View near Tientsin on the Peiho River, China

William Alexander

Sold

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Description

William Alexander (1767-1816)
View near Tientsin on the Peiho River, China

Signed with initials lower right
Watercolour over pencil on laid paper
23.9 by 38.3 cm., 9 ¼ by 15 in.

Provenance:
Private Collection, Portugal

Alexander accompanied George, 1st Lord Macartney (1737-1806) on his Embassy to China which left England in September 1792 and reached Chusan on 3rd July. Alexander was employed as the official artist for the journey and his watercolours were used to illustrate Sir George Staunton's account of it published in 1797.

In Chusan they found Chinese junks to take them up the Peiho River to Peking and they set off on 6th August, reaching Tientsin on 11th August. The Secretary to the Embassy Sir George Staunton described Tientsin as a `heavenly spot' with a good climate and fertile soil. Alexander exhibited two views of Tientsin at the Royal Academy - a large watercolour of the town, in 1796, is in the Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester (see Susan Legouix, Image of China - William Alexander, 1980, p. 50, no. 27, ill.) and `View of Tien-Sing' in 1800.

On 16th August, they reached Tungchow, twelve miles from Peking, and they continued to the capital by cart, although the ambassador was taken by sedan chair. From there the ambassador set off to see the Emperor at his summer residence at Jehol. Alexander did not accompany him and was forced to remain in Peking, a great disappointment as he was keen to see the Great Wall. In November Alexander set off on the return journey to England on the Hindostan and reached home in September 1794.

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