

luohan tang



百寶嵌
大櫃一對

one hundred treasures
pair of cabinets

羅漢堂





大櫃一對

紅地戛金/彩繪、百寶嵌
清代，18世紀早期
127x198x63.5公分
美國私人舊藏

*百寶嵌主要材質為：螺鈿、玻璃、有色玻璃、染色軟木、雞翅木、孔雀石、滑石、其它硬石、大漆

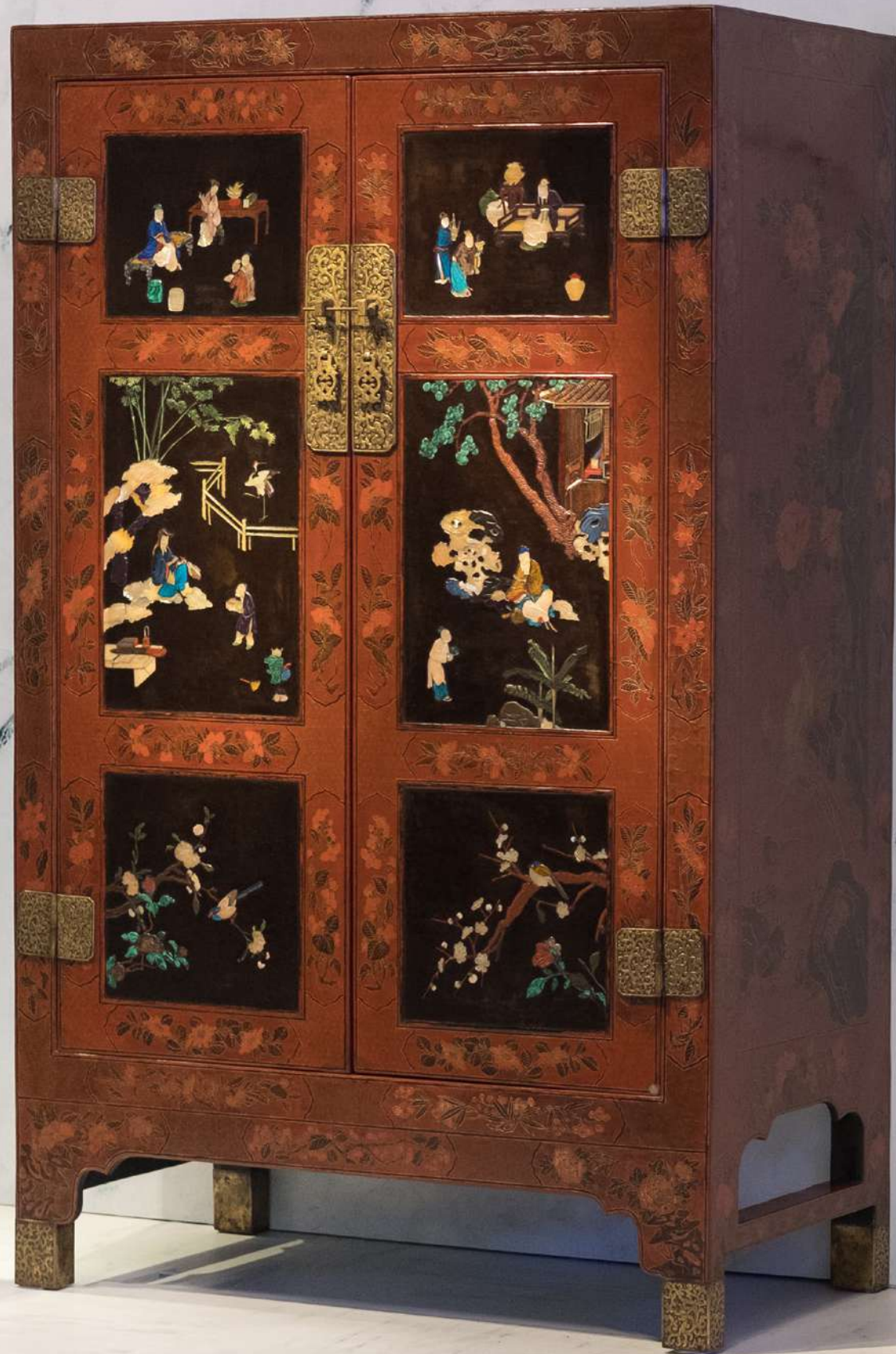
pair of cabinets

Qiangjin and Caihui lacquer on red background embellished with baibao inlay,
Qing Dynasty, late 17th/early 18th century,
127x198x63.5cm, old German then American collection.*

** baibao include mainly: mother of pearl, glass, colored glass, colored bone, colored soft wood, jichimu, zitan, rosewood, malachite, steatite, other hardstones, gesso and lacquer.*

figure 1 : 清 冷枚 (circa 1670-1740)《養正圖解》之桐叶封弟







此對大櫃氣度不凡，造型厚重而優雅，畫面富麗堂皇，工藝手段高超。此例當屬鳳毛麟角，集兩種大漆裝飾技法，即戥金/彩繪及百寶嵌於一體，門板上的黑色與櫃子主色調紅漆形成濃烈的對比。裝飾上最顯著的特徵乃嵌入黑漆背景之硬石，有色玻璃及雕刻螺鈿，其鑲嵌技法出神入化。而珍寶般的品質則令四扇門身價倍增，令觀者睹物驚艷。

此櫃是經典的方角櫃，櫃門對開，中間不設門桿。正面壺門連綿至側面。側板壺門下安棖，以加固結構¹。櫃內安置一對抽屜及擱板。

每扇門的裝飾類似中式窗戶，有三塊面板，中間一塊大的豎板，上面一塊方板，下方一塊小橫板。高浮雕鑲嵌產生立體效果，漆色的鮮明對比增加了縱深感，黑色場景給櫃子的紅色表面營造出三維境界。色彩鮮亮的各種材質宛如藍色電光賦予了大櫃生命和歡樂。為了使形象更加逼真，藝術家潛心展現細節，比如透明玻璃燈籠後面繪的蠟燭，窗戶玻璃後面的透雕等等，平添了幾多詩意。

每塊面板的裝飾主題則由其所居位置而定。底下的面板表現枝頭花鳥，中間那塊展示文人在戶外花園休閒，最上是文人閒坐在家，聽琴賞樂，近有侍者。從上至下的移動宛如從最內在的親密空間走到最超脫的自然環境它反映了圍繞男子的向外擴張的一個圖..家庭，社會和大自然有些人物故事也許表現統治者的美德善行（參考張志輝的說明）。這些情節收錄在康熙贈與諸子的書籍中，這些書籍用來讓王子們受到良好的教育。這幾幅人物故事的風格不禁令人聯想起焦秉貞（活躍在1780至26年）及其學生冷枚（約1670年至1742年）的繪畫。服飾上藍色的大量運用，豐潤的臉龐，優雅不凡的體型，建築和家具精緻的細節都是這種風格的折射。兩位畫家均是康熙御用的重要的繪畫及插圖大師。

櫃門框架及整個櫃體表面僅用戥金/彩繪技法處理。正面邊框，側板及櫃門分別由一連串花卉開光組成，周圍錦地細密。櫃子側板全幅展示帶框的湖石花鳥側。山的圖案構圖水準極高。在狹窄的空間中進退有方騰挪自如。每幅畫表現一對懸崖下的鳥兒，怒放的四季花卉從石壁中探出，無視地球引力。它們仿照的是真畫軸。此花鳥形象或許由一流的畫家提供。通常大漆櫃子的這個部位是各種形狀的開光，展示從流行畫冊裡拷貝過來的版畫圖案。這對大櫃精雕細刻，構圖質量得以保證。不僅是整體形象，連鳥羽乃至花卉細節皆用描金勾勒。其量之巨，令櫃子熠熠生輝，尤其在蠟燭或日落餘輝的暖光映照之下。

漂亮的鍍金銅活令此對櫃子錦上添花。合頁及拍子頗為厚重，上刻卷草及小螭龍，入木三分。

此對櫃子不同凡響，表現了文人優雅的生活環境，洋溢幸福歡快的氣氛，同時又充滿了恬靜，安逸和詩情畫意，實為楷模。

¹ 所有百寶嵌大櫃，無論是大漆還是硬木，側面的牙板都會直接落在一個起加固作用的橫棖上。在一些硬木櫃子上此類橫棖被挪走了。

玻璃鑲嵌

用於這對大櫃裝飾的鑲嵌材料最令人感興趣、它是當時最貴的玻璃。當時如果沒有皇帝親自恩准誰也不能擅用玻璃。這些玻璃由指定的玉匠切割。櫃子上有三種玻璃。清澈透明的白玻璃，不透明的深藍玻璃和不透明的中藍玻璃。所有其它顏色都是通過將所需的顏色塗抹在透明的白玻璃後面獲得的。清代早期，中國工匠不太擅長製造玻璃材料。他們尤其生產不出優質的有色玻璃。英國布里斯托爾博物館的一件深藍色玻璃碗被斷代為明末清初。該碗的表面帶有微裂紋。這意味著表面曾作過化學處理，去掉了光澤，以獲得亞光和乾燥的表面。其原因是組成玻璃的各種成分的比例欠佳。有趣的是，後來發現大櫃上鑲嵌的深藍色玻璃也微微開裂。在修復過程中用了特殊的處理方法，恢復了玻璃的光澤。康熙皇帝醉心於鮮亮的顏色，他數次派遣特使到歐洲，邀請上釉匠人和玻璃工匠前來中國。1684年，在康熙多次向法國皇帝路易十四請求派遣有特殊技能的工匠來中國後，四名法國傳教士於1688年2月抵華。其中有個叫李明（Louis Le Comte），他向康熙進獻了幾本藝術和建築書籍，包括一本玻璃製作方面的專著《玻璃作坊》。

1696年，紀理安（Kilian Stumpf）教父開始在帝都的法國傳教士區成立玻璃作坊，離蠶池口的法國教堂僅一箭之遙。

因此，大櫃上使用的玻璃很有可能是在17世紀最後十年裡生產的。這段時間中國玻璃工匠正在體驗來自歐洲的近似的配方，而紀理安監製的玻璃作坊尚未全面建成並投入運營。不久，這家作坊就製造出紅、黃、綠和許多不同彩色的玻璃，這在1705年康熙皇帝的禮品中列有清單，有案可稽。（參見：法國傳教士所記載的康熙皇帝玻璃作坊。作者：艾米麗·B·柯蒂斯）

參考書

參考書

在案頭小文玩中，比如紫禁城所藏的匣盒、硯台，確有多種工藝並施的器物，但未見一件用在如此巨大的器物上。就每種技法，我們可例舉出如下實例：

- 北京故宮博物院有幾件百寶嵌黑漆大櫃，大多數年代較此件晚。
- 國家博物館藏有一對百寶嵌紅漆大櫃，展現的人物眾多。儘管帶有萬曆款，卻是典型的清代風格，在表面的裝飾下有一層明顯的描金雲龍紋飾。百寶嵌的年代當在清中晚期。
- 紐約大都會博物館展出一對風格相似的黃花梨花鳥紋頂箱大櫃。
- 巴黎吉美博物館展出一隻黑漆小櫃，風景題材，百寶鑲嵌極為精緻。
- 吉美博物館還有一件四門櫃，亦用戩金/彩繪技法表現山石花鳥，與此件作品相仿（羽毛的刻工，鳥的大小，顏色……）

出處

此對櫃子來自一位德裔美國人的數量龐大的亞洲藝術收藏（超過1,000件），其中大多數為玉器。

This exceptional pair of cabinets delivers an image of wealth and sophistication together with that of power rendered by its solid yet elegant proportions. It is a rare example which combines four techniques of lacquer ornamentation, Qiang Jin/Caihua, Tianqi and Baibao Qian, resulting in a rich and strong contrast between the black background of the door panels and the red colors that dominate the rest of the cabinets. The most striking feature of the ornamentation is achieved by the skilled use of the hard stones, colored glass and mother of pearl carved elements inlaid in the black lacquer background. Their jewel like quality gives the four doors a precious and vivid visual impact.

Of classical square corner style, each cabinet closes with two doors without a central bar. The shape of the front apron continues on the sides. Below the side aprons, a stretcher reinforces the structure¹. The inside is equipped with two horizontal drawers and shelves.

The decor of each door is composed in the same manner as Chinese windows, with three registers, a large upright rectangle in the center, above a square one and below a small horizontal rectangle. The three dimensional effect of the high relief inlays adds to the sense of depth obtained by the stark contrast of the lacquer colors so that the black scenes really open a third dimension in the red surface of the cabinets. The variety of materials with such bright colors as the electrical blue infuses the pieces with the energy of life and joy. To render even more realistic images, the artists took great care in minute details, the candle painted behind the transparent glass lantern, the openwork behind the glass of a window, among others, adding to the whole poetry.

The theme of the frames ornamentation depends on the position. The lower register shows birds among flower branches. In the middle one, a scholar spends time in leisure, outdoor in a garden. At the top register, the scholar sits at home attended by his servants. The move from top to bottom goes from the most inside intimacy to the most detached scenes of nature. It shows the enlarging circle around a man: family, society, nature. Some of the figure scenes might illustrate the good behavior of the virtuous sovereign (see details infra by Zhang Zhihui). Those scenes were included in the exclusive books for the good education of the crown princes, presented by the reigning Emperor to his sons. The style of those figure scenes recall strongly the paintings by Jiao Bingzhen (active ca. 1680-1726) and his student Leng Mei (ca. 1670-1742). The extensive use of the blue colours for the garments, the soft rounded faces, the elegant and dignified body shapes, the refined details of the architecture and the furniture are typical of this style. Both are important masters known to have work for Kangxi for paintings and illustrations as well.

1. On all the cabinets (lacquer or hardwood) with baibao inlay the apron is cut out of the same line and a stretcher reinforces the sides. This stretcher has been removed on some hardwood pieces.



The frames of the doors and all the surfaces of the bodies of the cabinets are treated solely in Qiangjin/Caihui and Tianqi techniques. The frames of the fronts, the sides and the doors are composed of a succession of cartouches filled with flowers against a dense brocade pattern achieved in tianqi technique. The pictures displayed on the sides of the cabinets reveal a high level of composition skills. They make a powerful use of the available space. Each image shows a pair of birds down the side of a cliff where blooming flowers of the four seasons are challenging the gravity. They imitate real scroll paintings. First grade painters of the period might have provided specific drawings for those images. More often, on lacquer cabinets, cartouches of different shapes are to be found at this location, displaying images after woodblock prints taken from popular albums. The quality of the composition is served, here, by an exquisite engraving work. Not only the outlines of the images but also the feathers of the birds and details of the flowers are highlighted by golden engraved lines. Their numerous quantity enlightens the cabinets with a precious glow, which reveals in particular under the warm light of a candle or at sunset.

Outstanding gilded brass mounts complete those luxurious pieces. The hinges and the lock plates, cut in thick plates of brass, are deeply engraved with small coiled chi dragons detailed with a flowery style.

All the features of this extraordinary pair of cabinets convey a feeling of happiness and joy for the benefit of an exemplary life spent in precious surroundings, nonetheless filled with quietness, ease and poetry.

Luohan, 2017

glass inlay

The most interesting and at the time the most precious material to have been used for inlay in the ornamentation of this pair of cabinets is glass. Glass then could not be used without an authorization by the Emperor in person. It was carved by specialized jade workers. There are three kinds of glass on the cabinets. The white crystal clear transparent glass, a deep blue opaque glass and a middle blue opaque glass. All the other colors are obtained by painting the desired color behind the transparent white glass.

Chinese workers were not very skilled in the making of glass material in the early Qing. In particular, they could not produce good colored glass. A deep blue glass bowl in the Bristol museum is given a late Ming early Qing date. The bowl had crizzled. It means that the surface had gone through a chemical process that ate up its glossiness for a mat and dried aspects. This is due to a bad proportion of the different ingredients composing the glass basis. Interestingly on the cabinet the inlaid blue glass had also crizzled, when discovered. A special treatment during the restoration process enabled it to give back its luster.

Emperor Kangxi were fond of fresh and bright colors and sent several time envoys to Europe to request enameller and glass makers to come to China. After one of those requests made in 1684 to the French king Louis XIV, for specialized craftsmen, among other's four French missionaries arrived in Beijing in February 1688. One of them, Louis Le Comte, SJ (Li Ming, 李明) presented Emperor Kangxi with several books about the Arts and Architecture, including a book entitled « La Verrerie » about glass making.

In 1696 father Kilian Stumpf, SJ (Ji Lian, 紀理安) started to establish the glass making house in the French missionaries quarters of the Imperial City, close to the French church (on Canchikou - 蠶池口).

It is therefore most probable that the glass elements used on the cabinets were made during the last decade of the 17th century. When the Chinese glass makers were experiencing new approximate recipes coming from Europe, before the full establishment and running of the glass making workshop under father Stumpf's supervision. This one quickly achieved red, yellow, green and many different colors as listed in 1705 of gifts made by Emperor Kangxi. (See : French Missionary Records for the Kangxi Emperor's Glass Workshop, 法國傳教士所記載的康熙帝玻璃工作坊, Emily Byrne Curtis).

References

Although small table objects such as boxes or ink stones do exist in the collections of the Forbidden City, which shows similar joined techniques, no other large piece of furniture as those is known to us. For each technique, we can name :

- Several black lacquer cabinets with baibao inlaid, most of later date, are kept in the collection of the Palace Museum Beijing.
- A pair of red lacquer cabinets inlaid with baibao is displayed in the National Museum, Beijing. These cabinets show scenes with numerous people. Although with a Wanli mark, they are of typical Qing style. A first gold ornamentation with dragons among clouds is evident below the current decor. The baibao inlaid should be of middle to late Qing Dynasty.
- A pair of Huanghuali cabinets with dingxiang with similar style of birds and flowers ornamentation is displayed in the Metropolitan Museum, New York.
- The Guimet Museum, Paris shows a small black lacquer cabinet with a very fine work of baibao illustrating a landscape.
- The Guimet Museum displays also a cabinet with four doors enlivened with birds on rocks among flowers treated with the Qiangjin/Caihui technique, much in the style of our cabinets (the work of the feathers, the size of the birds, the colors, ...)

Provenance

The pair of cabinets comes from an extensive Germano-American collection of Asian art (more than 1000 pieces) mostly dedicated to jade.



