

# AMIR M O H T A S H E M I



## **A Collection of Botanical Studies Attributed to Win Achun**

Canton or Macau, Circa 1803-1809

Watercolour on ricepaper or European paper

Each approx. 40 cm high, 54 cm wide

See details below

The paintings in this collection were procured at the request of John Roberts (1739-1810), a director and chairman of the East India Company. Britain's first plant hunter to reside in China, William Kerr (1779-1814), was tasked with acquiring the paintings for Roberts. Correspondence between the East India Company in London and Canton reveals the historical context of the works, and that Kerr employed a local artist, most likely Win Achun. It is exceptionally rare to encounter a named artist from this period and research into Win Achun has been hitherto overlooked. The paintings in this collection had been bound into two albums in London, prior to 1810.<sup>1</sup> Following Roberts' death in 1810, they were sold at auction by his executors. More recently, in the 1990s, the albums were sold again, and it was revealed that 100 works had been undertaken by Win Achun.<sup>2</sup> At some point following this sale, the albums were cut up and the paintings dispersed. The present group of images attributed to Achun are united in their astounding level of detail, close observation of form, graceful movement and rich colouration. Each study is imbued with vitality and a sense of the plant's individual spirit. They are nothing short of exquisite.

1. A Study of a Peony, *Paeonia suffruticosa* cultivar

A5472

2. A Study of a Honeysuckle, *Lonicera japonica*

A5485

3. A Study of a Bilimbi, *Averrhoa bilimbi*

A5487

4. A Study of a Sugar Apple, *Annona squamosa*

(A5454)

5. A Study of a Santol, *Sandoricum koetjape*

(A5478c)

6. A Study of a Canarium, *Canarium L.*

(A5471a)

7. A Study of a Pomelo, *Citrus maxima*

(A5487b)

8. A Study of an Ambarella, *Spondias dulcis*

(A5487a)

9. A Study of a Lychee, *Litchi chinensis*

(A5477a)

10. A Study of a Rose Apple, *Syzygium jambos*

(A5487a)

11. A Study of Chinese Cinnamon, *Cinnamomum cassia*

(A5472b)

12. A Study of a Fingered Citrus, *Citrus medica*

(A5478a)

13. A Study of a Water Caltrop, *Trapa natans*

(A5485a)

14. A Study of a Chinese Privet, *Ligustrum sinense*

(A5477)

15. A Study of a Hong Kong Hawthorn, *Rhaphiolepis indica*

(A5475a)

16. A Study of a Plumbago, *Plumbago zeylanica*

(A5475b)

17. A Study of a Chinaberry Tree, *Melia azedarach*

(A5485a)

18. A Study of a Fontanesia, *Fontanesia phillyreoides* subsp. *fortunei*

(A5486a)

19. A Study of a Plum, possibly *Prunus mume* or *P. salicina*

(A5472a)

20. A Study of Tea Olive, *Osmanthus fragrans*

(A5477b)

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

<sup>2</sup> Christie's London, 30 April 1997, lot 14.