

**“Mine Eyes and Taste are grown a little Chinese”: Jean-Denis Attiret, S. J., Recognizes the Equal Value of European and Chinese Art**

An irascible Frenchman who hated toupou and whose mouth was tortured by learning Chinese, arrived in Beijing on 13 June 1739. All the more remarkable that in his famous letter of 1743 on the design of Chinese gardens, this Jesuit painter, Brother Jean-Denis Attiret, granted for the first time in history that Chinese and European gardens and architecture were of equal beauty, founded on different principles, each coherent in its own right. “I must own to you,” he wrote, “without pretending to decide which of the two ought to have the preference, that the manner of building in this country pleases me very much. Since my residence in China, my eyes and taste are grown a little Chinese.” This positive view broke radically with the principled rejection of Chinese art that had ruled European judgment for more than a century. My paper reconstructs the conditions that made this change possible.

Daniel Greenberg (Columbia University)

**Images of the Mongol Qing: Painting, Chengde, and Ritual in the Court of Colonial Affairs**

Like the facets of a meticulously cut diamond, the Qing empire was constructed through distinct programs of ritual, art, architecture, and rhetoric that were aimed at Manchu, Chinese, Mongol, and Tibetan audiences. During the eighteenth century, the Qianlong emperor (r. 1735-1796) undertook an extended military and political campaign to incorporate Tibet and Xinjiang into the Qing empire. Turning Qing image construction outwards, the emperor created a program of art and ritual designed to impress Mongol and Tibetan leaders from these newly conquered areas. Drawing upon established Tibetan prototypes, Qianlong commissioned Buddhist art and architecture for the Imperial Hunting Lodge at Chengde. But what did Mongol art and architecture look like? In this paper, I argue that Jean-Denis Attiret helped to create a form of painting that was explicitly designed to resonate with Mongol ambassadors. His painting, *Banquet in the Garden of Ten Thousand Trees*, depicts a Mongol event in a hybridized style that uses a distinctly Jesuit approach to bridge the distance between real and represented events. At the same time, this painting shared important stylistic elements with other works of eighteenth-century court painting created for different audiences. Inherently linked to but ultimately distinct from other modes of imperial construction, perhaps Qianlong and Attiret were attempting to carve a new facet of the empire: a vision of the Mongol Qing.

**Reception (4:30) Stronach Center, 8th floor**

**Sponsors:**

Department of Art History & Archaeology, Italian Department,  
Department of Religion, Department of East Asian Languages & Culture



**Front Cover Image**

Anonymous, Feast of the Sacred Heart at the Beitang in Beijing  
late 18th century, Bibliothèque National de France, Paris



**Coffee / Tea (9:30) Stronach Center, 8th floor**

**Morning Session (10:00-12:00) Schermerhorn Lecture Hall 612**

Eugenio Menegon (Boston University)

**Revisiting the Four Churches: Urban and Suburban Life and Networks of European Missionaries and Christian Converts in Qing Beijing**

The famous ‘Four Churches’ of Beijing, named after the four directions, comprised three Jesuit and one Propaganda Fide missionary centers and reflected a diverse set of political, artistic, religious and scientific agendas, producing different forms of exchange with the surrounding capital. They have been studied in recent years mainly from art historical and scientific perspectives, but their role as communitarian focuses of religious and social life still needs exploration. A web of daily interactions with the local Christian communities and the members of the imperial court enveloped, connected, and separated the churches, the adjoining residences and facilities, the women’s chapels, and the small oratory and hostels in Haidian near the Yuanmingyuan suburban palace, in a hierarchy of varied importance and influence. Using internal missionary correspondence, this presentation offers a picture of the complex grid of relations surrounding the churches. Such relations created physical and social spaces in Beijing and its hinterland, in what amounted, to quote Italo Calvino, to an “invisible city” within the capital itself.

Florence Hsia (University of Wisconsin Madison)

**On the Side: Mapping China from the Margins**

Early modern Jesuit journeys between Rome and Beijing are justly renowned for their work in remapping the globe. For their interlocutors and readers in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, Jesuit-authored geographies and maps made visible a new world crowded with previously unknown continents and seas, countries and peoples. For those in Bourbon France, Elizabethan and Stuart England, and the Spanish, Portuguese and Hapsburg empires, visual and textual materials stemming from the Jesuit mission in China fundamentally reshaped perceptions of the Middle Kingdom’s lands and inhabitants. The landmarks in this history are monumental in size as well as conception, from the wall-sized map of the world that Matteo Ricci published in Beijing in 1602 to Martino Martini’s *Novus atlas sinensis*, printed in a luxurious folio format as part of the renowned Dutch mapmaker Joan Blaeu’s multivolume atlas, the *Theatrum orbis terrarum* (1655) and again in the expanded *Atlas major* (1662). But neither Jesuit mappings of China nor the ways in which Jesuits inhabited the places that such visual forms articulated remained stable. This paper follows Jesuit itineraries through the margins of early modern European cartography as a way of making visible Jesuit struggles with their missionary work in the Celestial Empire.

Walter Melion (Emory University)

**Image Theory in the Annotated Manuscripts of Jerónimo Nadal’s *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia***

Published posthumously by the Society of Jesus in 1595 after long and complicated negotiations with various printmakers in the Low Countries, Jerónimo Nadal’s *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia quae in sacrosancto Missae sacrificio toto anno leguntur* [*Annotations and*

*Meditations on the Gospels Read during the Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the Year*] consists of 153 large plates, mainly engraved by Jan, Hieronymus, and Antoon Wierix of Antwerp, that anchor a complex textual apparatus. The book’s primary readers, Jesuit scholastics training for the priesthood, were expected internally to imprint Nadal’s images and spiritual exercises, and to use them to negotiate between the two kinds of prayer in which they would engage daily—public and private, liturgical and meditative. The importance of the *Adnotationes et meditationes* cannot be overestimated, since its images and texts, having been memorized by every member of the order, anchored their efforts to interpret the Gospels and shaped their practice of meditative exegesis, rooted as it was in Nadal’s expert application of *allegoria in factis* (allegory verifiably based in scriptural *facta and dicta*). The book traveled with them everywhere they went on mission, shoring up their vocation of evangelizing the world. The two manuscripts of Nadal’s book housed at the Pontifical Gregorian University, each subdivided into two bound volumes, contain numerous marginal and intratextual references to the *imagines*. My paper focuses on these insertions and what they tell us about the Society’s investment in defining and controlling the images that anchor Nadal’s text, and especially in distinguishing between two registers of *imago*—evidentiary and inferential.

**Afternoon Session (2:00-4:00) Schermerhorn Lecture Hall 612**

Kristina Kleutghen (Washington University in St. Louis)

**Language Barrier: Reintegrating French and Chinese Sources on Qing Painter Jean-Denis Attiret**

Despite having served the Qianlong emperor for thirty years with great favor, the French Jesuit painter Jean-Denis Attiret has been almost entirely overshadowed by the Italian Jesuit artist Giuseppe Castiglione. With primary sources about Attiret’s life and work divided between French Jesuit letters and Chinese imperial workshop archives, a rich trove of materials about him exists from both spheres in which he worked. The Chinese sources remained mostly internal to the Qing court, while the French sources traveled home for publication and propaganda, ensuring different content, audiences, and accessibility. Yet Attiret has received only limited consideration in a small amount of French and Chinese scholarship, and neither the French nor Chinese scholars have taken into account each other’s original sources. Consequently, the language of any scholarship on Attiret has profoundly affected the treatment, resulting in very different considerations of this artist, his biography, and his work.

This project integrates the Chinese and French primary sources on Attiret’s life and work. This artist, who enjoyed privileged access to both the imperial court and Jesuit missions in Beijing, and who either actively participated in or was manipulated by the needs of both spheres, provides a new lens onto eighteenth-century interactions between the court and the Jesuits. More than a biography, this project actively interrogates distinctions between the sources, and the highly nuanced agendas driving those differences, arguing that their rhetoric and disparate intended audiences continue to affect scholarship today. Surmounting the language barrier was vital to Attiret’s success in the eighteenth century, and today remains just as important to understanding the relationship between the French Jesuits and the Qing court.

Jeffrey Muller (Brown University)