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EST. 1817

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Richard Fallenböck (Wien 1859-1891 Paris)

Portrait of Yang Xilin from Shen Jiang, Shanghai

Signed in faux Chinese letters (lower right):

'Fallenböck'; and variously inscribed in Chinese '此相于奥国维也纳。' (first column lower right 'This was portrayed in Vienna, Austria'.) and

'此相于兴' (second column lower right 'The artist was very happy to have met the sitter') and '杨锡麟·来自上海申江。' (upper right 'Yang Xilin from Shen Jiang, Shanghai')

Oil on unlined canvas with stamp of a Viennese canvas maker on the reverse

18 ½ x 14 ⅞ in. (47 x 38 cm.)

Painted 2nd half of 19th century



Provenance

Private aristocratic collection, Austria, by descent until 2020.

This striking painting by Austrian artist Richard Fallenböck features an inscription in Chinese at the top right of the painting, which identifies the sitter as Yang Xilin from Shen Jiang, Shanghai (fig.1). 'Shen' and 'Jiang' refer to the regions Shanghai (as in Shenbao, the late Qing Shanghai newspaper) and the surrounding region Jiangsu. The inscription in the lower right corner, on the left-hand side, also in Chinese, states that the painting was executed in Vienna, Austria, and that the artist was very happy to have met the sitter (fig.2). The wonderfully playful signature in the bottom right corner is written to appear as Chinese characters but in fact spells out the artist's surname, Fallenböck (fig.3). Considering the inscription on fig. 2, the Viennese provenance as well as the stamp of the Viennese canvas maker, the painting was very likely executed in Vienna and never left the city. In 1873, Vienna hosted the first world fair in German speaking countries which opened the local art market especially to the far East. For countries like China, Japan, Egypt, Thailand and Turkey, the central location between East and West was the first opportunity to take part in a world

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exhibition on this scale and to enter into a cultural and economic exchange with the western industrialized nations. The present picture is a result of this increasing presence of Chinese people in Austria – maybe Yang Xilin was one of those Chinese merchants visiting Vienna in the 1870s and 80s which must have fascinated the young Fallenböck.



Fig.1

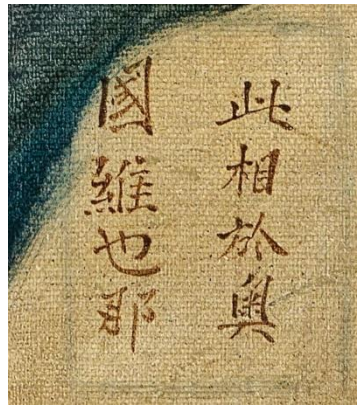


Fig. 2

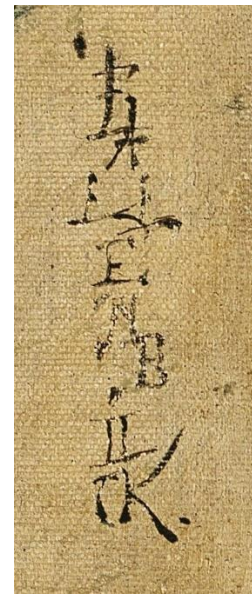


Fig. 3

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Fig. 4. Chinese pavilion at the Viennese World Exhibition in 1873.

Fallenböck was born in Vienna and received his artistic training at the Academy of Fine Arts (1876-1878). There he was a special student of Prof. Eisenmenger (1879-1881) and Prof. Canon until his premature death (1883-1885) as well as a student of professors J. Berger and Karger at the School of Applied Arts. He completed study trips to Venice, Munich and Paris and his talent for decorative and flower painting became recognised. Until his sudden death in 1891 his artistic name was growing in Vienna and Paris.

As well as flower painting, he was particularly interested in ethnic portraits and traditional dress, which allowed him to demonstrate his skill in depicting fabric and texture. As seen not only in the present work but also in the beautifully rendered treatment of the velvet in the *Drawing of the Archducal hat* from 1889, and the costume of a man wearing a *Portrait of a man* wearing a traditional Austrian headdress (called 'Wachauer Goldhaube') from the 1800s as well as in the *Arab in profile with Turban*.

We are grateful to Dr. Bettina Zorn, curator for East Asia at the Weltmuseum, Vienna, and to Professor Shane McCausland, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London, and his PhD candidate and Chinese paleographer, Yingbai Fu, for their assistance with cataloguing this picture.

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