documentais dos séculos XVI e XVII*, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisbon, 2015

*O Exótico nunca está em casa? A China na Faiança e no Azulejo portugueses (séculos XVI — XVIII)*, Museu Nacional do Azulejo, Lisbon, 2013

*Portugal, Jesuits, and Japan: Spiritual Beliefs and Earthly Goods*, Boston College's McMullen Museum of Art, Boston, Massachusetts, 2013

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*Tomás Pereira (1646-1708) — A Jesuit in Kangxi's China*, Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, Lisbon, 2009

*Encompassing the Globe - Portugal and the World in the 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Musée des Beaux Arts, Brussels, 2008

*O Espelho Invertido — Imagens Asiáticas dos Europeus 1500 - 1800*, Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, Lisbon, 2007

*Le Grand Atelier — Europalia*, Brussels, 2007

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*São Francisco Xavier — A Sua Vida e o Seu tempo (1506-1552)*, Cordoaria Nacional, Lisbon, 2006

*Dresden, Spiegel der Welt, Die Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden in Japan*, The National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo, 2005

*A Porcelana Chinesa nas Coleções do Museu Quinta das Cruzes*, Museu Quinta das Cruzes, Funchal, 2005

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*O Mundo da Laca*, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, 2001

*Os Fundamentos da Amizade — Cinco Séculos de Relações Culturais e Artísticas Luso-Chinesas*, Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, Lisbon, 1999-2000

*Escolhas — Objectos Raros e de Coleção, Paços do Concelho*, Câmara Municipal de Lisboa e Associação Portuguesa de Antiquários, Lisbon, 1999

*Vasco da Gama e a Índia*, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Sorbonne Chapel, Paris, 1998

*Caminhos da Porcelana*, Fundação Oriente, Lisbon, 1998

*Reflexos do Cristianismo na Porcelana Chinesa*, Museu de São Roque, Lisbon, 1996

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