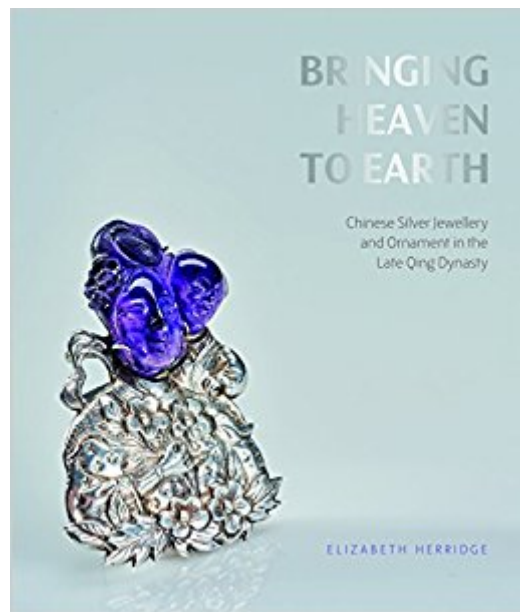




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Bringing Heaven To Earth: Chinese Silver Jewellery And Ornament In The Late Qing Dynasty



Synopsis

Shining a light on a little-known area of Chinese decorative arts from 1850 to 1930, this lavishly illustrated book presents dazzling jewelry from an important private North American collection. Immortals, dragons, magpies, monkeys and bats populate this pioneering book on Chinese jewelry of the late 19th to early 20th century. In so many aspects, these exquisite objects “made with silver, jade, tourmaline, amethyst, rock crystal, rose quartz, carnelian and serpentine” reveal a previously unexplored journey, not just from Heaven to Earth but from the West to the East and back again. The appeal of the jewelry is more than just aesthetic, and their varied design and decoration speak of the social, religious, economic and political climate of their time. Their period of production, from the Late Qing dynasty through to the 1930s, is one that has been insufficiently explored by historians as a whole. This was the time when the Treaty Ports attracted foreign residence and tourism, when Western visitors flocked to Shanghai and Peking to buy “Chinese” souvenirs, and when fashionable young Chinese of the Republican period embraced aspects of foreign life and design. Many of the pieces naturally reflect Chinese designs and motifs, particularly in the bold association of colors, their use of “re-purposed” carved plaques and the emphasis on luck-bearing emblems. Western influence creeps in, however, in the form of secure box-and-tongue clasps and the occasional maker’s or retailer’s names, as well as stamps such as “Chinese sterling”. Do these maker’s marks suggest that the items were produced for export or do they simply represent a nod to modernity? In the many fine photographs and her detailed descriptions of each piece, Elizabeth Herridge offers a full survey of the wide variety of the complex motifs involved and their significance. She presents a groundbreaking contribution to our understanding of early 20th-century China, its handicraft production, its commercial activities, and the last gasp of items such as mandarin court necklaces in the face of modern fashions.

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Customer Reviews

"A beautifully designed book with a wealth of material | enjoyable strictly for the beautiful photography, but also for anyone with a serious interest in Chinese jewelry." (Textile Research Center)

Elizabeth Herridge is the former Managing Director of the Guggenheim Hermitage Museum, Las Vegas. A veteran of Wall Street, she operates a London based specialist art and arts management consultancy (elizabeth-herridge.com). She is a graduate of Wellesley College, SOAS, the Getty Leadership Institute (MLI) and a specialist in Qing Dynasty decorative arts.

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