PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

The Alexander Hume Painting (13 Hongs Foreign Factories) Makes its Debut in the Hong Kong Maritime Museum

The rare giant scroll depicting one of the earliest “Canton Factories” painting in Asian Museums

Hong Kong, 26 May, 2016 – With the generous sponsorship of the K.H. Koo Charitable Foundation, The Tung Foundation and the Hong Kong Maritime Museum Endowment Trust, Hong Kong Maritime Museum (HKMM) successfully acquired a 250-year rare giant scroll - The Alexander Hume Painting (13 Hongs Foreign Factories) which is one of the earliest “Canton Factories” Paintings in Asian Museums. This world-class masterpiece has also been the Museum’s most significant and substantial collection item in its historical value.

This giant panoramic scene (gouache on silk, 91.5cm height, 276.5cm width), is thought to have been created in a Canton studio. Made specifically for the European market, it shows a western naturalistic landscape style mounted in the traditional Chinese hand-scroll format. This classical piece of Sino-Western fusion illustrates the starting point of the Canton trade system 250 years ago. Silk painting also highlighted the rapid development of Chinese silk trade at that time.

Port cities have historically been hubs of cross-cultural interaction. Since the Qing emperor Qianlong’s decree of 1757 which closed all other Chinese ports to foreign trade except Canton, business premises were rented to Western trading nations and clustered along the northern bank of the Pearl River. At the back of the scene, from right to left, the flags of Holland, Britain, Sweden, France (before the French Revolution) and Denmark are clearly seen. This painting can be seen as a significant masterpiece that marked the beginning of Canton Trade System (1757-1842).

The vivid scene in the foreground shows in detail the activities of both Chinese and foreign traders along the waterfront. These multi-cultural scenes feature Western and Indian merchants, Chinese compradors, imperial officers, sailors, fishermen, and various types of Chinese labourers. Small boats are shown transporting people and goods, such as tea and porcelain, to the large foreign ships anchored at the Whampoa dock. Two junks located on the river are inscribed with the Chinese characters Mingyang and Samkonghing. Historical records show that Samkonghing traded regularly in Batavia (now Jakarta), evidence of the prosperous international trade in China in the 18th century.

These foreign factory buildings display a fusion of Southern Chinese and Western architectural styles. The recessed verandahs, westernized façades, roofed balconies, end gables, balustrades and window caps built on original Chinese buildings show the spread and influence of western architectural taste.

The painting is assumed to be a souvenir purchased by Alexander Hume in China right before his home voyage in 1774. Hume was employed by the East India Company in 1754, and then rose to become the Chief of the Company’s representatives in Canton. Therefore, the provenance of this painting serves as significant evidence of early business developments of the British East India Company in China.
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The Alexander Hume Painting (13 Hongs Foreign Factories) is the most significant star piece of HKMM as well as a world class masterpiece of 13 Hongs painting collections. From now on, this painting is showcased in the C-deck gallery, adding to vibrant and sophisticated content to the “China Trade” series in HKMM.

Museum Admission Fee:
$30 Adult
$15 Senior (aged 60 and above) and child (under 18), Student (with a valid full-time student card), Visitors with disabilities (and one accompanying carer)

Photos with captions:

To download the above high-resolution images, please click:
https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B3Q32fS0nbUeYUV0aGVucEpaS1U&usp=sharing

About Hong Kong Maritime Museum
The Hong Kong Maritime Museum (HKMM), an independent, non-profit registered charity supported by the shipping industry, the business community, private individuals and the Hong Kong SAR Government, is a vibrant cultural institution dedicated to preserving, collecting and displaying objects that tell the story about trade and maritime in Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta, and the vital roles that ships and the sea play in our past, present and future. The Museum opened its door to the public at Murray House in Stanley in 2005 and then relocated to the Central Pier No. 8 in the heart of the Central Harbour Waterfront since 2013. Today the Museum displays nearly 1,000 objects in 15 galleries and attracts more than 100,000 visitors annually. HKMM also houses various event spaces, resource centre, roof-top social enterprise café, and gift shop that contribute to visitor’s experiences, and the community of Hong Kong actively engages in education and public programming offered for schools, adults, community groups and families. For more information, please visit www.hkmaritimemuseum.org.

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