

Chinese School



A Chinese woman swimming

Reference: 10968

Dimensions:

Height: 34.50 cm / 13⁵/₈ in

Width: 39 cm / 15³/₈ in

Oil on canvas

34.5 x 39 cm.; 13 3/8 x 15 1/4 inches

This intimate painting depicts a Chinese woman swimming, her hair loose, wearing a necklace. Her hands are particularly well handled as are the ripples of the water where they break the surface. The subject is highly unusual and no other versions of it are known.

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FINE ART

The iconography is also unknown. Many China Trade subjects are based on European prints but thus far no prototype has been found. Mermaids recorded in Cheng Zhai Za Ji, a book composed by Lin Kun in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), are described as beautiful females with fairy skin and very long hair, and no fish-like features.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries a school of painting known as the China Trade grew up in the treaty ports of Canton, Macao and Shanghai. Chinese artists produced pictures for the visiting merchants from Europe, India and America as souvenirs. The hybrid style reflects the more stylised approach of Chinese artists and their attempts to work in a more Western style to please their patrons.

With thanks to Patrick Conner for his comments on the work.