

An important gilt and polychrome-painted English Japanned leather eight-leaf screen, the tooled leather front decorated with courtly figures inhabiting a large garden with pagodas, trees, birds and fauna, the border decorated with vases and jardinières containing flowers, the reverse painted in black and decorated with scrolling vines, attributed to a follower of John Rowland (d. 1744), possibly John Hutton, Robert Halford or John/George Footman, London, St Paul's Churchyard, first half of the 18th Century.

England, First half of the 18th Century

Height: 112 ¹/₄ in. (285 cm)

Width: 166 ⁷/₈ in. (424 cm)

Literature:

Ralph Edwards, *The dictionary of English Furniture, Country Life*, London, 1954, III, p.60, fig.11.

E. Koldewey, "Gilt Leather Hangings in Chinoiserie and Other Styles: an English Speciality," *Furniture History Journal*, 2000, XXXVI, pp. 61-101, esp. p. 77, fig. 14

The present screen is an important example of English decorative arts made in embossed leather to imitate the highly prized Chinese lacquer screens of the late 17th century that reached Europe via English and Dutch trading companies. Although Chinoiserie leather screens of this kind are typically associated with Northern- and Southern-Netherlandish workshops, English manufacturers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century were also producing high quality leather panels to be used in screens and wall coverings. Correspondence between Dutch patrons and English craftsmen, such as the leading London leather-maker John Rowland (d. 1744), demonstrates the degree of cross-channel trade and collaboration in these wares.

While the current state of scholarship in this field prevents any firm attribution, highly idiosyncratic features, such as the black-and-white parquetry floor of the central pagoda, can also be found in a signed and dated screen by John Footman at Huis Doorn, Doorn, The Netherlands (fig.1). Footman (active 1760–1808) trained under Robert Halford, who in turn had taken over the workshop of one of John Rowland's assistants, Samuel Williams (active 1696–1752). However, in all likelihood, motifs and compositions such as this would have been passed on from master to apprentice, making it nearly impossible, at this stage, to further determine the attribution of the present screen.

Comparative Examples:

For related screens see an example in the Victoria and Albert Museum (no. W.69-1928), another screen formerly in the collection of Halstad B. Vander Poel and supplied by Vernay, New York, sold Christie's New York, 8 April 2004, lot 166, a further screen sold Christie's London, 28 November 2002, lot 188 and two others

illustrated in Janet Woodbury Adams, *Decorative Folding Screens*, London 1982, p. 49 and Michael Komanecky, *The Folding Image*, Yale, 1984, fig. 12, p. 26.



FIGURE 14. Six-leaf Chinoiserie gilt leather screen decorated with 'some few figures intermixt with Birds and Flowers' (H. 243 cm; W. of each leaf 54 cm), English, signed and dated by George Footman, 1766. Huis Doorn, Doorn, The Netherlands (inventory no. HuD 3772)