

A M I R M O H T A S H E M I



A Collection of Botanical Illustrations with Butterflies

Canton (Guangzhou), circa 1803-1809

Watercolour on European paper or pith

Each approx. 44cm high, 33cm wide

This rich and diverse collection of 48 botanical illustrations represents the astounding floral diversity of China and further afield. The paintings were procured at the request of John Roberts (1739-1810), a director and chairman of the East India Company, by Britain's first plant hunter to reside in China, William Kerr (1779-1814). Correspondence between the East India Company in London and Canton reveals the historical context of the works, and that Kerr employed local artists. The paintings in this collection had been bound into two albums in London, prior to 1810. Following Roberts' death in 1810, they were sold at auction by his executors. At some point following this sale, the albums were cut up and the paintings dispersed.

The present group comprises 16 botanical illustrations with insects, predominantly butterflies. The sublime colours of the plants and insects are enhanced by the joyful sentiment these paintings evoke. The works are supremely well painted, elegant and vivacious.

1) Study of a sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*)

Stock no.: A5474

2) Study of a pink and white hibiscus (*Hibiscus* sp.)

Stock no.: A5474f

3) Study of a lilac hibiscus (*Hibiscus sp.*)

Stock no.: A5467f

4) Study of a cerise hibiscus (possibly *Hibiscus syriacus*)

Stock no.: A5473c

5) Study of Wintersweet (*Chimonanthus praecox*)

Stock no.: A5473

6) Study of a white rose (*Rosa cultivar*)

Stock no.: A5473b

7) Study of sweet osmanthus and butterflies (*Osmanthus fragrans*)

Stock no.: A5473d

8) Study of tea flower (*Camellia sinensis*)

Stock no.: A5473a

9) Study of a peach (*Prunus persica*)

Stock no.: A5484

10) Study of a peanut (*Arachis hypogaea*)

Stock no.: A5484a

11) Study of a white chrysanthemum (*Chrysanthemum cinerariaefolium*)

Stock no.: A5473a

12) Study of magnolia and butterflies (*Yulania liliiflora*)

Stock no.: A5476

13) Study of a crêpe ginger and butterflies (*Cheilocostus speciosus*)

Stock no.: A5474b

14) Study of composite plant

Stock no.: A5476b

15) Study of an orange lily (*Lilium sp.*)

Stock no.: A5474a

16) Study of a lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*)

Stock no.: A5474e

For more information please [click here](#) to read our catalogue online.

¹ Middleton, Bernard C. *A History of English Craft Bookbinding Technique*. New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 1996. p. 330.

² Christie's London, 30 April 1997, lot 14.