

# Framed – Chinese Porcelain in European Painting



Uta Lauer  
Hamburg University



Karl Erik Olov Hagdahl  
(1910-1991)  
***Ostindiska Kompaniet***,  
one of ca. 60 school  
posters, printed by  
Norstedt & Söner, 1946,  
89 x 70 cm, Malmö  
Museet.

OSTINDISKA KOMPANIET.

U.S. & NORSTEDT & SÖNER  
Malmö



*Lotus jar*, from the Gustaf Wallenberg collection, sold at Bukowski's, Important Spring Sale 2022.



OSTINDISKA KOMPANIET.



A Chinese Blue and White Porcelain *Lotus Jar*, Wanli period (1573-1620);

Leland Little Auction House, Hillsborough, North Carolina, U.S.A., sold for 4.000 US \$ in 2024.



OSTINDISKA KOMPANIET.



Giovanni Bellini (ca. 1430-1516), *Il festino degli dei* (The Feast of Gods), oil on canvas, 170 x 188 cm, dated **1514**, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

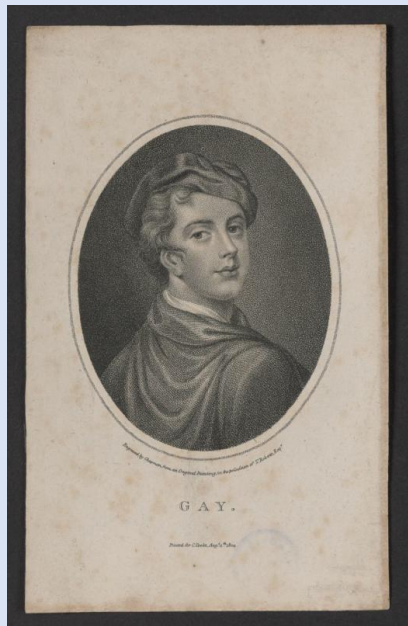
Oldest known depiction of Chinese porcelain in Europe; Bellini must have seen a genuine Chinese blue and white bowl.





East India Companies imported porcelain from China (and Japan) to Europe beginning in the 17<sup>th</sup> century; *Svenska Ostindiska Companiet* founded in **1731** in Göteborg; “porcelain fever”; English poet John Gay (1685-1732), satirical poem *To a Lady on Her Passion for Old China*:

*China's the passion of her soul;  
A cup, a plate, a dish, a bowl,  
Can kindle wishes in her breast,  
Inflame with joy, or break her rest.*





Willem Kalf (1619-1693),

*Still Life with a Chinese Bowl, Nautilus Cup  
and Other Objects*

dated 1662. 79.4 x 67.3 cm, oil painting.  
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza,  
Madrid.



Willem Kalf, detail: so-called “Sugar bowl” with with pairs of figures in relief representing the Eight Immortals of Daoism.

Bowl with Landscapes and the Eight Immortals, about 1620–40 (late Ming or transitional), Porcelain, 16.5 × 14.5 × 9.8 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Direct connection between painted “sugar bowl” and a real porcelain artefact:

Willem Kalf stayed at the home of Johannes le Thor (1601-1652) in 1653; le Thor was a jeweller, merchant and **director of the Dutch West India Company** in Amsterdam; owned many fine pieces of Chinese porcelain.





Jacques Linard (1597-1645), *The Five Senses and the Four Elements*, oil on canvas, 105 x 153 cm, dated 1627, Louvre Museum.

Note: bowl inscribed with Chinese characters, some incorrectly copied.





The tradition of painting still lifes including Chinese porcelain is still alive today, like in the work of Jan Frederik Johannes Nagtegaal (1920 - 2000), *Still life with old cheese and Chinese porcelain and gingerbread*, dated 1987, oil on canvas, 71 x 60 cm.

Nagtegaal worked as a restaurator at Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum, where he had first-hand experience with such wares.



Claes Grill  
(1705-1767)

director of the Grill  
Trading House,  
close ties with the  
East India trade  
through the Swedish  
East India Company



Carl Petter Hilleström  
(1760-1812), Svindersvik,  
oil on canvas, dated 1784,  
Nordiska Museet.

Svindersvik, Nacka, home  
of the Grill family.





It became fashionable among the Swedish nobility and wealthy families to order sets of table services with their coat of arms on it from Jingdezhen, China and have it delivered through the East India Company.

Grill coat of arms: stork with cricket in his beak.

*2. I servisen ingår tre stora terriner — av vilka en förlorat sitt lock. Dekoren är här densamma som på tallrikarna och de stora faten, mönstertyp A, men mönstrets detaljer är omdisponerade för att passa till kärlets form. Terrinens diam. 235 mm.*

*Plate with the Grill family coat of arms, D: 22 cm, Nordiska Museet.*





Bild 3—5. Båda dessa serviser kan ha beställts omkring 1740 av Claes Grill att utföras med mönster ritade av Christian Precht. Huvudmassan av den blå servisen (överst och t. v.) tillhör direktör Claes Grill, Stockholm, den polykroma (t. h.) greve Sigge Cronstedt och hans arvingar.



*Tureen* with the Grill family coat of arms, Nordiska Museet. Drawing of design sent to China, where it was hand painted on the porcelain.



Lovisa Ulrika (1744-1824) and Jean Abraham Grill (1736-1792). He was one of the directors of the East India Company.

Göteborgs Stadsmuseum.

They ordered a service from China through the East India Company for everyday use; “Pagoda pattern” (not with their coat of arms).

Godegård in Östergötland, country estate, where Jean Abraham Grill and his wife Lovisa Ulrika moved to in 1775.





Saltpincher, blue underglaze, pagoda pattern, L. 9.2, H: 3.2, W: 7 cm, Nordiska Museet.



Godegård, porcelain museum (Svenskt Porslinsmuseum); near Motala.



Charlotte and Cleive Hornstrand.

*The Family Grill East Indian Porcelain /  
Släkten Grills Ostindiska Porcelain. 2013.*





The import of Chinese porcelain soon inspired Swedish artists to experiment with these new, exotic designs. *Blue and White Octagonal Dish*, Jonas Åberg, Rörstrand, 1757, Röhsska Museum, Göteborg.

Tureholm castle, near Trosa; Count Ture Gabriel Bielke (1684-1763), interior design in Chinoiserie manner; rebuilt after fire in the 1720s; architect: Carl Hårleman (1700-1753; he also built Svindersvik manor, Nacka).





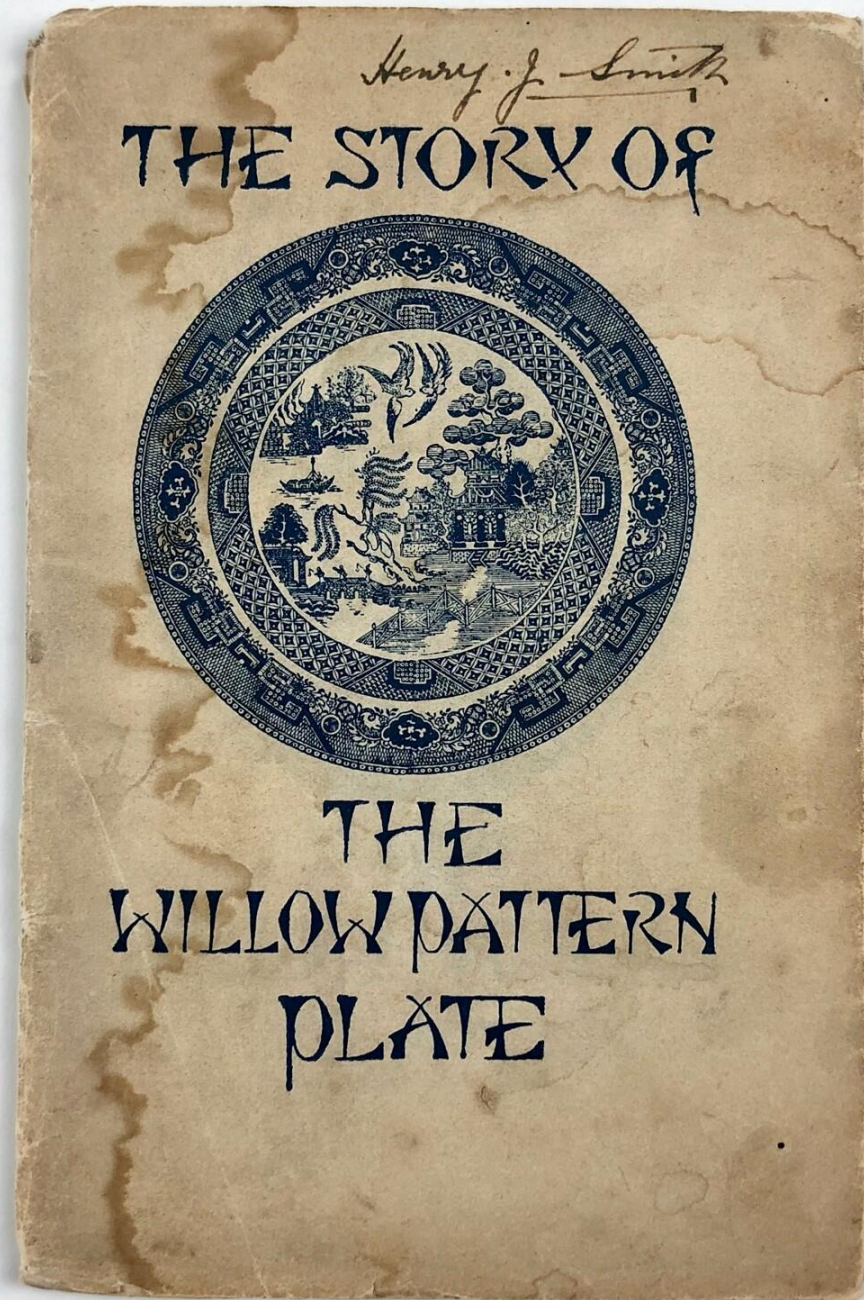
*Parrot Room, Tureholm castle with Chinese-style wall paintings.*





*Chinese kitchen*, Tureholm castle, painted by Carl Fredrik Engelkrona in the years 1744-1746 with motives taken from Chinese porcelain. Do some of the motives remind you of something?

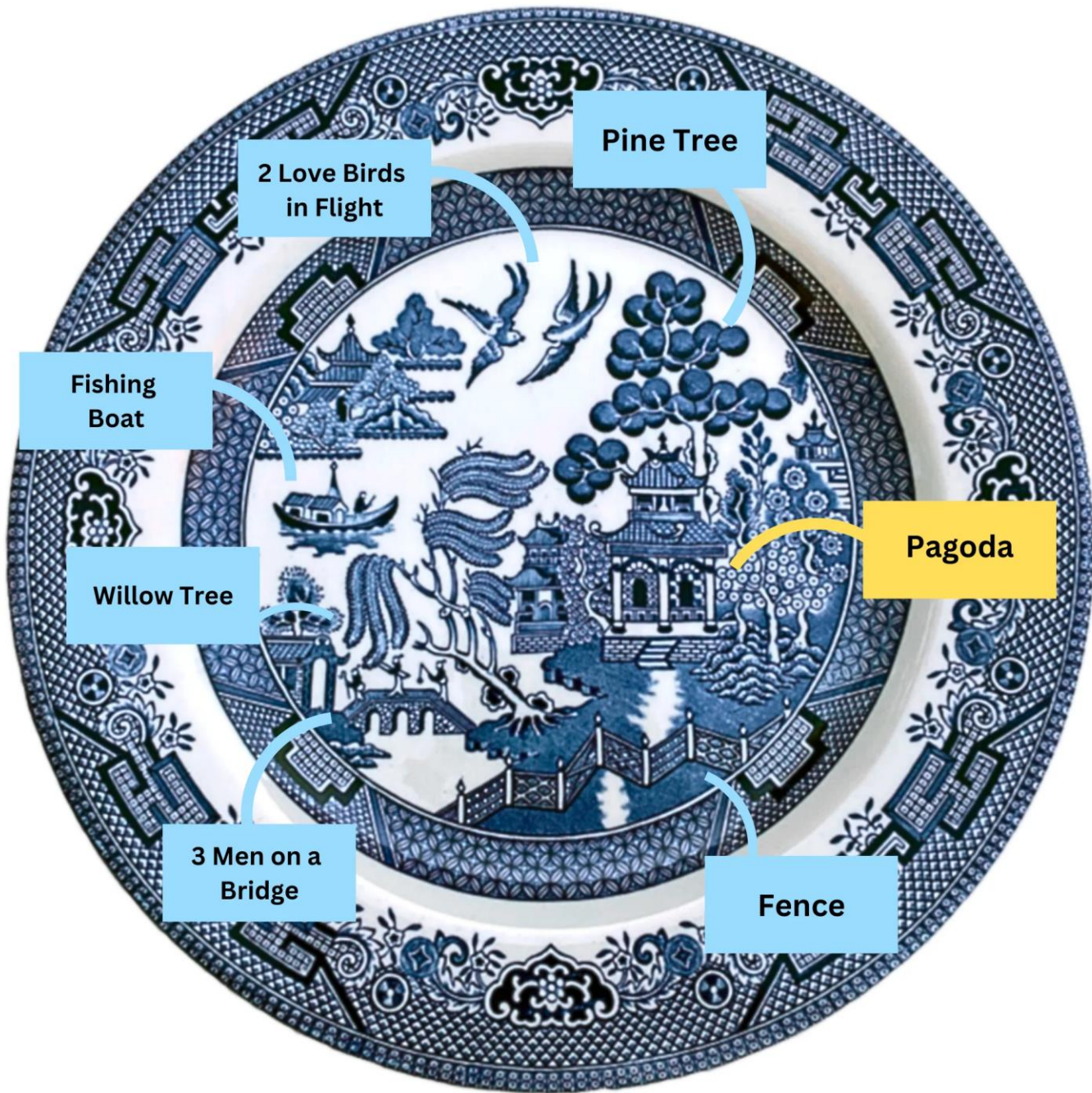




*Willow Pattern* has set characteristics. It features a pagoda structure, three figures on a bridge, a figure on a boat, two flying birds and a weeping willow tree.

The motif is based on a (probably fictitious) tragic love story.





Pine Tree

2 Love Birds  
in Flight

Fishing  
Boat

Willow Tree

3 Men on a  
Bridge

Pagoda

Fence

Motif believed to have originated from **Thomas Minton** for Thomas Turner's Caughley factory in Shropshire around **1780**. Minton then moved to the Spode factory, Staffordshire, in 1784 and they started using the design.

Became a very popular porcelain design pattern, affordable, much appreciated in Great Britain and the U.S.A.



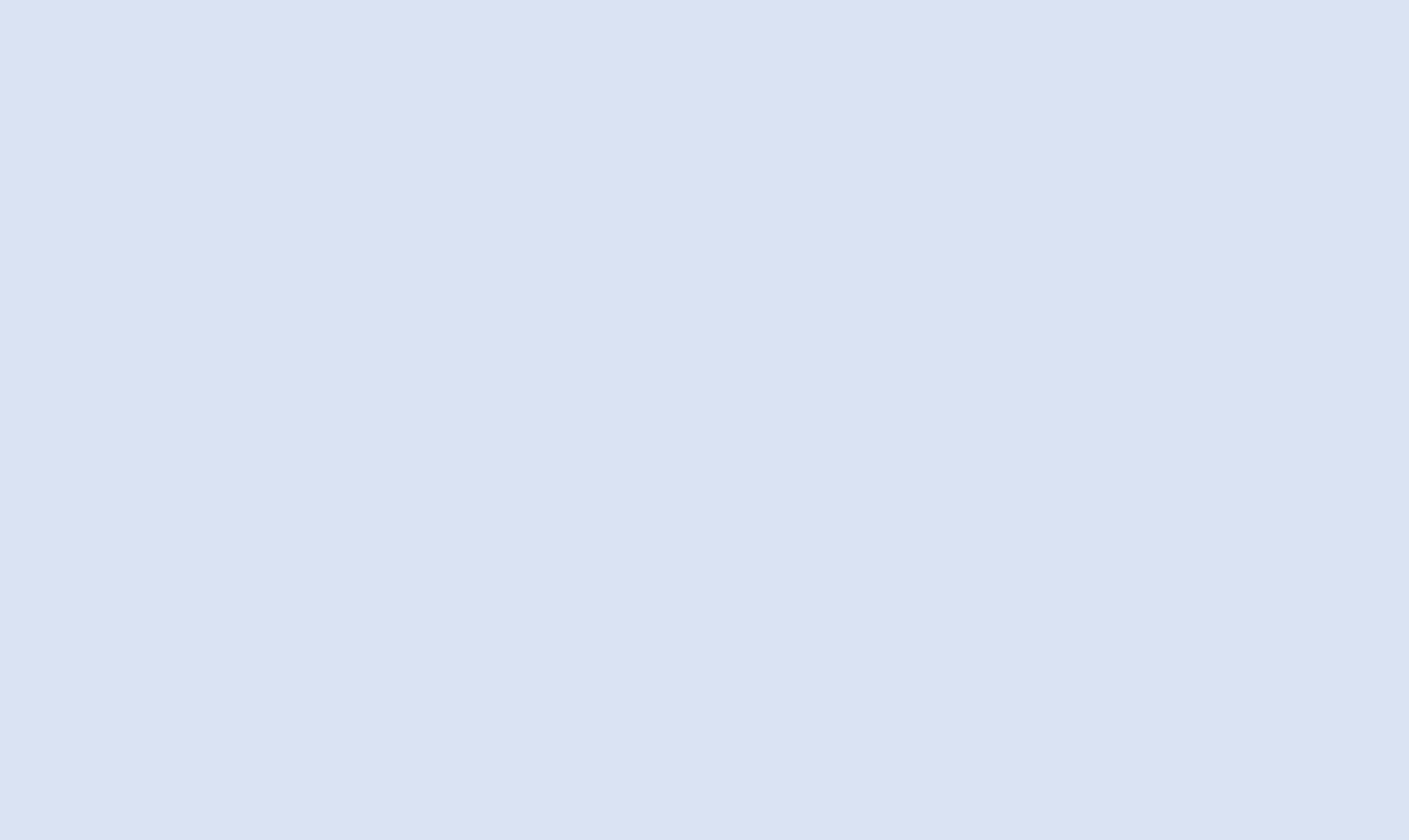
Röhsska Museum,  
Göteborg, East Asian  
Inspiration, Room 3.



Center middle shelf: Blue  
and White Octagonal Dish,  
Jonas Åberg, Rörstrand,  
1757.



Top shelf: **Robert Dawson**  
(1953), *Spin*, 2010, set of six  
plates, each D: 27 cm,  
(digitally created) print on  
bone China.





Robert Dawson,

*In Perspective Willow 1,*

onglaze screen-printed  
transfer on bone china blank  
made by Royal Doulton or  
Wedgwood, designed and  
decorated by Robert Dawson,  
1996. Victoria & Albert  
Museum.



Before sitting down for dinner later, let me thank you!

