*To Our Hallways*

# Objects in Frames

## Displaying Foreign Collectibles in Early Modern China and Europe

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## Frames and Framings: Transcultural Approaches and Case Studies

Frameworks, frames and framings were studied from a variety of disciplinary perspectives during the second half of the twentieth century. Philosophers conceptualized different types of material and immaterial by-works in between objects and their surroundings.[1] Linguists categorized prefaces and postscripts as framing devices for bodies of text.[2] The analyses of the frames of performances and screenings play an important role in postmodern theater and film studies,[3] while sociologists have worked on the framings of everyday experiences.[4] Within the field of art history, pedestals, plinths and socles have been studied as material framings for European sculptures.[5] Within the study of painting, the analysis of pictorial framing strategies has contributed to supporting the claim that "self-aware images"[6] that conspicuously display different modes of framing, for example through the representation of pictures-within-pictures, constitute an important aspect of visual modernity. Yet, as recently pointed out, it is "a visible fact that the meta-painting, or if a less loaded term is preferred, the embedded or 'nested' image, comes into its fullest flowering in Europe at precisely the moment, somewhere around 1600, when it is falling out of use in China."[7] While not all work on modes of pictorial framing in European paintings presents arguments related to "the West" and its "modernity"[8], the recent inclusion of non-Western images in discourses on meta-painting challenges earlier positions in the field.[9] In addition to pictorial framing strategies *within* the image, three-dimensional European picture frames have been exhibited and historicized,[10] contextualized and theorized.[11]

Non-European framings studied include the architectural space of the Mihrab, the representation of windows in Mughal painting and the image–text relationships in Chinese books.[12] Only in the last decade has research addressed transcultural framings, examining frames as part of the constitutive process of the meeting and merging of cultures. Among these studies, Gregory Minissale's *Framing Consciousness in Art: Transcultural Perspectives* is the most comprehensive.[13] Minissale examines concepts of framing "in art history, philosophy and consciousness studies" considering "the logic of framing" as "the most important epistemological structure shared by these disciplines."[14] He also discusses a wide variety of examples, such as pictures-in-pictures in painting, photography and film and in what he calls "non-European images on the edge"[15] including Mughal paintings. Adding "models of consciousness, notions of symmetry and parallel process"[16] to art historical and philosophical approaches as tools of investigation, he arrives at a similar criticism of "art history's continual characterization of the painting-in-the-painting as a token of Euro-American modernist self-reflexivity" to that formulated in relation to Chinese paintings and briefly outlined above. Research on early modern print culture also offers insights into the processes and aesthetics of transcultural framing. Examples include paratexts that provide frames for translated European texts in Chinese treatises, mediating between different types of knowledge,[17] and Netherlandish maps re-framed in response to Japanese pictorial conventions – a process of appropriation that allows for visual and geographic decentralization.[18] As argued elsewhere, "despite differences in the roles and aesthetics of pictorial by-works in China and Europe, in both cultures Sino-European printed imagery made use of pre-existing pictorial strategies of framing as powerful tools in the visual appropriation of the foreign."[19] Processes of visual and material appropriation are also exemplified by the "re-framing" of Netherlandish print culture and object surfaces in early modern artifacts made in China. The act of transcultural re-framing is inevitably also an "act of re-layering, a sophisticated mediation between the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional potentials of surface layers … The resulting EurAsian layers escape binary divisions into 'European' and 'Asian' elements, clear-cut 'Netherlandish' or 'Chinese' components. They instead materialize a complex interweaving of transcultural authorships."[20] In comparison with the study of painted and printed imagery, framings of three-dimensional objects in Europe and Asia have received little scholarly attention, with the notable exception of the study of Chinese collectibles staged in Western museums and exhibitions from the early nineteenth century onwards[21] and in nineteenth- and twentieth-century museum spaces in China.[22] Since the publication of *Exhibiting Cultures* in 1991,[23] critical readings in the field of museum studies have contributed significantly to the understanding of Western displays of foreign cultures in a postcolonial framework. The idea that the beholder's gaze "frames" a culturally or otherwise constructed "other" as presented through material objects in a display case or the lens of a camera has also moved beyond academia: the results of an internet search on the phrase "framing the other" include a museum-based conference and a documentary[24] as well as a platform for sharing ideas and knowledge about contemporary art and the role of art institutions called "Framer Framed," a title taken from a compilation of film scripts and interviews.[25]

This book provides an innovative re-examination of source materials and enhances our theoretical understanding of the material, cultural and conceptual dimensions of framing strategies in art and culture by complementing contemporary approaches towards the framing of "China" in museum settings and offering an in-depth treatment of early modern Sino-European material culture in its respective Chinese and European contexts. *Objects in Frames* brings together the philosophical and sociological dimensions of object framing, their material manifestations (and related visual aspects) and considerations of cultural difference. To achieve this, the frame is used not just as metaphor, but also as *tertium comparationis* for cultural comparison. Collections of elite cultures in early modern China and Europe are examined through case studies to provide an in-depth analysis of the processes by which foreign objects, artifacts and natural items were framed as collectibles in new cultural contexts.

Chapter one, “Porcelain in Frames: The Europeanization of Chinese Ceramics through Sixteenth-Century Metal Mounts,” focuses on the incorporation of foreign goods into the framework of the late sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century European *Kunstkammer*. Precious metal mounts literally reshaped raw materials and artifacts, including Chinese porcelain, aesthetically framing and Europeanizing it in the process, thereby mediating between the foreign object and the European collection in which it was newly embedded. Applying the concept of the *parergon*, a term used within the milieu of the sixteenth-century Northern European *Kunstkammer* and later redeployed by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) as “by-work,” the chapter conceptualizes the aesthetics of metal frames added to rare collectibles.

Mounted porcelain has a special place among objects in Sino-European exchange and eighteenth-century “rococo mounts” on ceramics, in particular, have received much scholarly attention. Categorized as “an ornamental mode to enhance” Asian wares, Kristel Smentek has interpreted eighteenth-century French mounts as signaling “more dynamic engagements with imports from distant lands” and an indicator of the ways in which “objects mediated in the imagining of eighteenth-century selves in relation to, rather than in opposition to, an other.”[26] Chinese porcelain in eighteenth-century European mounts has also been conceptualized as belonging to a “new category of objects,” called “boundary objects” (*objets frontière*). These artifacts have been understood to conspicuously embody and display the meeting and merging of elements from different cultures, originating in “the East” and “the West” respectively. Sabine Du Crest has mapped boundary objects through the use of social terminology. She describes some of them as leading a “double life” (*double vie*), and interprets others as representations of a “marriage” (*mariage*) of different parts and members of a “patchwork family” (*famille recomposée*).[27] While boundary objects, including mounted Chinese ceramics, have been endowed with such quasi-human characteristics, the power of transcultural framings as Europeanizing devices in these objects, as well as the European understanding of the frame as a by-work (*parergon*), remain unexplored in relation to these artifacts. Scholarship on the appropriation of porcelain in “global history” has addressed sixteenth-century mounts on ceramics and recognized “the mounting in gilt metal” as “an important part of the exceptionalizing process” of porcelain in English and European collections that “further acted to transform the ceramics from one shape to another, from a simple (but unfamiliar) bowl shape, for example, to a grand cup with a high foot and a domed lid, in European style.” The present study further supports earlier claims, made by Stacey Pierson and others that this “physical transformation … represented a very localized form of appropriation.”[28] Yet, it moves away from the study of the pivotal pieces of porcelain, which are key to earlier studies,[29] to the study of the mounts themselves, adding a comparison with non-European (including Chinese) metal mountings on porcelain and other rare collectibles and an in-depth contextualization of the specificity of European mounts as by-works (*parerga*). This chapter argues that mounting changed the collector's engagement with the surfaces of foreign collectibles and thereby served the Europeanization of the haptic encounter with porcelain. In addition, it reveals the economic and social implications of mounting and investigates the semantics of framing and their meanings within early modern European systems of aesthetic appreciation, allowing for a conceptualization of mounts on porcelain as frames.

Chapter two, "Staging the Foreign: Global Arts at Emperor Kangxi's Observatory," analyzes a case of European objects re-framed within a Chinese context: the astronomical instruments designed for Qing dynasty Emperor Kangxi (r. 1662–1722) by the Flemish Jesuit Verbiest in 1673. The European instruments were Sinified through sculpted pedestals (*zuo* 座) and semi-architectural shells (*tai* 臺) and staged the foreign at the center of the ritually defined spaces of Chinese display, the "spiritual platform" (*lingtai* 靈臺), as the imperial observatory was called. Drawing on visual and textual sources from the period, the chapter argues that semi-architectural shells (*tai* 臺) conceptually link socially and architecturally defined platforms to artifact pedestals (*taiji* 臺几), connecting the politics of (imperial) display to the aesthetics of object collections.

The chapter highlights the function of the mount as mediating between beholder and object, but also between two different culturally defined systems of collecting and display. It draws upon scholarship on the study of object supports in Chinese display settings,[30] but adds a transcultural case study that materializes the meeting of European and Chinese systems of object framing. The chapter's focus on transcultural object supports in seventeenth-century China connects to Kyoungjin Bae's work on eighteenth-century tables in and in between Britain and China, among them a European-style table that serves as object support to a variety of imperial collectibles in the painting *Shi yi shi er*, a famous representation of the collections of Emperor Qianlong (r. 1736–1795).[31] Bae's study concentrates on the Southern Chinese manufacturing and trading center Guangzhou. Within the framework of her argumentation on the craft-related changes and wider socio-cultural implications brought through the implementation of the non-Chinese furniture shape of the round table, she refers to the imperial example to underline that "the adaptation of European form on round tables was not just a Cantonese phenomenon."[32] In contrast, the present study limits itself to imperial Beijing and the case of the transcultural framings of Emperor Kangxi's astronomical instruments, which connect to the material and aesthetic language of transcultural furniture, furniture-like devices and object supports, but, as this chapter argues, are more than marginal devices that mediate between beholder and object as they carry cosmological meanings and form material manifestations of Chinese imperial power.

Chinese mounts on foreign objects, which are understood as symbolic representations of imperial power, add to other examples of visual and material uses of the foreign in the political framework of the Qing Empire. In recent years, "a global perspective" has had an impact on the writing of Qing dynasty art history.[33] The uses of art in the "Qing encounter"[34] with Europe have been studied with a focus on the employment of European craftsmen and foreign knowledge at the Chinese court under the emperors Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong. Qing court painting has been comparatively well studied in this regard.[35] In addition, three-dimensional objects "constituted of Asian as well as European material and visual components" which can be understood as "EurAsian matters"[36] have received scholarly attention.[37] Chapter two studies another important example of Sino-European artifacts, shows how scientific objects could be re-framed through artistic means and argues that a newly crafted frame had the agency to transform the European designs of an armillary sphere or a celestial globe into a material manifestation of Qing imperial power.

Chapters one and two analyze and conceptualize the re-framing of two different kinds of artifacts, Chinese porcelain in Europe and European astronomical instruments in China. In addition to these examinations of transcultural framings on man-made objects, chapters three and four analyze the framing of (foreign) nature in Renaissance and Ming dynasty collecting. This part of the book concentrates on coral. In both cultures, coral fragments were associated with the creative potentials of art and nature and, as *pars pro toto* for maritime worlds, evoked connections between the liminal spaces of an indigenous sea and foreign oceans, imagined paradises and faraway material cultures. Coral therefore can be used to compare the framing of 'the same' natural fragment in two different cultures which leads to broader conclusions on the ways in which Chinese and European systems of collecting and display staged nature as a creative force.

A focus on framings allows this study to build on and transcend micro-historical investigations into coral's meanings in sixteenth-century Munich, Dresden, and Innsbruck, seventeenth-century Antwerp and early modern Genoa.[38] As the material's "resistance to decay" was one of the reasons why "European artists used it to allegorize Christ's passion,"[39] religious aspects of material framings of coral are briefly addressed in instances when objects of a religious nature had entered the *Kunstkammer*. Research on coral in the religious context of Buddhist iconography has shown that coral was perceived "as transformative matter" in Europe as well as China and that it had been artistically employed "to embody metamorphic elements, related to the resurrection of Christ and motifs from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* on the one hand and transformations of bodies in the context of Buddhist worship on the other."[40] Rather than studying coral through the lens of religion, as a constituent of global networks of the gemstone and jewel trade,[41] or as a European commodity that accrued "economic value and potent social agency"[42] in Qing dynasty China, this study focuses on the visual and material framings applied to the "densely paradoxical character of this substance"[43] in European and Chinese systems of collecting and display. The transformative power and ambivalent nature of coral is articulated in ancient and historical writings from Aristotle to Linnaeus in Europe and from Wei Yingwu to Li Shizhen in China,[44] but, as this book shows, is equally defined through a variety of visual and material framings applied to it by sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century collectors in China and Europe. Rather than studying the "ambivalent matter" of coral within the framework of gemstone or jewelry studies, this study focuses on coral's framings, using it as an example of a natural collectible placed in frames in early modern China and Europe.

## Studying Objects (and Texts): The Frameworks of Research

Long before non-European objects became readily available and affordable commodities at the end of the early modern period, they were rare collectibles in Europe. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, foreign curiosities were owned primarily by members of the elite who acquired them along mercantile and dynastic networks, interpreted them through pre-established scholarly discourses, classified them according to European ordering systems and displayed them using the practices of the *Kunstkammer*.[45] Similar things can be said in relation to collecting in early modern China. Collectors' manuals and inventories show that non-Chinese objects were a constituent of Ming and Qing collecting, classified as rare and curious items, in addition and opposition to indigenous collectibles belonging to the categories of the antique and the elegant.[46]

Starting with pioneering research on material culture in China, including non-Chinese objects,[47] the "global turn" in art history has augmented and changed scholarship on art in China during the past decade.[48] The study of artifacts (as related to, but different from paintings and prints) has played an important part in this process. Some scholars have focused on a reconstruction of the "global lives of things" as part of an "early modern material culture of connections" which includes China and Europe,[49] while others have examined instances of artistic "encounter" between the geographically and socio-politically defined entities of China and Europe.[50] Recent research suggests that it is the transcultural process itself (rather than specific artistic and material interchanges between China and Europe) that can help us to understand transcultural objects worldwide, arguing against China and the West as fixed entities and accepting both as mutually and globally entangled categories.[51] A focus on EurAsian artifacts as transcultural objects enables an understanding of Sino-European art as embedded in "entangled" or "crossed" histories,[52] while analyzing "EurAsian layers"[53] supports an understanding of objects "caught up in recursive trajectories of repetition and pastiche whose dense complexity makes them resistant to any particular moment"[54] in time in Europe, China and elsewhere. An examination of "EurAsian matters"[55] takes full account of materiality and thereby goes beyond an understanding of "entangled objects"[56] as merely "entangled in the webs of culture," subjected to culture's ability to refigure the object, reduce it to "an artefactual trace" and translate things into signs.[57]

The most recent book-length study dedicated to artifacts made and collected in early modern China, Jonathan Hay's *Sensuous Surfaces*, interprets objects as "*thinking* materially" with the body of the beholder, acknowledging the potential of artifacts to "simultaneously embody metaphoric and affective potential"[58] and does not characterize objects by their Chinese or non-Chinese, European or non-European origins. Similarly, this study does not deny the existence of an affective power that speaks to the human body through artifacts, does not doubt an object's potential to lead one or many "global lives"[59] or question its belonging to a group of "objects in motion in the early modern age."[60] Yet, in addition to previous understandings of Chinese and non-Chinese artifacts, it wishes to exemplify and prove that a better understanding of the materiality, aesthetics, sociological and cultural implications of framing contributes meaningfully to the study of transcultural objects.

While collectors from Europe and China actively sought fragments of foreign natural and artificial material cultures, their systems of classifying them varied and have, of course, transformed since the sixteenth century. An item, identified today as an East Asian lacquerware casket, would appear in a sixteenth-century German inventory as "a small square box … of thin black wood and with gilded painting,"[61] containing cornelian and chalcedony formed like seal rings, a bird head cut in a glass-like material, a small sculpture of a dog and a tiny vessel carved out of chalcedony.[62] During the same period in a different place, lacquered caskets appeared in a 1591 Chinese treatise on elegant living described as "Japanese boxes, with four, six or nine compartments: take each compartment within the box interior for storing a Han dynasty jade seal or for collecting silver seals; use the lower part to assemble precious stones, amber, Guan kiln ware, green-blue eastern ceramics, antique scrolls and books."[63] Texts such as these are collectibles in their own right. By compiling semantic fields, information, ideas and concepts, inventories and collectors' manuals not only list and document historic sites, but also create and design spaces on the page in the reader's imagination. Through their content as well as their structure, sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century texts on collecting evoke buildings and interiors, the way furniture and furnishings were organized and the places where things were stored and should be viewed.[64] Based on historical room settings, they arrange information in a specific array, creating sections and constructing hierarchies. Within these textual spaces the literal object body and more metaphorical "bodies of information" are put on display to a reading audience.

Texts on collecting have been studied in their own right. Craig Clunas' study of a Chinese collector's treatise, Wen Zhenheng's *Superfluous Things* of 1616–1620,[65] forms a milestone in the study of objects in the early modern world and, since its publication in 1991, has been cited by scholars working on artifacts in China as well as by researchers working outside the field of Ming studies. The book examines Wen Zhenheng's *Superfluous Things* in relation to textual, visual and material sources to present an argument in support of an early Chinese modernity as articulated through Ming material culture collecting. Through the study of one particular text on objects, it provides an important gateway to our understanding of things of the past. In contrast, Jonathan Hay's later *Sensuous Surfaces* puts the study of artifacts center stage with an emphasis on human–object interaction. *Objects in Frames* draws on Clunas' seminal work, but uses collectors' manuals, inventories, correspondence, diaries (*biji*) and other written evidence not in support of claims on early modernity or text–object relationships, but by discussing terminology and other text-related matters only when they are of primary importance to a better understanding of objects and their frames. A focus on (transcultural) framings allows for fruitful re-readings of primary sources "against the grain,"[66] as evidenced by chapter two's discussion of Jesuit correspondence sent from China to Europe in an effort to add to (and partly contradict) previous interpretations of the same sources. Other citations from period correspondence, including messages from the merchants Li Rihua (1565–1635) and Hans Fugger (1531–1598), provide insights into period perceptions and support arguments related to frames and framings. Many of the European primary sources cited have also been studied as texts in their own right. A good example is the inventory of the Munich *Kunstkammer* of 1598, which is published in three volumes that combine a transcribed version of the inventory with extensive commentary on each group of collectibles mentioned and a series of essays.[67] Similarly, the 1600–1601 inventory of the collections by Augsburg merchant Octavian Fugger (1549–1600) has been published in a monograph which presents a careful transcription alongside an analysis of the text, the object categories and a selection of its collectibles.[68] A number of early modern inventories have also been discussed in a special issue of the *Journal of the History of Collections*.[69] The editors understand inventories as texts that "attempt to translate material things into linguistic statements"[70] while the journal contributors examine relationships between texts and collectibles, written systems of order and spatial relationships. The present study does not aim at a better understanding of inventories as texts, but builds on the text-focused work of previous scholars while drawing on information offered by object lists to better understand the semantic frames applied to certain collectibles.

An interpretation of Chinese things as exhibited in the framework of the early modern European *Kunstkammer* is complicated by the fact that during the sixteenth century Chinese objects were subsumed alongside other foreign objects under the label "Indian" (*indianisch*).[71] While it is possible to trace some of the "Indian" items back to China, this identification is a contemporary one, not representative of the early modern period. The use of the term "Chinese" to discuss early modern Asian objects in Europe is therefore problematic. It is employed here because the label "Indian" seems incorrect today, though within the period it denoted non-European origin. Similarly, the designation of an object's origin as coming from the "Western Ocean" (*xi yang* 西洋) signified it was foreign and indicated trade through the Indian ocean region to China. Both terms denote spaces far away. "India" in the early modern European usage stood for today's South, East and South East Asia as well as the Americas – all spaces which were further from Europe than the Mediterranean and Africa. In fifteenth-century China "the end of [the] East Ocean is hence the beginning of [the] West Ocean,"[72] and further away and more difficult to reach than those territories that today constitute Japan, Korea, the Philippines and Taiwan. The perceptions of these geographic regions in terms of object provenance are subject to the socially defined frameworks of collecting and display, within which the labels "India" and "Western Ocean" seemed appropriate and sufficiently accurate. As argued in the two last chapters of this book, faraway spaces of nature, labeled as "Ethiopia," "India" or the "Western Ocean," were spheres defined by overlapping characteristics associated with ancient, mythologically defined and geographically removed foreign sites. Adjectives such as "Indian," that are geographically specific today, had more diverse meanings in the sixteenth century. It is therefore important to remain aware that the "Chinese object" was part of a larger continuum of "Indian" material culture and that a European thing in China was one small constituent of the broader material cultures associated with the "Western Ocean." In the same vein, this study takes for granted that words such as "Chinese" or "European" label groups of people and objects and thereby partially obscure the existence of underlying entanglements that could also be fruitfully investigated under the umbrella of transcultural studies and the framework of "connected histories."[73] While the "connected" and "disconnected" art histories of China and Europe are relevant and briefly discussed elsewhere,[74] this book aims to explicitly distinguish between a "European" object and its "Chinese" frame and vice versa to highlight and understand transcultural framings in EurAsian objects.

Textual framing of the material object happens first through the application of terminological frames to a new thing. A good example of this is the thirteenth-century term *porcellane* and its sixteenth-century variations *Pourzelanae*,[75] *Porzelana*,[76] *purselyne* or *purselyn*.[77] The expression *porcellane* first appeared as a term for ceramic objects made in China in *The Travels of Marco Polo* of 1298, where the same expression could also denote cowry shells.[78] The neologism *porcellane* likened the ceramic object's foreign materiality (rather than its decoration or shape) to the exotic cowry shell (*porcellana*). Etymologically, the shell had received its name due to the resemblance of its shape to a *vulva* (colloquially *porcello*),[79] while shell and porcelain were linked by their comparably white, smooth and reflecting materiality.[80] The labeling of European mechanical clock mechanisms as *zi ming zhong* 自鳴鐘 ("self-sounding bells") provides us with a Chinese example of a commonly accepted new verbal frame for a hitherto unknown thing. The term *zi ming zhong* 自鳴鐘 is first mentioned in 1603.[81] It blends the traditional bell (*zhong* 鐘), which played an important role in Chinese ritual, with a remarkable "self-sounding" of the instrument, using a term applied to denote the cries of birds (*ming* 鳴). While the item is described as displaying "a mysterious and unknown art" by 1603,[82] the poems written in honor of the self-ringing bell by the Qing dynasty emperors Kangxi and his grandson Qianlong reveal more about the object's *zi* 自 – the self that makes the sound. Emperor Kangxi dedicated multiple poems to the self-ringing bell: "Day and night its endless movements are superior to those of the clepsydra/ Winding and unwinding they report the hour/ *Yin* and *yang* cannot change its nature."[83] In contrast, several decades later, his grandson Emperor Qianlong concluded his "Ode to a Self-Ringing Bell" with the lines "The clock's distinct sounds embody perfection/ The tunes herald [the time] in a variety of ways/ If you desire quietude/ Then you should not wind it up."[84] Kangxi, who was interested in and most likely well informed about the clock's mechanical operations,[85] described it as "winding and unwinding" out of itself, perpetuating in "endless" movement, attributing a metaphysical agency to the item whose universal "nature" could not be changed even by the cosmic powers of *yin* and *yang*. Qianlong's poem, on the other hand, ends by stressing human control over the device, starting with the description of a foreign timepiece, an "unusual treasure [that] arrived by ship,"[86] and concluding with the Chinese emperor's suggestion to stop the object's "self-sounding" if silence is preferred. While in his own "Ode to a Self-Ringing Bell" Kangxi writes, "The method originated in the West/ Through instruction we learn the ingenuity,"[87] putting himself in the place of a student, his grandson allows for the suppression of the "sounding" by the Chinese subject. While Qianlong's "Ode to the

Self-Ringing Bell" clearly privileges human over object agency, Kangxi's "Ode to the Self-Ringing Bell" indicates that the agency of the machine takes the place of human action, mechanically produced sounds rendering superfluous servants who announce the time.[88] Thus, attitudes towards the foreign collectible, as well as its "self" (*zi*自), the most abstract characteristic implied by the self-ringing bell neologism, depend on historical, social and cultural contexts, assuming entirely different historical roles even within the same genre of text created by Qing dynasty emperors in the time frame of three generations. While the interpretation of the object would change later, the neologism became commonly accepted, integrating an object, recognizably foreign through its enamel-on-metal materiality, mechanical apparatus and stylistic designs, into an existing indigenous language system.

The same can be argued for material frames. As chapter one shows, the practice of mounting porcelain appears early in European history. It is transformed throughout later centuries to the point where the aesthetics of European mounts are taken back to China and appropriated in eighteenth-century Guangzhou enamelware.[89] Like the framing of the foreign object through the thirteenth-century neologism *porcellane* which transformed into a variety of later European variations, the material frames for the new artifact also emerged at a certain point in time, became established, multiplied and transformed in the process. The mounts applied to the astronomical instruments discussed in chapter two provide a Chinese material appropriation of a foreign item which continues an established tradition of object framings. Like the term *zi ming zhong*, the mounts draw upon existing constituents of expression within the (material) language of things to integrate a foreign thing, inscribing it with newly configured Chinese characteristics. Like the term *porcellane*, which still exists today through the term porcelain, the glass covers of the artifacts discussed in chapter three underwent a transformation into transparent museum display cases. As a result of the spread of the public museum, which grew out of early European forms of collecting and came to prevail as a world-wide model,[90] glass is used to frame coral fragments in European as well as Chinese museum displays; however, the temporary display of collectibles in Chinese gardens discussed in chapter four was not institutionalized at a comparable scale despite late nineteenth-century efforts to do so locally[91] and the objects labeled as *zi ming zhong*, a term that is no longer in common use, lost their significance.

While verbal framings and neologisms had the potential to integrate recognizably foreign objects into existing indigenous language systems, the same applied to material frames, which had the power to appropriate something foreign within local languages of object display, providing it with a framework that was shared with non-foreign things, marking difference, but also creating nodes of connectivity and the possibility for comparison. It is therefore in a comparative and connective history of object framings in the early modern period, an era of "first globalization,"[92] where we encounter issues of transcultural importance that have the potential to meaningfully contribute to current debates on museum politics and strategies of display in a global world.