

Chinese Artist of the Straits School circa 1825



Rambutan

Reference: 10965

Dimensions:

Height: 38.20 cm / 15 in

Width: 48.70 cm / 19 3/8 in

Inscribed l.r.: Buah rambootan./Nephelium lappaceum./Monaecia pentandria L. and with further botanical notes, watercolour and bodycolour over traces of pencil with gum arabic, on laid paper watermarked: RUSE & TURNERS/1825 and with the Strasburg Lily

38.2 x 48.7 cm; 15 x 19 inches

Provenance

Sharon and Anne Hamlyn until 2019

KAREN TAYLOR

FINE ART

These fine examples of watercolours by Chinese Artists of the Straits School are in the style of the Chinese artists who worked for Sir Stamford Raffles in Singapore and Major-General William Farquhar (c.1771-1839) who was Resident of Malacca from 1808-1818. The frequent movements of trade and personnel between India and China, via ports on the Malay peninsula including Malacca and Prince of Wales Island, meant that collectors frequently had both Indian and Chinese drawings in their collections. Henry Noltie has suggested that this school is named 'Straits School' (see *Forgotten Masters Indian Painting for the East India Company*, ed. W. Dalrymple, 2019, pp. 78-82).

British patrons commissioned local Chinese artists to draw the flora and fauna of Malacca and the extensive botanical annotations in Jawi, the Malay script derived from Arabic, Romanised Malay, Latin and Greek and with reference to the Linnaean system of classification, created by Carl Linnaeus (1707-78) are typical of this material.

The accumulation of natural history drawings by officials of the British East India Company gave rise to the term 'Company School', now out of favour, which has been used to describe the work of Indian or Chinese artists for British patrons. The distinctive style is a result of a fusion of two artistic traditions, the European with its desire for realism and the Asian taste for a more stylised approach.

The eighteenth and early nineteenth century saw an enormous rise of interest in Europe in the study of natural history by both scientists and amateurs. A knowledge of the subject was considered to be an important part of a liberal education and many people studied 'natural philosophy' and the various branches of natural history. Accurate drawings were vital tools in classification as well as a reminder of the excited reaction to new discoveries.