

China Stamp Art Postcards **DRAFT**

Scope: This single frame exhibit of Early Republic and Nationalist China (1911-1949) stamp art postcards examines cultural themes portrayed on the picture side of cards. Makers of this cottage industry craft cut used postage stamps, created collages, and often added ink highlights to showcase the ancient crafts of papercutting and ink brush for a low-cost souvenir.

Exhibit Plan

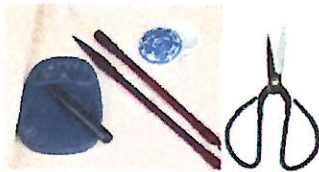
- Heads of State
- Cultural Identity
- Idealized Lifestyle for Women
- Romanticized Rural Life for Men

Background: Following the revolution against the Qing dynasty in 1911, China had several forms of government until the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. During these decades, Chinese experienced civil and political unrest, warlords, epidemics, natural disasters, civil war, foreign powers in treaty ports, Japanese occupation, and World War II.

The country was repeatedly fragmented, symbolic in these macerated postage stamps. The idealized imagery on the postcards was in direct conflict with turbulent life in early twentieth century China.

Postcard creators used the "four treasures of the scholar's studio" tools: brushes, paper, ink, and ink stones in combination with used stamps from China and incoming mail.

Postcard sales in China targeted a growing Western market looking for images of old-fashioned or exotic foreign life. Businesses from coastal Canton and port cities of Hong Kong and Swatow created and sold these postcards to tourists, visitors, and missionaries. Some cards were exported to the United States for sales in Chinatowns and world's fairs.



SWATOW DRAWN WORK CO., LTD.
(Established 1907)
Manufacturers,
Importers, Exporters & Commission Agents.
Specialists in
**ART EMBROIDERED TABLE LINENS, SILK LINGERIE
AND HANDKERCHIEFS.**
Other Goods we also export are as follows —
Camphorwood Chests, Ivory wares, Enamelware, Lacquer ware, Fire Crackers, Fans, Tortoiseshell, Umbrellas, Vacuum Flasks, Wearing Apparel, Watch Bands, Gloves, etc., etc., etc.
702-704 Jardine House, 14-16, Pedder Street, Hong Kong.
Cable Add: — "Swatowwork"
Mail Add: — P.O. Box 445, Tel. 26579.

Fisherman with Cantonese bamboo hat, fishing pole, bag, and his catch

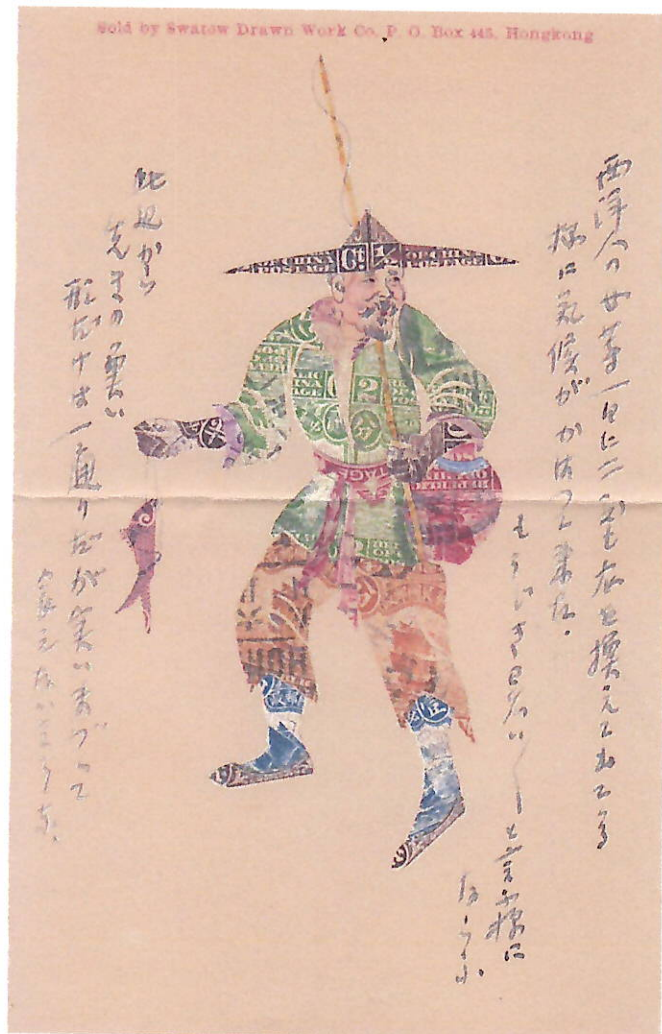
China & USA stamps, c. 1920s

Note: belt and fish design cuts

Swatow Drawn Work Co., Hong Kong

Sold to a Japanese visitor who added

poetic Japanese text front and back.



SYNOPSIS: China Stamp Art Postcards

This is the first showing of this exhibit.

Treatment and Significance

The topic is appropriate for the one-frame format because even though drawn from a much larger collection, many postcards repeat the same subjects with minor design changes. How many different fishermen do you want to see? I chose one good example as sufficient.

Scope and Limits

While these postcards were produced at the beginning of the postcard rage in Europe and North America, they continued to be produced through the next decades when buyers still sought novel, attractive postcards as they traveled to what they considered exotic locations. The timeframe of revolution to Communist reign offered creators and sellers a window of opportunity for these designs.

Coverage and Development

I chose the framework based on themes of imagery while considering the reasons that makers selected these visuals to market. I did not develop chronologically or regionally or by artist. Defining exact years of creation is difficult and, unless postmarked, can only be determined by latest date of a cut stamp. Identifying actual makers and marketing firms is challenging because very few cards include this information on the reverse. Instead, most cards simply state "Made in China."

Relevance

China today is the second largest economy in the world and a major political power. These postcards are from the era prior to Mao leadership in 1949 and offer an insight into the chaotic pre-Communist years. Further, recent interests in using postage stamp for collage art and mail art should attract a variety of collectors and viewers to this frame.

Philatelic and Related Knowledge and Personal Study and Research

To prepare this exhibit, I studied a variety of literature on the history, culture, mythology, and clothing of China; the art of Chinese painting and design; and postage stamp catalogs.

Condition and Rarity

Many stamp art postcards are missing pieces of cut stamps. I have avoided these damaged cards and tried to select the best examples possible. There is no information regarding numbers created, although repeated design postcards are still all unique in small ways with which stamps are used and how cut and how faces painted. Having collected these cards for a couple of decades, I do know when I see a card subject only once, it is a rare item. One example would be the Chinese Madonna and Child, possibly created to sell to missionaries.

References for Jurors

While there is no catalog or definitive book/article on this subject, below are some articles to introduce these postcards.

Diane DeBlois & Robert Dalton Harris, "Collecting Bits and Pieces," *Kelleher's Stamp Collector's Quarterly* (First Quarter 2020): 61-71.

David A. Norris, "Vintage Stamp Collage Postcards," *American Philatelist* (January 2012): 56-58.