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An Aviary in the European Palace Complex at Yuanming Yuan:

Tracing Path and Flight in the Early Modern World

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in Art History

by

Fan Cynthia Fang

2021

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

An Aviary in the European Palace Complex at Yuanming Yuan:
Tracing Path and Flight in the Early Modern World

by

Fan Cynthia Fang

Master of Arts in Art History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2021

Professor Bronwen Wilson, Chair

As ornithological studies took flight in seventeenth-century Italy, almost every notable villa in Rome included an aviary. A century later, between 1747-1759 in Qing China, an aviary was constructed as a part of the European palace complex at Yuanming Yuan (圓明園). The aviary served as an important portal that provided access to the east and west side of the complex. However, it is no longer extant. A component of my thesis reconstructs this aviary through a study of diverse forms of material evidence (archeological, photographic, and digital reconstructions of the site). By examining the migration and intertwining artistic practices, mediums, avian husbandry, and natural history, we see that the aviary requires moving beyond biographies and social life of objects to explore how a concept was translated into diverse forms and media. The story of the aviary at Yuanming Yuan is a critical instance of the global fascination with birds, and their captivity in elite spaces, which ultimately helps us reassess early modern connections across and between cultures.

The thesis of Fan Cynthia Fang is approved.

Hui-Shu Lee

Lothar von Falkenhausen

Bronwen Wilson, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2021

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As ornithological studies took flight in seventeenth-century Italy, almost every notable villa in Rome included an aviary. Birds, and their variety, were considered scientific phenomena in early modern Europe.¹ A century later, between 1747-1759 in Qing China, an aviary was constructed as a part of the European palace complex at Yuanming Yuan (圓明園). Two prints, from a series of twenty engravings of the complex, present the east and west façades of the aviary (Fig. 1-2), which was executed under the supervision and commission of emperor Qianlong (乾隆, 1711-1799). I believe this structure to be the first recorded European aviary in Qing China, which served as a crucial portal to access the east and west side of the European palace complex.

The aviary at Yuanming Yuan is no longer extant. Primary sources are scant, and there has been virtually no research on the structure. Perhaps surprisingly, architectural enclosures for birds have received little scholarly attention despite their vital role in many European villas.² My study of the aviary, accordingly, requires contending with partial and diverse forms of evidence and navigating a reconstruction of the larger complex, which is itself a site in ruins.

The design of this aviary, alongside other buildings that were a part of the European complex in Yuanming Yuan, is usually attributed to Milanese Jesuit Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766). Nearly three decades after its completion, the complex was engraved by Manchu court artist Yi Lantai (伊蘭泰, fl. 1749-1786). The east façade engraving features the aviary in the center of its composition. The façade is surmounted with a balustrade whose design is echoed in the pair of railings that flank the pathway. The spacious pathway leads to the ornamented portal with its wrought-iron gate at the center. On both sides of the gate are two niches, their half-domes decorated with undulating shells, that exhibit miniature fountain sculptures. The façade

¹ Natsumi Nonaka, "The Aviaries of The Farnese Gardens on The Palatine: Roman Antiquity, The Levant, and The Architecture of Garden Pavilions," in *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 59/60 (2014): 366.

² Notable studies include Annejuul Moll-Breebaart and Edward W. Leeuwijn, "Birds on De Hooge Vuursche: The Aviary of the Eighteenth-century Country Estate De Hooge Vuursche," in *Die Gartenkunst* (2008): 143-150.

recedes in the middle, its curvature calling to mind the façade of Borromini’s Oratorio dei Filippini (Fig. 3). Pilasters and detached columns on plinths extend vertically, their visual effects accentuated by the broken entablature, corbels, and finials. Embellished with architectural elements that one may find in early modern European villas, such as niches, pilasters, and marble entablatures, the aviary evokes foreign examples.

Aviaries (*uccellieri*, *ornithons*) were commonly featured in ancient Roman villas and reintroduced in the late Cinquecento to the educated class through ancient texts.³ As admiration for their soaring occupants increased, publications of ornithological studies blossomed.⁴ The interest and expansion of knowledge in birds is reflected in villa plans amongst the elite and privileged. The avian structures, decorated with classical architectural elements, surely served as powerful expressions of educated patrons. And yet these structures have been largely overlooked by art historians. This thesis explores the cultural identities of the aviary by considering how it made its way across the sea to Qing China. What was the function of the aviary in the complex? And why did birds and these architectural forms matter in this imperial context?

The aviary is particularly useful, as I will be proposing, for thinking about transcultural studies because it highlights the continuous back and forth between China and Europe. The avian structure, as an expression of global mobility, exemplifies the tendency for misperceptions of these kinds of objects and for interpreting them in terms of influences; instead, it conveys what Paula Findlen describes as “efforts to simulate but not entirely replicate something observed elsewhere.”⁵ Despite the aviary’s eclectic sources and intriguing configuration of elements, any mention of it in studies of the palace fastens onto stylistic resemblances to European architecture. This kind of stylistic comparison is unsatisfactory, as I suggest, given the complexity of the

³ Nonaka, “The Aviaries of The Farnese Gardens on The Palatine,” 365.

⁴ For avian encyclopedias and writers, see Appendix.

⁵ Paula Findlen, *Early Modern Things: Objects and Their Histories, 1500-1800* (London: Routledge, 2013), 244.

aviary and what it can tell us about transcultural phenomena. As the engravings indicate, the architectural forms thwart straightforward associations with singular sources; the aviary is neither Chinese nor solely European. The engravings of the aviary facades, similarly, resist canonical art historical models of influence. They are the results of a Chinese artist, who was trained by an Italian Jesuit, and who was experimenting with a new artistic medium. One aim of this thesis, then, is to use the aviary to work through new approaches to transcultural artistic forms.

My study begins with the aviary's scant physical records and history in Yuanming Yuan. Chapter One introduces the absent aviary and the European palace, to which the aviary once served as a portal. The construction of the buildings, including the aviary, was incredibly collaborative. It involved Jesuits of multifaceted talents from all over Europe, as well as local knowledge. Drawing on diverse forms of evidence—narratives, photographic, artistic, archeological—I examine the architectural history of the aviary. Its current state—as ruins—leaves us with material, archival, visual forms of evidence and overlapping chronologies.

Confronting this absence, Chapter Two focuses on the important evidence furnished by the two engravings of the aviary's façades. The printed images of the site are significant for many reasons. They provide insights into what at first glance appears to be a European concept, since the aviary was the first of its kind in the Qing court. The prints were also among the first copper plate engravings to be produced in China. As the only surviving visual evidence of the buildings from 1783, the engravings have been sources for architectural reconstructions of the site. However, whether the engravings accurately represent the aviary (or the buildings of the complex) remains open to question, since it no longer exists for comparison. Accordingly, I focus on the aviary engravings as representations—as both documents and artworks—and as techniques and processes of translation. I consider the artist's experimentation with intaglio

prints and their form and content, which yield insights into the migration of ideas about and across artistic mediums. From this visual investigation, I examine discrepancies between the visual forms in the engravings and other records of the aviary. This chapter seeks new ways of analysis that move beyond stylistic comparisons. The aviary highlights the back and forth between Europe and China as ornithology took flight.

Chapter Three seeks to answer some of the questions raised by this analysis in order to reconstruct, if necessarily speculatively, the aviary at Yuanming Yuan. Why was this aviary designed in Qing China? What was its function? What birds were kept there? The first part of the chapter explains motivations for building an aviary at the European palace complex. I reason that its inclusion was accelerated due to the Qing emperors' interest in collecting knowledge on European natural history. Surveying different types of aviaries, and considering the dissemination of the concept from Italy to the world, I make a case for the significance of a European prototype. The second part of the chapter reconstructs the aviary's spatial organization and functions using archeological findings. I postulate that peacocks were kept at the aviary, and propose that its occupants might have been connected to Qing court artistic productions. The connections are speculative but inferred from overlapping chronologies and interlocutors at the Qing court.

Working on a site that no longer exists, with scant records and archeological fragments, brings to the fore the provisional character of any reconstruction of the aviary, and also its complexity. One component of my study is to explore different forms of evidence and to contemplate ways in which these can be used to recreate the material, artistic, and political stakes of architectural structures that are no longer extant and without clear models or conventions. The aviary once served as an important gateway, gathering and dividing birds and people. The wide range of global factors that contributed to the function of the avian edifice, its design, and its

reproduction in prints—which were disseminated outside the court—calls for a methodological approach that keeps in mind the limits of stylistic comparisons and tracing influences. Examining material evidence that spans two centuries, from the 1700s to the 1900s, requires both rigor and speculation. In an attempt to bridge this divide, I make use of different forms of evidence to describe the aviary from diverse perspectives.

Chapter I, Forms of Evidence: Absence, Records, Fragments

1.1 Remnants of an aviary

Three working figures stand on top of what was once an avian façade in the European palace complex at Yuanming Yuan (Fig. 4). *The Peacock Cage Being Torn Down* (1924), a photograph of the aviary undergoing demolition, is one of the few extant visual documents of the building. The blurry figure on the far-right lifts up a hefty stone, his gesture accentuating the process of dismantling the site that resembles a mountain from which debris flows. Still visible, in the center of the façade, is a hollow opening. This arch once served as a portal that allowed visitors to access either the east or west parts of the palace complex.

The aviary was located in the European palace complex, which occupied a narrow section of Yuanming Yuan. The site is approximately ten miles northwest of Beijing, south of the Great Wall and east of the Western Mountains. Emperor Kangxi (康熙, r. 1661-1722) initiated Yuanming Yuan's construction in 1709, and it later became the imperial residence for Qing emperors. Yuanming Yuan was composed of three parts: Yuanming Yuan (圓明園), Changchuan Yuan (長春園), and Qichun Yuan (綺春園). It was enlarged and embellished by Kangxi's successors, emperor Yongzheng (雍正, r. 1722-1735) and Qianlong (乾隆, r. 1735-1796).⁶ In 1747, Qianlong instituted the building of the European palaces (*Xiyang lou* 西洋樓) as a part of Kangxi's Changchuan Yuan. Construction of the European palaces continued until 1783. It was a late addition to the imperial residence and constituted less than one-twentieth of Yuanming Yuan. The complex included an array of buildings as well as an observatory, a maze, and an aviary.

⁶ Victoria Siu, "Castiglione and the Yuanming Yuan Collection," in *Orientalisms* 19, no. 11 (1988): 73.

Photographs, such as *The Peacock Cage*, provide some visual evidence of the aviary's design. During the Second Opium War in 1860, Anglo-Saxon troops, led by Lord Elgin and General Cousin-Montauban, ordered the destruction of Yuanming Yuan.⁷ A decade after the sack of the imperial residence, the ruins were captured by western photographers whose images serve as the few available records of the European palaces.⁸ Ernst Ohlmer (1847-1927), who photographed the site in 1873, was the first.⁹ Felice Beato (1825-1908) and Thomas Child (active 1871-1889) also recorded the ruins, but few of their pictures provide substantive architectural information for critical analysis or documentation of plans or style of the complex.¹⁰ For the purposes of my study, *The Peacock Cage* and Child's *East Gate of the Aviary* (Fig. 4-5) are the only photographs of the partial structure since a local political situation in 1924 led to the site being dismantled overnight.¹¹

Two research projects shed light on ways in which scholars have tackled the difficulty of reconstructing the site. In 1985, Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens led a group of French specialists in Chinese or Baroque art to publish their field research in 1988.¹² Their findings contributed to debates on the restoration of gardens and remnants of palace buildings. A reconstructed model of the European palace was presented in Beijing in the fall of 1985, and lent to researchers of the Yuanmingyuan Association. A decade later, Régine Thiriez examined a comprehensive list of photographs of the site. Her perceptions of the palace complex are revealing:

⁷ Cecile Beurdeley and Michel Beurdeley, *Giuseppe Castiglione: A Jesuit Painter at the Court of the Chinese Emperors* (Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle, 1971), 74.

⁸ For a study on the photographs of the European palaces (from 1873 to 1925), see Régine Thiriez, *Barbarian Lens: Western Photographers of the Qianlong Emperor's European Palaces* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1998).

⁹ Vimalin Rujivacharakul, "How to Map Ruins: Yuanming Yuan Archives and Chinese Architectural History," *Getty Research Journal*, No. 4 (2012): 93.

¹⁰ Rujivacharakul, "How to Map Ruins," 9. On Ernst Ohlmer, see Thiriez, *Barbarian Lens*, 85-92. For a complete list of photographers that documented the ruins, see Thiriez, *Barbarian Lens*, Appendix Five.

¹¹ Thiriez, *Barbarian Lens*, 64.

¹² Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens eds, *Le Yuanmingyuan: Jeux d'eau et Palais Européen Du XVIII Siècle à La Cour de Chine* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1988).

Returning to reality, the well-informed visitor would have been at pains to define the style of the unmistakably Western architecture. Baroque? Yes, certainly. Classical? In some parts, maybe. Italian? Look at these curved wings. French? Well, if you went for details... So, what about enjoying the lot such as it was, for all the eclectic combination of styles?¹³

Thiriez' account highlights how ideas about Europe could be expressed through an inventive admixture of details. Both projects grapple with the limits of evidence: the reconstruction of the complex in a model—through collaboration, archival research, and archaeological fieldwork—enables us to navigate the palace complex. In the monograph, Thiriez contemplates the eclecticism of the architecture based on historical photographs and forms of material evidence.

These two projects provide departure points for my thesis, which takes the aviary as a case study for approaching global art history. Such studies are necessarily partial,¹⁴ and to develop an approach and analysis of the avian structure is complicated further by fragmentary evidence and diverse media. In the following sections, I introduce the history of the aviary through material, archival, and visual evidence, each of which creates a different narrative. In doing so, some of the methodological limitations of evidence come to the fore, and disjunctures between these narratives begin to surface.

1.2 History of the European palace complex: Giuseppe Castiglione and the Jesuits

Many of the European palaces were built between 1747 and 1751.¹⁵ During the late sixteenth century, with thriving foreign trade, nations from around the world regularly offered diplomatic gifts. One of these may have included an engraving of a fountain, which according to a

¹³ Thiriez, 38.

¹⁴ See Angela Vanhaelen and Bronwen Wilson, "Introduction: Making Worlds: Art, Materiality, and Early Modern Globalization," in *Journal of Early Modern History* 23 (2019): 103-20.

¹⁵ Tong Jun, "北京長春園西洋建築 (Occidental Structures in the Forever Spring Garden of Yuanming Yuan)," in *Yuanming Yuan*, 1 (China Yuanming Yuan Society, China Jianzhu Gongye Publisher, January 1980), 72. See also Guo Daiheng, *China's Lost Imperial Garden: The World's Most Exquisite Garden Rediscovered* (Shanghai: Shanghai Press and Publishing Development Company, 2016), 193.

missionary in 1775, inspired the construction of this complex.¹⁶ A large coterie of European Jesuits served the court as scientific advisors, translators, and artists.¹⁷ Qianlong ordered Father Michel Benoist (1715-1774), a French Jesuit mathematician and cartographer, who was experienced in hydraulic machines, to make a model of the fountain. The finished product inaugurated the emperor's desire to erect European-style palaces in imitation of the engravings. Thus, by the order of Qianlong, Giuseppe Castiglione took charge of architectural plans while Father Benoist tended to the fountains and oversaw construction.¹⁸

Castiglione was a member of the Jesuit Order, which sent abroad individuals from Europe who were equipped with different expertise. The Milanese Jesuit is known for his architectural designs of the European palaces as well as for his impressive career as a painter at the Qing court. Raised in a well-respected Italian family, he entered the Society of Jesus at age-nineteen. He received his religious training while living in the Order's *domus probationis* in Genoa. Admission to the order, however, required possession of professional skills or experience beyond one's religious vocation. For his artistic training, he studied in Milan.¹⁹ Marco Musillo suggests that Castiglione was recruited with the China trip in mind, and that the Order likely expected him to replace Giovanni Gherardini (1655-1729), a painter from Modena, who held a full-time appointment at the Qing court.²⁰ Castiglione arrived in the Forbidden City as a Jesuit missionary in 1715 and adopted the Chinese name Lang Shining (郎世寧). Under his Chinese

¹⁶ Carroll Malone, *History of the Peking Summer Palaces Under the Ch'ing Dynasty* (Illinois: University of Illinois, 1934), 139. The missionary's letter is translated from *Lettres édifiantes*, vol. 24, edition of 1781, 401 ff.

¹⁷ Kristina Kleutghen, "Staging Europe: Theatricality and Painting at the Chinese Imperial Court," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 42 (2013): 81.

¹⁸ Malone, *History of the Peking Summer Palaces Under the Ch'ing Dynasty*, 139.

¹⁹ Marco Musillo, "Reconciling Two Careers: The Jesuit Memoir of Giuseppe Castiglione Lay Brother and Qing Imperial Painter," in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42 (2008): 49-52.

²⁰ Musillo, "Reconciling Two Careers," 45.

name, Castiglione began his long career at court in the enameling workshop, just as the Jesuit influence began to wane.²¹

As members of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits in China were of diverse nationalities. The Jesuit order was one of the most active early modern religious institutions, and the only Catholic order set up through a worldwide communication system. Established by Ignatius of Loyola in 1540, Jesuit schools and universities educated boys to fill civic positions and serve the common good.²² Jesuit teachers were in charge of teaching theology, philosophy, mathematics, and science; their expertise in mathematics and science aided missions in Asia and the Americas.²³ However, Jesuits were unable to directly use European artistic conventions to aid their Chinese audience in understanding Christian images.²⁴ Additionally, the papacy withdrew support for the Jesuits in China, as they condemned the Jesuits' adaption to Chinese thought and culture.²⁵ In this difficult political climate, Jesuits of various nationalities carried out the construction of the European palace complex.

The European complex was realized by a team of Jesuits, whose expertise lay in different fields. The Jesuits lived in a church complex next to Yuanming Yuan and worked every day in the palace during the ten months that Qianlong resided there.²⁶ Trained as a painter and draughtsman, Castiglione delegated duties. He designed a wrought-iron door with a jig-saw pattern for the aviary, but the casting was carried out by Brother Gilles Thibault (1703-1766), a specialist in this technique. Qianlong was greatly appreciative of this work, as it was entirely

²¹ Wen Fong, "Imperial Patronage of the Arts under the Qing," in *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996), 555.

²² This was made explicit in Father Tommaso Termanini's treatise on Jesuit education. Paul F Grendler, "Jesuit Schools in Europe. A Historiographical Essay," in *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 1 (2014): 17.

²³ Sheila J. Rabin, "Early Modern Jesuit Science. A Historiographical Essay," in *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 1 (2014): 88.

²⁴ Musillo, "Reconciling Two Careers," 46.

²⁵ Siu, "Castiglione and the Yuanming Yuan Collection," 79.

²⁶ Greg Thomas, "Yuanming Yuan/Versailles: Intercultural Interactions Between Chinese and European Palace Cultures," in *Art History* 32, no. 1 (2009): 126.

new to his eyes.²⁷ Father Benoist also planned the construction and, as noted earlier, engineered the fountains. Described by Musillo as the “scenographer” and “clockmaker” of the palace complex,²⁸ Castiglione and Benoist examined the best European book collection and prints at the three Jesuit-gathering libraries in Beijing.²⁹ Their collaborators include but are not exclusive to Florentine architect Ferdinando Bonaventura Moggi (1684-1761), French Father Jean-Denis Attiret (1702-1768), and German Father Ignatius Sichelbarth (1708-1780). Fathers Attiret and Sichelbarth assisted in drawing the architectural plans (the extent of their involvement remains uncertain).³⁰ French botanical expert Pierre d’Incarville (1706-1757) designed the gardens. For the heavy labor in construction, Castiglione requested help from Chinese craftsmen, who he had trained under him.³¹ From this synopsis, it is evident that the European Palace complex was a project that involved Jesuits from various nations, expanding beyond an Italian-French tradition that is normally associated with the European palaces at Yuanming Yuan.

1.3 A set of twenty engravings: evidence, use, and limits

A set of twenty engravings documents the architectural views of ten buildings at the European palace complex. In 1783, three decades after construction was complete, Qianlong assigned two or three of Castiglione’s disciples to engrave the plans on copper.³² Manchu court artist Yi Lantai

²⁷ Beurdeley and Beurdeley, 70.

²⁸ Musillo, “Mid-Qing Arts and Jesuit Visions,” 15.

²⁹ Michèle Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens, “The Emperor Qianlong’s European Palaces,” in *Orientalisms* (November 1988): 71. For a comprehensive study on the formation of Jesuit libraries in Beijing, see Noël Golvers, *Libraries of Western Learning for China: Circulation of Western Books between Europe and China in the Jesuit Mission* (Leuven: Ferdinand Verbiest Stichting, 2013).

³⁰ Michèle Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens eds, *Le Yuanmingyuan: Jeux d’eau et Palais European Du XVIII Siecle à La Cour de Chine* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1988), 8. Original text is as follows: 郎世寧與蔣友仁，為了執行好這一皇帝的聖旨，在北京的三個基督徒聚集點裡的圖書館中查詢了所有最好的歐洲書籍，專題著作和版畫文集。他們的合作人有：王志誠 (Jean-Denis Attiret) 和艾啟蒙 (Ignatius Sickelpart [sic])。他們繪製了西洋樓個殿的平面，立面圖，甚至內部彩畫。艾啟蒙還繪治了海晏堂。

³¹ Beurdeley and Beurdeley, 68.

³² Beurdeley and Beurdeley, 75. See Francesco Vossilla, “The Jesuit Painter and His Emperor: Some Comments Regarding Giuseppe Castiglione and the Qianlong Emperor,” in *National Palace Museum Bulletin* 49 (2016): 70.

headed a team of Chinese artists and completed the request for 200 of the series of prints in February of 1787. The sets were sent personally by the emperor to various palaces, residences, and bureaus; the original copper plates, alongside forty sets of prints, were sent to be stored in the European palaces.³³ The twenty engravings serve as important visual evidence that scholars continually use for architectural reconstructions of the site.

Relying on the engravings, scholars have attributed certain Italian and French artists, and buildings, as sources for the palace complex. In 1934, Carroll Malone observed that “the rococo architecture of these palace buildings recalls the extravagances of Italian art at the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century as seen in the work of Borromini, Guardini, and Bibiena.”³⁴ In 1971, Cecile and Michel Beurdeley described Castiglione’s designs as a fascinating kind of Baroque, reminiscent of Borromini.³⁵ Recently, in 2016, Guo Daiheng asserted that Castiglione adopted “both the Baroque and Rococo styles” to the architecture.³⁶ Buildings in the palace complex have also been compared to the Apollo Niche at Villa Piccolomini in Frascati as well as the Trianon de Porcelaine and L’Arc de Triomphe at Versailles.³⁷ Aforementioned assertions are bolstered by materials that missionaries requested during the building process: among them Androuet du Cerceau’s *Le premier volume des plus excellents bastiments de France*, three versions (Latin, French, and Italian) of Vitruvius’ *De architectura*, and several Italian books.³⁸

Connections drawn from such comparisons can be convincing but are exemplary of how fastening onto one type of evidence is unsatisfactory. Where do these sources lead us, except to

³³ Kleutghen, “Staging Europe,” 90.

³⁴ Malone, 141.

³⁵ Beurdeley and Beurdeley, 66.

³⁶ Guo Daiheng, *China’s Lost Imperial Garden: The World’s Most Exquisite Garden Rediscovered* (Shanghai Press and Publishing Development Company, 2016), 193.

³⁷ Rujivacharakul, “How to Map Ruins,” 100.

³⁸ Beurdeley and Beurdeley, *Giuseppe Castiglione*, 65-7. Various signs of annotations show that the following books were consulted: editions of Vitruvius in Latin, Italian and French, Vignola, Pozzo, Scamozzi, Felibien, Du Cerceau, Giovanni Battista Barattieri (in two editions of '600), and Carlo Fontana. See George Robert Loehr, *Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766), Pittore di Corte di Ch'ien-Lung Imperatore della Cina* (Rome: istituto italiano per il medio ed estremo oriente, 1940), 78.

show that there was influence from Europe? The problems of using European and general categories of style, in this case, fails to account for processes of translation that are sometimes belated and also inventive. The aviary has long been a part of a conversation that is overtly reliant on stylistic analysis and tracing influence. Taking a step back, we might consider what the engravings invite viewers to contemplate instead.

1.4 Piecing together an overlooked aviary

Over the decades, scholars have embarked on reconstruction projects of the palace complex, but the aviary is seldom mentioned. Architectural plans and maps that came to light were made available to Malone, an American who taught at Qinghua University in 1911. The maps were likely drafts of the official map from the Tongzhi Restoration project (1860-1874).³⁹ In 1985, Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens' research team carried out a 1:500 scale model of the complex. More recently, with the help of digital technology, Guo Daihung created a 3D remodeling of Yuanming Yuan. Her recent book, *China's Lost Imperial Garden* (2016), features some reconstruction images of Pavilion Harmonizing Surprise and Delight (*Xieqiqu* 諧奇趣), Complex of the Maze (*Wanhuazhen* 萬花陣), Hall of Calm Seas (*Haiyantang* 海晏堂), Observatory of Lands Beyond (*Fangwai Guan* 方外關), and Great Fountain (*Da Shuifa* 大水法).⁴⁰ The name of the aviary, however, is only mentioned in passing.

The two facades of the aviary were built in separate stages. The west façade was first constructed between 1747 and 1751. Due to Qianlong's decision to expand the complex, the east façade and other palace additions were completed in 1759.⁴¹ The aviary's location, as seen in a

³⁹ Rujivacharakul, 96.

⁴⁰ Guo, 193-207.

⁴¹ Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, 63.

reconstruction map (Fig. 6), was positioned toward the left of the narrow strip.⁴² The west façade faces the Building for Gathering Water. On its northeast is the Complex of the Maze and on the southwest is the Pavilion Harmonizing Surprise and Delight. These four structures were among the first of the complex to be built. Construction of the east façade began in 1756. Together with the west façade, the aviary formed a portal that allowed visitors access to the east side of the palace complex. The east façade, often referred to as the “Italian” side, faces a canal and the bamboo pavilion. Water accordingly flowed from marble fountains on both sides of the portal.⁴³

Questions begin to emerge as we put the aviary in context with the history of the palace complex and the set of engravings. Why was the aviary a part of this spatial organization, and what was its role as a portal that provided access to other palace buildings? Responses to these questions are explored in the following chapters.

⁴² See the map in Malone’s *History of the Peking Summer Palaces Under the Ch’ing Dynasty* (1934), 140.

⁴³ Malone, 147.

Chapter II, Engravings of Two Avian Façades: Tracing Material Evidence

2.1 Twenty engravings: history and execution source

The twenty engravings of the palace complex, executed by a team of Chinese artists, were the second test of copperplate engravings in Qing China. The first test was of thirteen battle and victory scenes that commemorated the emperor's military exploits between 1755 and 1759.

Castiglione was one of the Jesuits chosen to illustrate the battle scene paintings. In 1765, small-scaled copies of the paintings were sent to France to be engraved on copperplates. Subsequently, the finished plates and prints were transported back to China to be copied by Chinese apprentices of the Jesuits. In 1783, Qianlong appointed two or three of Castiglione's Chinese assistants to document the European palace complex in copperplate engravings.⁴⁴ The job was entrusted upon Yi Lantai, who had previous experience in collaborative commissions with Italian artists.⁴⁵ The set of prints were thus a product of Chinese artists working in a new medium.

It is unclear if Yi Lantai's engravings were based on his own *in situ* observations or if he replicated architectural drawing designs left by Castiglione. For one, the presentation style—emphasis on the façades, use of symmetry—fits within architectural conventions of building designs in Europe, especially for presentation drawings. Cecile Beurdeley and Michel Beurdeley, co-authors of one of the first studies on Castiglione, remarked that Qianlong “instructed Castiglione, his favourite painter, to draw up plans and choose his collaborators.”⁴⁶ The so-called plans have not survived, but they proceed to describe the designs submitted to Qianlong as a “fascinating kind of baroque.”⁴⁷ This statement is revealing since the authors indirectly equate

⁴⁴ Marco Musillo, *The Shining Inheritance. Italian Painters at the Qing Court, 1699-1812* (Los Angeles: Getty Trust Publications, 2016), 7.

⁴⁵ Musillo, *The Shining Inheritance*, 134.

⁴⁶ Beurdeley and Beurdeley, 66.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Castiglione's designs, the ones that were submitted to Qianlong, with Yi Lantai's engravings.

The Beurdeleys speak of the engravings as if synonymous with Castiglione's architectural plans.

One entry in *Yuanming Yuan: Volume 1* (1981) counters this perception:

[...] the truth of what happened is probably this: the twenty copperplate engravings were completed by Lang Shining [Giuseppe Castiglione] after the *Xiyanglou* [European palace complex] concluded its construction. It is a finished perspective picture, not a construction blueprint."⁴⁸

Although the author erroneously attributes the engravings to Castiglione instead of Yi, the purpose of the statement was to refute uncertainty about the function of the printed series.

The palace engravings have been crucial for architectural reconstructions because the buildings no longer exist. However, if there is ambiguity regarding their accuracy, how can we use the engravings to represent the absent complex? I investigate this query by closely examining the two façade engravings of the aviary.

2.2 The two aviary engravings: west and east façade

The west and east façade engravings represent the aviary portal at Yuanming Yuan. In the set of twenty engravings, each print is numbered and inscribed near its border with vertical or horizontal Chinese text. The façades, sixth and seventh in the series, are titled accordingly as *West façade of the Peacock Aviary Six* and *East Façade of the Peacock Aviary Seven* (養雀籠西面六、養雀籠東面七, Fig. 1-2). Larger than one may expect for early modern engravings (approximately 19.5 inches in width and 35 inches in length), the prints housed at the Getty Research Institute are mounted on heavy paper.⁴⁹

The west façade engraving exhibits a one-story architectural complex that spans horizontally across the print. A spacious pathway directs our attention to the façade, which is

⁴⁸ Tong, "Occidental Structures in the Forever Spring Garden of Yuanming Yuan," 72. My translations from "經過的事實應是：二十幅銅板圖乃西洋樓全部完成後郎世寧所繪，是竣工透視圖，不是施工圖。"

⁴⁹ For locations of other completed sets, see Appendix.

divided into three sections. The hierarchical ordering highlights the center, where an ornamented gate is framed by tiled roofs and columns. Copious topiaries, separated by the pathway, occupy the lower-third of the composition. Behind the façade, on both sides, trees rise toward the sky, taking up a generous amount of the composition. On the far left is a small pavilion that is separated from the main façade (Fig. 7.4). A walkway leads to the pavilion's entrance. Like the façade in the center, the pavilion also has tiled roofs. The articulation of the roofs indicates that the pavilion has an open courtyard in the center. The pavilion's four latticed windows are rectangular in shape.

These architectural structure and decorations align more closely with Chinese designs than with those of European buildings. In front of the symmetrical façade, for example, are two sizable sculptures with dynamic organic forms that flank the gate (Fig. 7.2). The walls behind the sculptures are net-like screens. In contrast to classical columns and capitals supporting an entablature (knowledge imported through treatises on Vitruvius and Jesuit training in Europe), numerous columns support beams and the roofs, using mortise and tenon construction. Cloud-shaped corbels decorate the corners at the wooden joint, also following local practices (Figs. 7.1~7.3). Architectural adornments, such as the finials on the tiled roofs, only vaguely resemble European architecture.

Perhaps to accentuate the planar character of the architectural structure, the engraving features an array of botanical specimens.⁵⁰ Flowers are planted in between topiaries that occupy the foreground. In contrast to the neatly trimmed topiaries, trees rise up toward the sky in an unruly manner. They emerge behind both the left and right side of the one-story complex. The tree branches intersect with depictions of clouds, which occupy much of the upper composition.

⁵⁰ For a comprehensive list of plants included at the east and west aviary, please see the M.A. thesis of Wang Yi-Lan, "Comparative Study on Plant Landscape of Yuanmingyuan of Current and its Prosperous Period," *Beijing Forestry University* (2017), 33.

The seventh print in the sequence is the east aviary façade. In contrast to the planar wooden framework seen in the previous engraving, the center of the west façade has a semi-circular plan and its surface is accordingly concave (Fig. 1). The façade is surmounted with a balustrade whose design is echoed in the pair of railings that flank the pathway. It is this pathway that leads to the ornamented portal with its wrought-iron gate at the center. On each side of the gate are two niches, their half-domes decorated with undulating shells. Within these niches are marble fountains that let water cascade into a basin (Fig. 8.1). Pilasters and detached columns on plinths extend vertically, their visual effects accentuated by the broken entablature, corbels, and finials.

Tensions between nature and the human-made, seen in the sixth print, remain at play. Similar topiaries, fewer in number, are dwarfed by tall trees with lavish foliage that emerge from small hills on either side of the aviary. It is difficult to discern whether Yi intended to depict organic soil or hardened rocks. Their branches are far-reaching, crisscrossing each other, and layered. Taller than the avian structure, the trees direct our attention toward the sky. Several branches are positioned before clouds and interject with their forms. The trees' organic appearance is in stark contrast to the two rows of neatly trimmed topiaries. Fourteen topiaries are manicured in ovular shapes and span horizontally across the building's front. The rendering of the ground is similar to the small rocks by the pond, which are carved and lined up artificially by the water (Fig. 8.2). The sheer diversity of forms, patterns, grids, and ornamentation on the prints conveys artistic engagement with architecture, nature, and the burin as he rotates the copper plate.

The west and east aviary engravings are imbued with strange and provocative details. The palace complex is crowned, which has been described as “baroque” and “rococo.” However, the west façade incorporates few European architectural references, or, perhaps better, purposely

establishes a conversation between Chinese forms and the classical orders. The east façade is more aligned with architectural conventions from Europe—its façade flooded with decorative lines, flamboyant curvatures, and low-relief ornaments.

The architecture may resemble European models, but the execution of the design betrays unfamiliarity and also experimentation with both copperplate engraving and techniques for creating shadows. Consider the balustrade that is surmounted on the east façade, whose shadows are inconsistent with the façade. The right section of the balustrade is in complete shadow, while the bottom of the façade is slightly bathed in light (Fig. 8.3). Patterns made with the burin, such as the topiaries, resemble woodcuts (a practice with a much longer history in China than in Europe), and other details, such as the spiraling patterns on the ground below recall calligraphy. Moreover, the two façade engravings both show signs of wear-and-tear from being folded vertically in the center. The physical folding of the paper reasserts the symmetry of the architecture, the use of single-point perspective, and it reminds us of the mirroring of the image on the paper in both woodblock printing and engraving. We are reminded that the set of engravings were the product of a Chinese artist working with a European medium that was entirely new and yet one that he had the means to translate through familiar practices.

2.3 Speculations, tracing material evidence for execution source

Discrepancies, differences, and translations bring us back to the question of Yi Lantai's source for the engravings. Tracing the provenance of the engravings, we learn that the “missionaries’ original drawings have disappeared,” but that copies were made for Andreas Everardus Van Braam Houckgeest (1739-1801), director of the Dutch trading station in Canton (Guangdong), in 1794.⁵¹ However, a letter from George Loehr reveals that van Braam Houckgeest's copies were

⁵¹ Beurdeley and Beurdeley, 75.

drawings of engravings lent to him in Canton.⁵² Since the series of engravings was completed by 1786, it seems likely they were the sources for Houckgeest's drawings.

An examination of the east façade's light source suggests that Yi Lantai's engravings were based on *in situ* observations. The light source of the east façade comes from the upper left, implying that the sun would have risen from the north-east of the façade. However, based on previous reconstruction maps of the aviary's location, the east façade is directly east-facing (Fig. 9). A light source from the upper left is improbable, as the sun would create a different shadow on the façade's surface. The inconsistency in shadow might be explained by Guo Daiheng's reconstruction map from 2016 (Fig. 10). In Guo's map, the east façade faces toward the north-east rather than the east. The shadows on the façade thus align with the direction of the sun, indicating that Yi relied on on-site observations to complete the project. If Yi were to use Castiglione's architectural plan as model, discrepancies in shadow are unlikely, given the Jesuit's artistic training in Milan.

Surviving photographs of the east façade substantiate the claim that Yi's engravings document the avian facades. The west façade was burnt down in 1860, but *The East Gate of the Aviary* (Fig. 5) captured parts of the east façade before its demolition in 1924. When comparing *The East Gate* to the east façade engraving, we see that Yi's placement of gate, pilasters, niches, wall-reliefs, and fountains are accurate. *The East Gate*, however, lacks some decorative sculptures that are present in Yi's engraving. For example, finials, and the crown-like form on the façade's apex (Fig. 11), are absent in the photograph. The ornamental relief, inlaid above the portal, is also depicted differently. The absence of finials and sculptures is perhaps due to the rampage of Yuanming Yuan in 1860. However, we can infer that supporting structures of the

⁵² George R. Loehr, "A. E. Van Braam Houckgeest The First American at the Court of China," in *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 15, no. 4 (1954): 190.

architecture (pilasters, portal, niches) are faithful reproductions of the east façade. Indeed, it would be unlikely for the reverse to be true, since buildings tend to be adjusted during the construction process.

An undated color wood-block print illustrates the European palace complex from the perspective of the west façade (Fig. 12). Topiaries are at the foreground of the composition. Two sculptures flank the ornamented gate, and the façade is rendered in red, blue, and yellow. On the left, the pavilion is in white and navy blue. Just like the engraving, the structure dips in the center. There is no information regarding the production date of the anonymous print, which was included as a frontispiece of Maurice Adam's 1936 publication.⁵³ However, the west façade's architectural arrangement, as seen in the wood-block print, corresponds to the composition of Yi's west façade engraving. We could infer that both the wood-block print and the west façade engraving intended to resemble the west façade's appearance from when it was present.

2.4 Flowing line: China and Europe

The two prints of the aviary show a Chinese artist navigating through one of the first productions of copperplate engravings in China. Consider the team of artisans in the studio, turning the copperplates on the table. The hatching lines that form the composition appear more like etchings—as if the artists were scraping onto the surface. The engravings prompt us to contemplate the collaborative process of learning and working with a new artistic medium.

The aviary engravings are also imbued with transcultural components. Consider the ornamental reliefs on the entablature of the east façade (Fig. 13.1). It is difficult to determine what the minute pedal-like drawings intend to resemble. Their formal qualities are reminiscent of the unconventional drawings seen on delftware (Fig. 13.2). Delftware is porcelain produced by

⁵³ See Maurice Adam, *Yuen Ming Yuen, l'oeuvre Architectural Des Anciens Jésuites Au XVIIIe Siècle* (Pei-p'ing: Imprimerie des Lazaristes, 1936), VI.

Dutch potters, who imitated Chinese Kraak porcelain and innovated with their consumers' imagination of China.⁵⁴ In trying to mimic Kraak porcelain, the Dutch potters created forms that are neither Chinese nor Netherlandish. The ornamental reliefs in the engravings, similarly, show a Chinese artist attempting to make sense of forms from Europe. They demonstrate how the object resists being categorized as a product of "China" or of "Europe." Instead the prints offer another instance of how different kinds of lines move globally. The calligraphic blue lines on Kraak porcelain from Jingdezhen appeared in the Netherlands, seen in the imitation of lines on delftware. The lines are then translated back to an aviary in Qing China, which was subsequently carved on copperplates by Yi Lantai and his team. The mark-making and artistic experimentation of the aviary engravings contribute to the continuous back and forth between China and Europe.

⁵⁴ For more on porcelain, see Ben Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism: Geography, Globalism, and Europe's Early Modern World* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

Chapter III, Early Modern Aviaries, Knowledge Possession, Reconstructions of Habitat and Function

In June 1988, Yuanming Yuan Park was officially open to the public six months after being identified as a site of cultural relic protection. Present-day Yuanming Yuan remains a tourist attraction, and one of its most popular destinations are the ruins of the European palace complex. Nothing of the west façade of the aviary remains (Fig. 14.1). However, at the site where the east façade once stood, some marble pieces survive. Piled on the ground, the stones provide a rough indication of how one would have passed through the aviary portal (Fig. 14.2). A public statement on November 5, 2020, issued by the Chinese National Administration of Cultural Heritage, clarified that they have no intention of restoring the ruins to their original state. The government's decision against the restoration stemmed from a concern that a physical reconstruction would erase the history of Yuanming Yuan being plundered by foreign forces.⁵⁵

Although the government does not intend to restore the palace complex, as we have seen, scholars have sought to reconstruct the European palaces and their role in the complex of the buildings in Qing China. The aviary, as I have been suggesting, provides a particularly apt focus for considering such transcultural questions. Methods for studying the palace are often split between those that create a new set of replicas—reconstructions and models—and those that trace motifs, styles, and sources for those buildings. Such stylistic comparisons, however, are limited, because they principally rely on similarities between forms without supporting historical documents.⁵⁶ Nor is hybridity a useful concept in the context of the aviary, or the European palaces, since it often suggests an encounter or a synthesis of ideas that can be traced, rather than

⁵⁵ Statement published on the website of Chinese National Administration of Cultural Heritage on November 5, 2020, under the name “國家文物局對十三屆全國人大三次會議第 7024 號建議的答覆,” see <http://www.gov.cn/fuwu/bm/gjwwj/index.htm>.

⁵⁶ Rujivacharakul, 100.

an on-going complex transcultural process.⁵⁷ The aforementioned concerns are at the heart of studying influence and considering its limits for analysis of the European palaces.

In this chapter, I first examine aviaries in a global context to rethink influence. Although the design of the east façade can be traced to trends in seventeenth-century European aviaries, as I show, there was no specific point of origin for the avian structure. I then examine the aviary's role as a portal, which gathered people from across the globe. I incorporate recent findings in archeological excavations with my speculations. Throughout this chapter, I highlight the ways in which the aviary at Yuanming Yuan embodies the back and forth that took flight in early modern world.

3.1. Motivations for a European aviary, early modern aviaries in Europe

Aviaries were featured in early modern villas and court complexes in diverse geographical locales. Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens points to how the plan of European palaces resembles seventeenth-century Italian villas, specifically the Villa Borghese and Villa Medici.⁵⁸ The Padiglione dell'Uccelliera at Villa Borghese was one of the most well-known aviaries in the world.⁵⁹ Many other Italian villas also included aviaries, such as Villa Farnese, Villa Lante, Bagnaia (1568-1578), Villa Giulia (1550-1553), and Villa Pamphilj at Porta San Pancrazio. The tradition was especially strong in Italy, due to the influence of the Medici and the popes, but avian architecture extended beyond the Italian peninsula.⁶⁰ For example, visitors travelling to Italy took interest in aviaries during the early 1600s. Bird enclosures were designed in the

⁵⁷ On theoretical approaches by post-colonial studies and comparative studies of literature that question whether a synthesis of Chinese and Western art is even possible, see the review by John Finlay on Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens' *Giuseppe Castiglione*, 220-226.

⁵⁸ Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, "The Emperor Qianlong's European Palaces," 71.

⁵⁹ Nonaka, 392.

⁶⁰ Moll-Breebaart and Leeuwin, 148.

Netherlands from the mid-seventeenth century onward, and, alongside menageries, became common on country estates and mansions in major cities.⁶¹

Early modern aviaries can be divided into two types.⁶² The first kind are small cages, hidden in foliage, arbors, or archways. The cages were concealed to give the impression that the birds, whose songs and chirping would be heard, were free and not confined. The second type are larger, more ornate aviaries for the exhibition of a great number of birds. An example of the second kind is an aviary at Kenilworth Castle (1575), which stood on marble pilasters against the terrace wall. It had a base cap molding, four large windows on the front, and two at each end. They were all covered with wire mesh. Each window was arched and divided from the others by columns supporting a “cumly Cornish [cornice],”⁶³ which was painted and gilded with great diamonds and other precious stones. These two types of early modern aviaries will be pertinent to my discussion of the aviary in Yuanming Yuan.

The fascination with birds began a long time ago in Europe. Ancient Romans were fond of talking birds, and large bird collections were used for aesthetic as well as gastronomical reasons. A larger, more ornate aviary has a long history that begins with Pliny the Elder’s description of Marcus Laenius Strabo’s great aviary at Brindisi.⁶⁴ Comparable is the aviary of Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27 B.C.), who recorded one part of his Casinum villa in *De re rustica* (40 B.C.).⁶⁵ Varro’s aviary became famous in the Cinquecento through Piero Ligorio’s reconstruction in the *Speculum romanae magnificentiae*.⁶⁶ Varro describes that,

⁶¹ On the topic of aviaries, see Annejuul Moll-Breebaart and Edward W. Leeuwin’s examination of the aviary at De Hooge Vuursche (2008) and Nonaka Nastumi’s research on the aviaries at the Farnese garden (2014).

Annejuul Moll-Breebaart and Edward W. Leeuwin, “Birds on De Hooge Vuursche: The Aviary of the Eighteenth-century Country Estate De Hooge Vuursche,” in *Die Gartenkunst* (2008): 145.

⁶² Paula Henderson, *The Tudor House and Garden: Architecture and Landscape in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries* (Yale University Press, 2005), 149.

⁶³ Henderson, *The Tudor House and Garden*, 150.

⁶⁴ Moll-Breebaart and Leeuwin, “Birds on De Hooge Vuursche,” 143.

⁶⁵ He speaks of his aviary in its third volume. See A. W. van Buren and R. M. Kennedy, “Varro’s Aviary at Casinum,” in *The Journal of Roman Studies* 9 (1919): 59–66.

⁶⁶ Nonaka, 365.

[...] within the net are birds of all kinds, especially songsters, such as nightingales and blackbirds, to which water is supplied by means of a small channel, while food is thrown into them under the net.⁶⁷

Varro's aviary was both a place for keeping birds and an elaborate architectural complex with water features and cosmological connotations.

Birds occupied a special place in culture and cosmology; some considered birds as morally superior, or the highest of animals.⁶⁸ Ulisse Aldrovandi and Conrad Gessner's ornithological publications were frequently reissued. Popular Jesuit polymath Étienne Binet (1569–1639) devoted a significant portion of his treatises to birds and their capacity for flight as well as their moral superiority to men and other animals.⁶⁹ The surge of interest in birds in early modern Italy also encouraged the production of manuals for bird-keeping. For example, Giovanni Pietro Olina's *Uccelliera* (1622) provided instructions and illustrations on how to capture, feed, and kill birds; it is a bird-encyclopedia that has information on specific breeds and accompanying illustrations. Similarly, as Paula Henderson observes, birds in early modern England "kept the pleasure gardens more exotic, [and were] kept for their song, their beauty and rarity and sometimes for their size."⁷⁰ In France, Louis XIII (1601-1643) developed admiration for sweet-sounding songbirds. He was a frequent visitor of a large aviary at the palace of Fontainebleau, even naming a tutor for singing birds.⁷¹ His successor, Louis XIV (1638-1715), selected birds for their qualities of beauty.⁷² In 1662, the Sun King turned to an orderly and

⁶⁷ Van Buren and Kennedy, "Varro's Aviary at Casinum," 63.

⁶⁸ Peter Sahlins, "Precious Beasts: Animals and Absolutism in the Early Reign of Louis XIV," in *1668: The Year of the Animal in France* (Zone Books, 2017), 88.

⁶⁹ Sahlins, "Precious Beasts," 89. Étienne Binet's book was titled as: *Essai des merveilles de nature et des plus nobles artifices pièce très nécessaire, à tous ceux qui font profession d'éloquence* (Essay on the marvels of nature and the most noble artifices most necessary for those who profess eloquence, first published in 1621 and republished a dozen times before 1660).

⁷⁰ Henderson, *The Tudor House and Garden*, 149.

⁷¹ Sahlins, 55.

⁷² Keeping large collections of animals at courts traces back to the 1300s and before, with a tradition of kings keeping animals at court; exemplary is the collection of animals at Louis XIV's royal menagerie of Versailles represented a selection of species from the known world. See Sahlins, 53-4, 69, 73, and 88.

peaceful display of birds in the gardens of Versailles. Louis XIV installed two aviaries in the Marble Courtyard of the palace in 1671 at the end of the first building campaign by Louis Le Vau. These were ornate and hugely expensive artworks of elaborate design, executed by the king's best artisans, with gilded ironwork and sculpted marble interiors.⁷³

The Yuanming Yuan aviary echoes this trend in seventeenth-century European aviaries, particularly the Farnese aviary on the Palatine hill and its transition from a functional structure to a sign of the patron's prestige. During the sixteenth century, the aviary's function was more important than its aesthetic aspects. The turn of the seventeenth century proved a radical change in architectural form. Aviaries began to invade the realm of high design, and prominent architects became involved in the design process.⁷⁴ The Farnese aviary turned from a "rustic utilitarian structure," according to Nonaka, into an elegant garden pavilion in a prominent aristocratic garden.⁷⁵ Adopting a classical design connoted cultivation, a sign of prestige and respectable social status. Thus, with an embellished exterior, the aviary became an iconic feature of the patron's self-representation.⁷⁶ The stylistic transition of the Farnese aviary in the seventeenth century helps us pinpoint when Italian aviaries began to adopt classical architectural elements, such as the niches, entablatures, and fountain sculptures. The same architectural elements appear in the east façade of the Yuanming Yuan aviary. These classical details mark the aviary as a specific type, which is connected to antiquity and the discourse of aristocratic power in early modern Rome.

⁷³ Sahlins, 88.

⁷⁴ Nonaka, 366-7.

⁷⁵ For more on the Farnese Aviaries, see Nonaka.

⁷⁶ Nonaka, 376.

3.2 Knowledge possession in the form of an aviary

Enclosures for animals, such as aviaries or menageries, were not a novel concept to China. In 138 B.C., Emperor Wu's imperial park, or the Supreme Forest, included tangible specimens of every kind, which served as a microcosm and a replica of the cosmos.⁷⁷ During the Ming Dynasty, a "Hundred-Bird Room" was kept for exotic birds from across the world.⁷⁸ During the reign of Kangxi, Gao Shiqi (1644-1703) wrote that an aviary stood next to the Purple Light Pavilion (*Ziguang Ge* 紫光閣), "housing all kind of 'strange and exotic beasts and fowls, such as peacocks...'"⁷⁹ Qianlong kept an imperial menagerie, which had one director and three eunuchs attached to it. The menagerie was responsible for "rearing and keeping livestock, fowl and beasts."⁸⁰ In Yuanming Yuan, Father Attiret describes that,

[...] there are also... a number of cages and pavilions, some on the water and some on the land, for all sorts of aquatic birds; as on the land one finds from time to time little menageries and little hunting parks.⁸¹

Hence, we learn that there is a plethora of menageries and aviaries at the Qing court.

The aviary at the palace complex was likely desirable as a form of knowledge possession. Qing emperors showed an interest in western knowledge, whether it be on foreign erudition or natural history. Filippo Maria Grimaldi (1618-1663), mathematician and astronomer, put on an exhibition for Kangxi, which amazed the audience with anamorphosis, peep shows, magic lanterns, and garden painted landscapes.⁸² By studying and documenting foreign erudition, the emperors transformed alien expertise into local competences to create a shared store of knowledge. The *Complete Collection of Illustrations and Writings from the Earliest to Current*

⁷⁷ Lothar Ledderose, citing *Chiao-cheng san-fu huang-t'u* (*Chung-kuo hsüeh-shu ming-chu* ed., 6) 4, 29.

⁷⁸ Lin Lina, "花下開屏金翠簾 絳羽暎日煥輝輝--郎世寧畫孔雀開屏探析" in *National Palace Museum Periodicals* 故宮文物月刊 No. 391 (Oct 2015): 31.

⁷⁹ Lai, 75.

⁸⁰ The menagerie was recorded in the *Guo chao gong shi* (國朝宮史 History of the Imperial House and Court). Lai, 20. Citing Yu Minzhong et al. ed., *Guochao gongshi*, Juan 21, 26a-b, in *Siku*, vol. 657, 444.

⁸¹ Malone, 135. Translated from *Lettres édifiantes*, vol. xxvii, edition of 1749, 1-61.

⁸² Musillo, "Mid-Qing Arts and Jesuit Visions," 3.

Times (*Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成)—an encyclopedia completed in 1725, from the reign of Kangxi to Yongzheng—reflects this kind of desire for knowledge possession.⁸³ At the command of emperor Kangxi, Jesuit missionary Ludovico Buglio (1606-1682) compiled *On Lions* (*Shizi shuo* 獅子說) and the *Treatise on Hawks* (*Jincheng ying shuo* 進呈鷹說), which was later renamed as *On Hawks* (*Ying lun* 鷹論). Both treatises were reproduced in the *Complete Collection*, and were translations of entries from Aldrovandi's *Historia Animalium*,⁸⁴ taken from the substantial European book collections at the four large churches in Beijing.⁸⁵ The monumental undertaking of compiling the *Four Treasuries* (*Siku quanshu* 四庫全書) is exemplary of Qianlong's fervor for knowledge possession. It was a project that he oversaw every step of the way. *Four Treasuries* included virtually every scientific work translated into Chinese from 1600 to 1770.⁸⁶ Qianlong had his own imperial menagerie; however, it would surely be appealing to have a "European style" aviary in Yuanming Yuan, as a form of knowledge possession.

3.3 Reconstructing spatial organization and functions with archeological findings

Thus far, I have examined the aviary and its migration to Qing China. I also explained why the east façade evokes aviaries from seventeenth-century Italy. The following sections are dedicated to piecing together scholarship and archeological findings, shedding light on the aviary's structure and function.

⁸³ Lai, 44. Citing Jiang Tingxi, *Gujin tushu jicheng*, vol. 63, *bowu huibian qinchong dian*, Juan12, *ying bu*, 125-133.

⁸⁴ Ibid. Citing Fang Hao, *Zhong xi jiaotong shi*, vol. 2, 552-554.

⁸⁵ For a comprehensive study on the formation of Jesuit libraries in Beijing, see Noël Golvers, *Libraries of Western Learning for China: Circulation of Western Books between Europe and China in the Jesuit Mission* (Leuven: Ferdinand Verbiest Stichting, 2013). The Church of the Saviour (Beitang), Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (Nantang), St. Joseph's Church (Dongtang) and Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (Xitang). The oldest volumes in the collection can be traced back to the late Ming, originating in the library of Matteo Ricci or the collection of 7,000 European books brought to Beijing by Nicolas Trigault (1577-1629).

⁸⁶ Gang Zhao, *The Qing Opening to the Ocean: Chinese Maritime Policies 1684-1757* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 182.

The aviary served as an important gateway to access either side of the palace complex, and yet, its spatial arrangement is unclear.⁸⁷ A black and white photograph from 1870 captures the view from inside the portal of the aviary (Fig. 15). According to the caption, *Arche de la porte de la volière* (*Arch at the Aviary Door*), the viewer is facing Haiyantang in ruins. This archway allowed visitors to pass through either side of the palace complex, and the experience is described by Thiriez as this:

When one turns to the vaulted corridor that used to form the center of the aviary [west facade], he reached another fantasy world. [...] From there, a backward glance would have revealed that the dark corridor opened into a splendid western gate, still intact with two niches housing fountains shaped as tiered vases.⁸⁸

Importantly, however, an alternative passageway is mentioned in Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens' *Le Yuanmingyuan*. "... Walking down the mountain, and passing through the side door behind the aviary, one arrives at the European Palace complex's extension."⁸⁹ The extension refers to the east façade onward to Haiyantang. The "side door" (*bianmen* 邊門) could not possibly be the gated portal. From these two descriptions, we can infer that there were two paths that one could take to pass through the aviary: one through the side-door, and the other, through the main portal, as seen in *Arch at the Aviary Door*.

In the few references to the aviary, and in spite of little evidence about its spatial configuration, scholars describe it as a singular architectural structure, which is an idea that I now challenge, or at least nuance. The west façade was destroyed in 1860 and there is nothing above ground for comparison. From his visit, Osvald Sirén described that,

[...] the Aviary or 'Room for the Feeding of Birds,' in this case peacocks, was a small-ish building whose pavilion-like middle section had a concave facade divided by niches and stout pilasters carrying a strongly embossed entablature.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Malone, 147.

⁸⁸ Thiriez, 38.

⁸⁹ Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, *Le Yuanmingyuan*, 24. My translation from "走下山來，經過養雀籠籠後的邊門，人們便來到了西洋樓的擴建部分。"

⁹⁰ Osvald Sirén, *Gardens of China* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1949), 127.

Sirén describes the then-extant east façade but equates the aviary to the “Room for the Feeding of Birds.” He implies that by entering through the east gate, one directly enters into the bird-feeding room. This gives the impression that the aviary is a singular structure, enclosed between the two façades.

The aviary likely consisted of two parts. In a 1983 reconstruction proposal, He Zhongyi and Zhen Zhaofen refer to the aviary as a two-part complex for the first time:

... the west is the building for water, and the east is the aviary and bird-feeding room... However, both the aviary and room for bird-feeding is completely flat; there are no traces to be used. It is adequate to simply mark the position of where it was located at and set up a drawing board for explanation.⁹¹

The location of the so-called bird-feeding room can be found in reconstruction plans for the palace complex in the past century (Fig. 16). A square is closely positioned next to the aviary in reconstruction maps of Carroll Malone (1934), Maurice Adam (1936), Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens (1988), and Guo Daiheng (2016). However, none of the aforementioned scholars provides explanation of the square's purpose. Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens' 1:500 scale model of the palace complex sheds light on the matter (Fig. 17). In this model, this square space can be seen on the left of the west aviary portal. When comparing the model to the engraving, the location of the square coordinates with the pavilion featured in the west aviary engraving (Fig. 18).

I propose that the pavilion, next to the west façade, is where most birds were kept. Thiriez's description offers some support for this idea: "... across from this [north terrace overlooking a courtyard], only a scorched earth showed where the Chinese-style aviary for exotic birds used to stand against a wall."⁹² The east façade of the aviary, however, is hardly “Chinese,”

⁹¹ He Zhongyi and Zhaofen Zeng, in “長春園的復興和西洋樓遺址整修 (The Rejuvenation of Chang Chun Yuan and Renovation of the Ruins of the 'Western Style Building'),” in 圓明園 Yuanming Yuan, 3 (中國圓明園學會 *Zhongguo Yuanmingyuan xuehui* 中國建築工業出版社 *Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe*, 2007), 32. My translations from “廣場之北是萬花陣花園，西是蓄水樓，東為養雀籠和飼鳥房。... 但養雀籠，飼鳥房兩處已成平地，無跡可考，將來可標出其平面位置並樹立畫板說明即可。”

⁹² Thiriez, 38.

as I argued above. The “Chinese-style aviary” must be in reference to the pavilion on the left of the gate, as seen in the west façade engraving (Fig. 2). The design of this pavilion is reminiscent of Henderson’s second type of aviary at Kenilworth Castle, which exhibited a great number of birds; they both inhabit a square space with large windows on all sides. In terms of the chronology of the pavilion’s construction, it is sensible that it housed most of the birds. The west façade was finished long before the east façade, which extended the palace complex eastward. One would likely pass through the side door on the west façade to see the birds at the pavilion.

I speculate that birds were also kept under the archway at the main portal, an idea suggested by the screen-like walls, and the sonorous possibilities of housing them there. As Henderson notes, it was common throughout Europe for caged birds to be tucked under archways in gardens. The Jesuits, who came from across the continent, and who were involved in the palace construction in China were surely aware of this phenomenon. Many birds were kept for their song. Consider Louis XIII’s keenness for songbirds. Small songbirds were likely kept in cages and tucked underneath the portal of the aviary, since passing through the main archway of the aviary, and moving between nature and the reconstruction of Europe in China, one would experience and hear the chirping of birds.

Archeological findings from 2015 further my hypothesis that the portal held caged birds. A group of researchers, from the Beijing Municipal Administration of Cultural Heritage, excavated 800 square meters within the site of the aviary. They examined foundations of the aviary, storage room, west walkway, as well as the water supply and drainage system. The team found glazed artifacts, marble, porcelain pieces, and glassware.⁹³ Zhang Zonghua, an

⁹³ Guo Jingning, Shang Heng, Zhang Zhiyong, Sun Zheng, Wei Ran, Zhang Zhonghua, and Zhang Lifan, “2015 年北京市文物考古工作回顧 (The 2015 Review of the Beijing Municipal Administration of Cultural Heritage),” in *Beijing Wenbo Wen Collection*, 2016: 48. My translation from “養雀籠遺址考古發掘 養雀籠遺址考古發掘面積 800 平方米，清理出養雀籠本體、庫房院、西側道路、供排水系統等。[...] 養雀籠還出土了大量文物，分為琉璃構件、漢白玉構件、瓷片、玻璃器等，琉璃構件顏色分為黃、綠、藍等。”

archeologist from the 2015 excavation, found holes in the foundation of the west façade. The holes were possibly designed for copper wiring and correspond with foundations of pre-existing columns that likely created wire mesh for the birds. For this reason, the research team contends that there were copper wires, creating nets to confine the birds as a part of the avian façade. “People would pass through the middle [portal] while birds sung on both sides”⁹⁴—an idea not so different from caged birds tucked underneath the archway.

The pavilion next to the west façade, which has been virtually overlooked, likely housed most of the rare and exotic birds. Perhaps, this oversight is because any attention to the aviary has focused on its east façade, or the “Italian” side (Fig. 1). Moreover, the symmetry of the engravings easily directs our attention toward the vanishing point in the center, which in both cases are the wrought-iron gates. The actual location of the aviary requires a detour to the left.

3.4 Peacocks, poems, and propaganda

There are claims that peacocks were kept at the aviary, although not enough information exists to substantiate this assertion. Malone maintains that peacocks and other precious birds were reared at the site until the reign of Emperor Jiaqing (嘉慶, r. 1796-1820) but he does not provide the source of this information.⁹⁵ In 1984, Zhan Guanghua published notes from a Lama, Jin Xun (金勳, 1882-1976), who was familiar with the configuration of Yuanming Yuan and noted that two

⁹⁴ Xu Wen 許雯, “北京圓明園考古新公布一批考古成果 (Beijing Yuanmingyuan Archaeology announces a new archaeological findings),” interview documented on *The Institute on Archeology CASS* (June 2017): <http://chinesearchaeology.net/cn/xccz/20170629/58707.html>. My paraphrasing from: “張中華和同事在考古發掘這裡的時候，發現牌樓的地基上面有用於拴銅絲的榫眼結構，“通過這個發現，再加上文獻資料，我們推斷出銅絲能通過地基上的榫眼和牌樓的柱子交錯編織成銅絲網，網裡養鳥，中間供皇室成員穿行，人從中間過，鳥在兩側鳴。”

⁹⁵ Malone, 147.

peacocks were kept on each side of the west avian façade.⁹⁶ The account is questionable, as it is based on Jin's memory and personal notes.

However, peacocks were present at the Qing court as tribute gifts from foreign rulers of the Western Regions (*xiyu* 西域), especially Central Asia and Southeast Asia.⁹⁷ After years of conflict between the Qing and the Zunghars, a pair of peacocks was sent as tribute gifts in 1739.⁹⁸ The peacocks mated and bore two chicks. Qianlong's eleven-stanza poem in 1752 (*Kongque chu* 孔雀雛) records this story. On 16 August 1758, Qianlong ordered Castiglione to paint the fully-grown peacocks in *Peacock Spreading its Tail* (*Kongque kaiping tu* 孔雀開屏圖, Fig. 19).⁹⁹ He had written another poem about the two peacocks and inscribed it on the painting. Qianlong's poem describes that the court has steadily received offerings (peacocks) from the Western Regions. It is, however, unheard of for the eggs to hatch successfully.

Many years ago, two eggs were birthed and cared for.
When the birds were merely born, they stooped down with their wings to be fed.
With their feathers newly grown and strength yet developed, they followed around the female chicken who led them to feed.
The old peacock in the cage was distant.
Around three-years-old, the peacocks were still small in size, but at five-years-old, they were fully grown.
Underneath the flowers, they exhibited their tails, which had gold and jade-green patterns [...]¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Zhan Guanghua 趙光華, “長春園建築及園林花木之一些資料 (“Some Reference Materials for Architectural Layout and Garden Plant Disposition in Chang Chun Yuan”),” in Yuanming Yuan 圓明園, 3 (*Zhongguo Yuanmingyuan xuehui* 中國圓明園學會 *Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe* 中國建築工業出版社, 2007), 1.

⁹⁷ Kristina Kleutghen, “Peacocks and Cave-Heavens,” in *Imperial Illusions* (University of Washington Press, 2015), 144.

⁹⁸ Kleutghen, “Peacocks and Cave-Heavens,” 151.

⁹⁹ Lin, “花下開屏金翠簾 綵羽映日煥輝輝 – 郎世寧畫孔雀開屏探析,” 32. Citing “*Ruyi guan* (如意館)” in *Huojidang* (活計檔): “七月十三日(西元一七五八年八月 十六日), 接得員外郎郎正培、庫長德魁押帖一件。內開本月十二日, 太監胡世傑傳旨: 著郎世寧畫 開屏孔雀大畫一軸, 補景著方琮、金廷標合筆, 用白絹畫。金廷標合筆, 用白絹畫。”

¹⁰⁰ My translation from “數歲前乃育兩殼, 雞伏翼之領哺囑。淋滲弱質隨雌雞, 老雀籠中情反邈。三年小尾五年大, 花下開屏金翠簾。”

Qianlong concluded that the peacocks eventually warmed up to the people and culture, but laments that the court was unable to have an abundance of the birds. On a symbolic level, the poem celebrates the successful tribute of Qianlong's military campaign, as he began his third Central Asian campaign in the year of 1758. More meaningfully, the poem evokes an auspicious phenomenon: the peacocks were able to hatch under Qianlong's watch, a sign of the emperor's heavenly approved sovereignty. Lastly, Qianlong uses the peacocks as a metaphor for the talents of the worthy. Peacocks are not good at producing offspring but they are talented and dazzling. Qianlong laments that he cannot have that at his court.

I believe that the peacocks from Castiglione's painting could have been kept at the aviary in the European palace complex. Qianlong's poems have propagandistic agendas but provide context to the chronology of the peacocks' presence at court, which may be connected to the aviary. From Qianlong's eleven-stanza poem (*Kongque chu*), we gather that two peacocks were birthed in the year of 1752. The other poem, inscribed on Castiglione's 1758 painting, describes how he watched the peacocks mature through the course of five years, and laments about the small number of peacocks at court. Between the years of 1752-1753, the construction of the west aviary façade was long complete. The pavilion would be available for rearing peacocks. A yellow-glazed artifact, dug up in an excavation from 2015, supports this hypothesis (Fig. 20). The artifact, likely originally attached to the roof of the west façade, has the inscription of "Peacock Archway" (*Kongque pailou* 孔雀牌樓). This artifact confirms that peacocks were indeed occupants of the aviary. The contextual evidence, on the other hand, suggests that the peacocks in Castiglione's painting could be kept at the aviary in the European palace complex.

The aviary must have been home to birds beyond peacocks. Qianlong's poem expresses regret in his inability to have an abundance of peacocks. Although it was a metaphor for talents at his court, we can infer that the number of peacocks were low at the aviary. Researchers from

the 2015 excavation described “how peacocks were exhibited from first entering might be connected to the expansion of bird-keeping activity [at the aviary].”¹⁰¹ If bird-keeping activity was expanded, other birds must have been kept here. As previously described, there was likely a desire for small songbirds to be kept under the archway of the aviary portal. Peacocks could not have been kept in small cages due to their size, and their chirping is objectively unpleasant. But one further example of painting that documented bird-activity in the Qing court, and was contemporaneous to the aviary construction, warrants consideration.

3.5 *Album of Birds*

In 1750, emperor Qianlong ordered the production of *Niao pu* (*Album of Birds* 鳥譜), an encyclopedic collection of images on birds (Fig. 21). Completed in 1761, a few years after the aviary’s construction finished, the *Album* records a total of 361 birds. The compilation includes twelve volumes, with thirty leaves in each volume. Each spread has an image to the right, as well as Manchu and Chinese text to the left.¹⁰²

Serving a larger argument that the *Album* was an important constituent in the formation of Qianlong’s imperial image, Lai Yu-chih convincingly contends that birds in the *Album* must have been drawn from real life. Lai argues that specimens of birds from around the empire were collected and delivered to the Department of Painting “so that their likeness can be painted and included in the *Album of Birds*.”¹⁰³ This is supported by evidence from the Archives for the Department of Painting. In 1753, “bird skin” (*niaopi* 鳥皮) was supplied for a painting,

¹⁰¹ Guo Jingning et al., “The 2015 Review of the Beijing Municipal Administration of Cultural Heritage,” 48. My translation from “第一進就展陳孔雀等，可能跟後來養殖規模擴大有關。”

¹⁰² The full title of the *Album of Birds* is: *Yu Sheng Zhang Weibang he mo Jiang Tingxi niao pu* 余省張為邦合摹蔣廷錫鳥譜 (*Album of Birds* by Yu Sheng and Zhang Weibang after Jiang Tingxi). It is in 12 volumes, of which the first four are preserved at the National Palace Museum in Taipei, the subsequent eight in Beijing. Lai, 56.

¹⁰³ Lai, 58. Citing “Hauyuan chu (畫院處),” *Huojidang* (活計檔), 1750, 21st of the 4st; 26st of the 6st; 1753, 8st of the 5st; 4th of the 6st. In *Zonghui*, vol. 17, 329, 330, 331; vol. 19, 499, 501.

suggesting that artists sought to paint from real-life. Accordingly, this was a revival of an older Tang-Song tradition to use empirical observation.¹⁰⁴ Henceforth, I speculate that artists sought to paint living birds in-person as well. The *Album*'s production began in 1750, a year before the completion of the aviary's west façade. There is a possibility that birds, depicted in the *Album*, could have been housed at the aviary-pavilion in the European palace complex.

Beyond a shared production date, the aviary and *Album of Birds* are connected by Jesuit Ignatius Sichelbarth, a lead painter of emo birds in the *Album*. Sichelbarth was an important collaborator of the designs of the European palace complex.¹⁰⁵ According to Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, Sichelbarth painted Haiyantang, which one could admire from the east gate of the aviary. Sichelbarth was in direct contact with the avian structure, as he needed to pass through the aviary in order to reach Haiyantang. Records from an entry in 1776 indicate that Sichelbarth obtained models for his drawing from the imperial menagerie.¹⁰⁶ Qianlong ordered Fang Cong and Sichelbarth to paint the emo birds in the detailed and refined manner of Castiglione's peacock painting.¹⁰⁷ One wonders if Sichelbarth was able to request exotic birds that may have been housed at the aviary.

3.6 Conclusion

My last chapter sought to combine visual and contextual evidence with archeological findings to propose that the aviary at the European palace complex has two pathways. Peacocks were likely housed at the pavilion that is depicted in Yi Lantai's engraving of the west façade.

Contemporaneous artistic productions at the Qing court, such as the *Album of Birds*, suggest that

¹⁰⁴ Lai, 59.

¹⁰⁵ Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, *Le Yuanmingyuan*, 8.

¹⁰⁶ Lai, 20. Citing "Ruyi guan (如意館)" in *Huojidang* (活計檔), 1776, 21st of the 11th, in *Zonghui*, vol. 39, 802.

¹⁰⁷ Lai, 16. Citing "Ruyi guan (如意館)" in *Huojidang* (活計檔). See First Historical Archives, Art Museum, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, eds. *Qing gong neiwufu zaobanchudang'an zonghui*, vol. 37, 131.

other birds could be kept at the aviary, too. Aspects of proposed connections are speculative but assumptions inferred from the overlapping interlocuters and chronologies.

The aviary was a collaborative project that involved Chinese craftsmen and Jesuits from various nations, who all participated in building the European palace complex. It served as an important portal that connected the eastern and western complex within the strip of buildings. By walking through the portal, and hearing birds chirp, the aviary invited and created different experiences for the people who interacted with it. In this way, the site became a space where foreign people and birds came together, the sounds of the birds perhaps conveying the different languages of visitors who had migrated from diverse parts of the world. The aviary is an encapsulation of the global, an example of heteroglossia in its architectural languages—in their syntaxes and their meanings. Interestingly, it is through the investigation of the aviary, once located in Qing China, that we are reminded of overlooked aviaries in European villas. In these complex ways, the aviary became a global portal that gathers and embodies the back and forth that took flight in the early modern world.

The Yuanming Yuan aviary has opened up intriguing connections that take us to and from Europe and China. Faced with the absence of the building, it is an opportunity to explore, and hopefully to rethink how global art history might be undertaken—in the multiplicities of connections and directions that open up and that interrogate categories such as national and chronological styles. My thesis has also tread the line between the absence and representation of what was once built. Circulating evidence constructs different narratives about the site of the aviary, which is also connected to functions, birds, court habitat, and the early modern world. I have explored the migration and intertwining of artistic practices, mediums (such as architecture, engraving, photography), avian husbandry, and natural history. The aviary requires moving beyond biographies and social life of objects to explore how a concept was translated into an

object and into diverse forms and media. The story of the aviary at Yuanming Yuan is a critical instance of the global fascination with birds, and their captivity in elite spaces, which ultimately helps us reassess early modern connections across and between cultures.

FIGURES



Fig. 1. Yi Lantai (fl. 1749-1786), *East Façade of the Peacock Aviary (Seventh)*, 1783-6. Engraving, 50 x 87.5 cm., mounted on heavy paper. Getty Research Institute Special Collections.



Fig. 2. Yi Lantai (fl. 1749-1786), *West Façade of the Peacock Aviary (Sixth)*, 1783-6. Engraving, 50 x 87.5 cm., mounted on heavy paper. Getty Research Institute Special Collections.

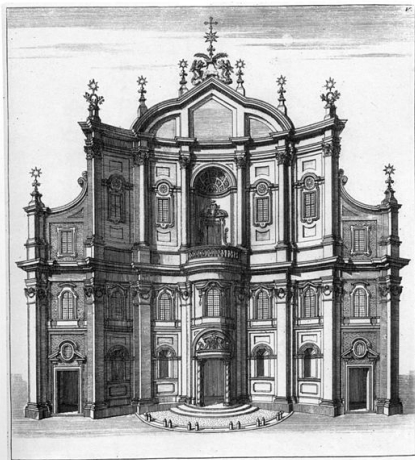


Fig. 3. Domenico Barrière (1622–1678), *Façade of Oratorio dei Filippini* by Francesco Borromini, 1658. Etching. Biblioteca Apostolica, Vatican.

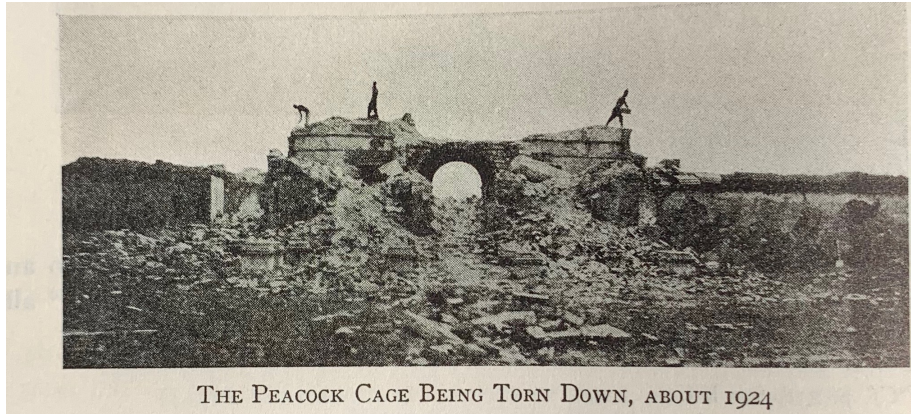


Fig. 4. Anonymous. *The Peacock Cage Being Torn Down, 1924*. After Carroll Malone, *History of the Peking Summer Palaces Under the Ch'ing Dynasty* (Illinois: University of Illinois, 1934), 147.

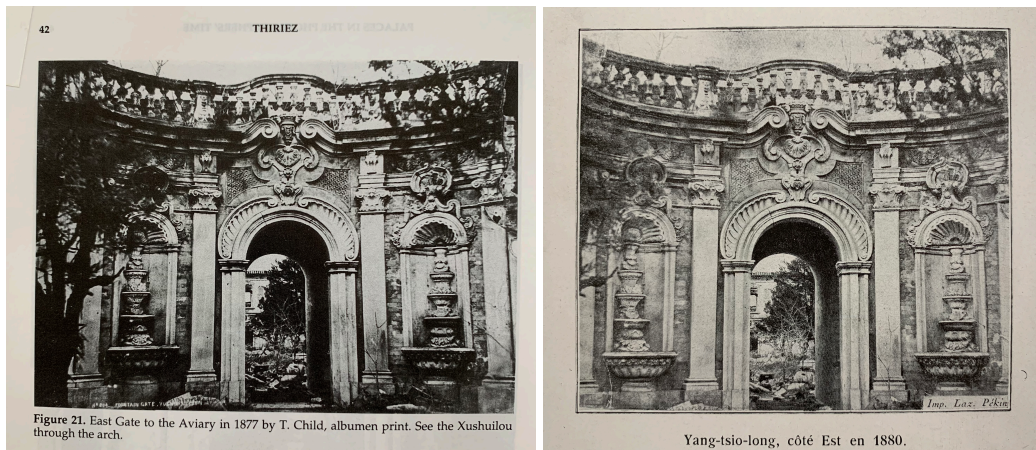


Fig. 5. Thomas Child, *East Gate to the Aviary, 1877*. Photograph to the left, after Régine Thiriez, *Barbarian Lens: Western Photographers of the Qianlong Emperor's European Palaces* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1998), 42. Photograph to the right, after Maurice Adam, *Yuen Ming Yuen, l'oeuvre Architectural Des Anciens Jésuites Au XVIIIe Siècle* (Pei-p'ing: Imprimerie des Lazaristes, 1936), *planches*.

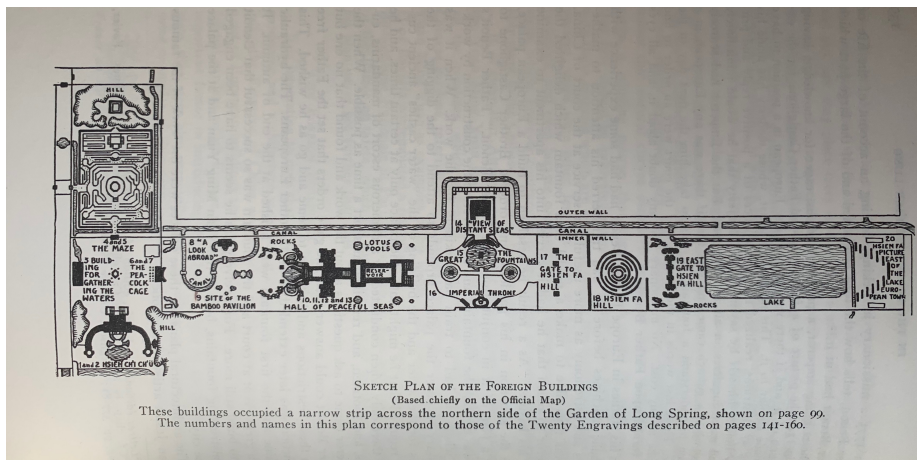


Fig. 6. A reconstruction map. After Carroll Malone, *History of the Peking Summer Palaces Under the Ch'ing Dynasty* (Illinois: University of Illinois, 1934), 140.



Fig. 7.1~7.3. Façade, sculpture, and roof details of the west aviary engraving. Yi Lantai, *West Façade of the Peacock Aviary*, 1783-6. Engraving, 50 x 87.5 cm., mounted on heavy paper. Getty Research Institute Special Collections.

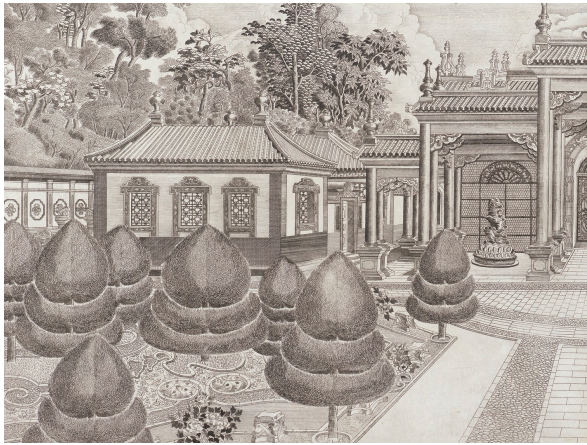


Fig. 7.4 Pavilion detail of the west aviary engraving. Yi Lantai, *West Façade of the Peacock Aviary*, 1783-6. Engraving, 50 x 87.5 cm., mounted on heavy paper. Getty Research Institute Special Collections.



Fig. 8.1~ 8.2. Façade, ground, and pond-rocks details of the east aviary engraving. Yi Lantai, *East Façade of the Peacock Aviary*, 1783-6. Engraving, 50 x 87.5 cm., mounted on heavy paper. Getty Research Institute Special Collections.

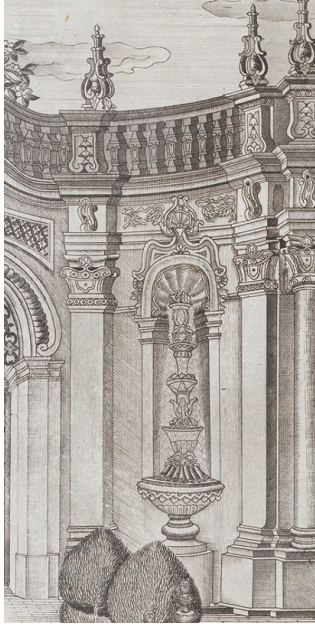


Fig. 8.3. Right balustrade detail of the east aviary engraving. Yi Lantai, *East Façade of the Peacock Aviary* (Seventh), 1783-6. Engraving, 50 x 87.5 cm., mounted on heavy paper. Getty Research Institute Special Collections.

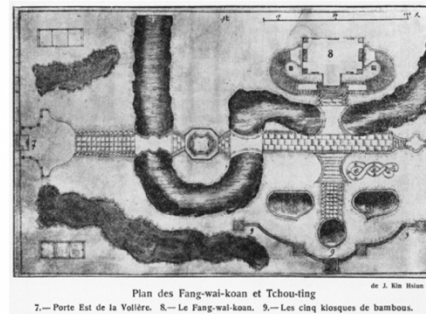
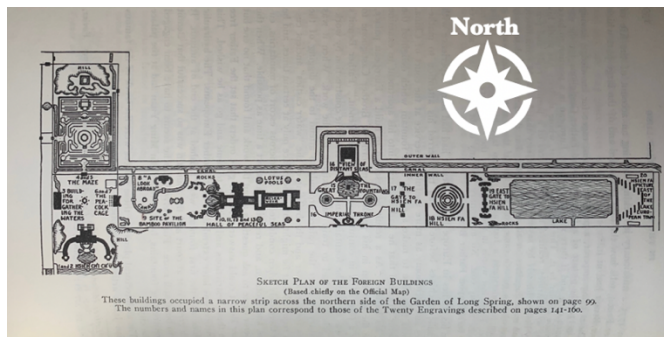


Fig. 9. Left: Carroll Malone reconstruction plan. Right: Maurice Adam reconstruction plan. After Carroll Malone, *History of the Peking Summer Palaces Under the Ch'ing Dynasty* (Illinois: University of Illinois, 1934), 140; Maurice Adam, *Yuen Ming Yuen, l'oeuvre Architectural Des Anciens Jésuites Au XVIIIe Siècle* (Pei-p'ing: Imprimerie des Lazaristes, 1936), 28.



Fig. 10. Reconstruction map of the European palace complex. After Guo Daiheng, *China's Lost Imperial Garden: The World's Most Exquisite Garden Rediscovered* (Shanghai Press and Publishing Development Company, 2016), 33.

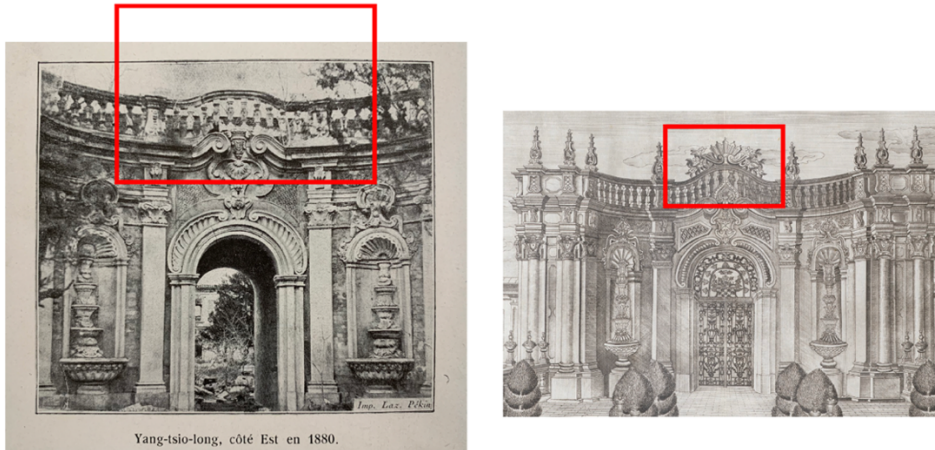


Fig. 11. Comparison of Thomas Child's *East Gate to the Aviary* to Yi's *East Façade of the Peacock Aviary*. After Maurice Adam, *Yuen Ming Yuen, l'oeuvre Architectural Des Anciens Jésuites Au XVIIIe Siècle* (Pei-p'ing: Imprimerie des Lazaristes, 1936), *planches*.



Fig. 12. An undated color wood-block print. After Maurice Adam, *Yuen Ming Yuen, l'oeuvre Architectural Des Anciens Jésuites Au XVIIIe Siècle* (Pei-p'ing: Imprimerie des Lazaristes, 1936), VI.



Fig. 13.1. Façade detail of *East Façade of the Peacock Aviary*.
 Fig. 13.2. Jacob van Hulsdonck (1582-1647), *Still Life with a Porcelain Dish of Fruit*, 1635. Oil on panel. 24 x 35.5 cm. Private collection.



Fig. 14.1. Present-day site of the aviary at Yuanming Yuan. Photographs taken from Yuanming Yuan Park's official website (<http://www.yuanmingyuanpark.cn>).



Fig. 14.2. Present-day site of the aviary at Yuanming Yuan. Photographs taken from Yuanming Yuan Park's official website (<http://www.yuanmingyuanpark.cn>).

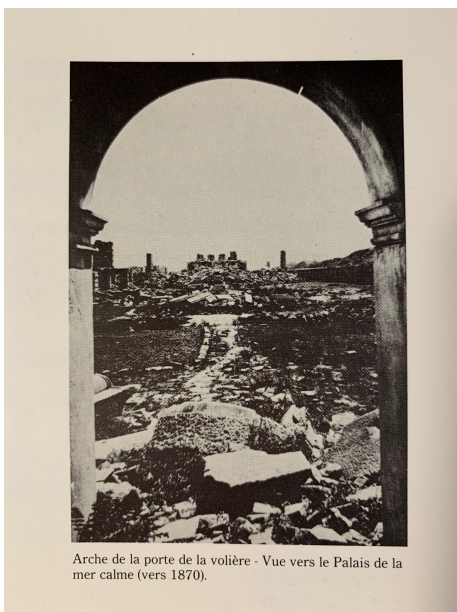
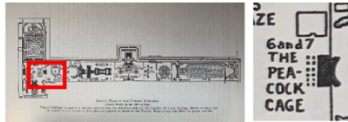
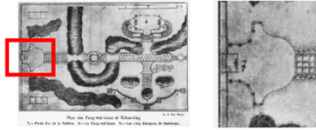


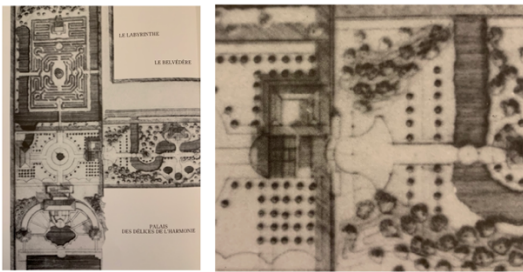
Fig. 15. Anonymous photograph, *Arche de la porte de la volière - vue vers le Palais mer calme* (Arch of the aviary door - view towards the Palais calm sea), 1870. After Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, *Le Yuanmingyuan: Jeux d'eau et Palais Européen Du XVIII Siècle à La Cour de Chine* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1988), 27.



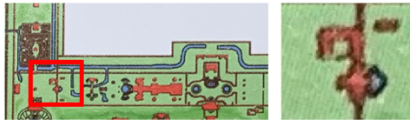
Carroll Malone's map (1934), aviary highlighted in red.



Maurice Adam's map (1936), aviary highlighted in red.

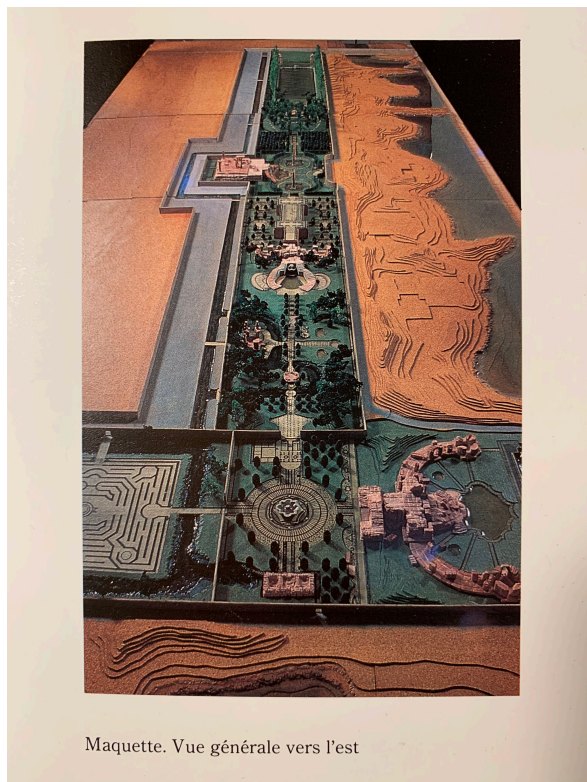


Michèle Perazzoli-t'Serstevens' map (1988).



Guo Daiheng's map (2016), aviary highlighted in red.

Fig. 16. Comparison of four reconstruction maps: Carroll Malone (1934), Maurice Adam (1936), Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens (1988), and Guo Daiheng (2016).



Maquette. Vue générale vers l'est

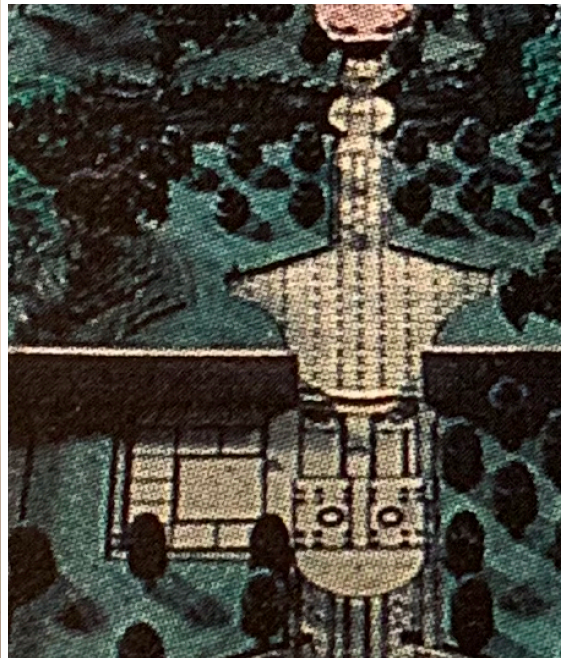


Fig. 17. Reconstruction model (1:500) of the European palace complex plan. After Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, *Le Yuanmingyuan: Jeux d'eau et Palais Européen Du XVIII Siecle à La Cour de Chine* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1988), 37.

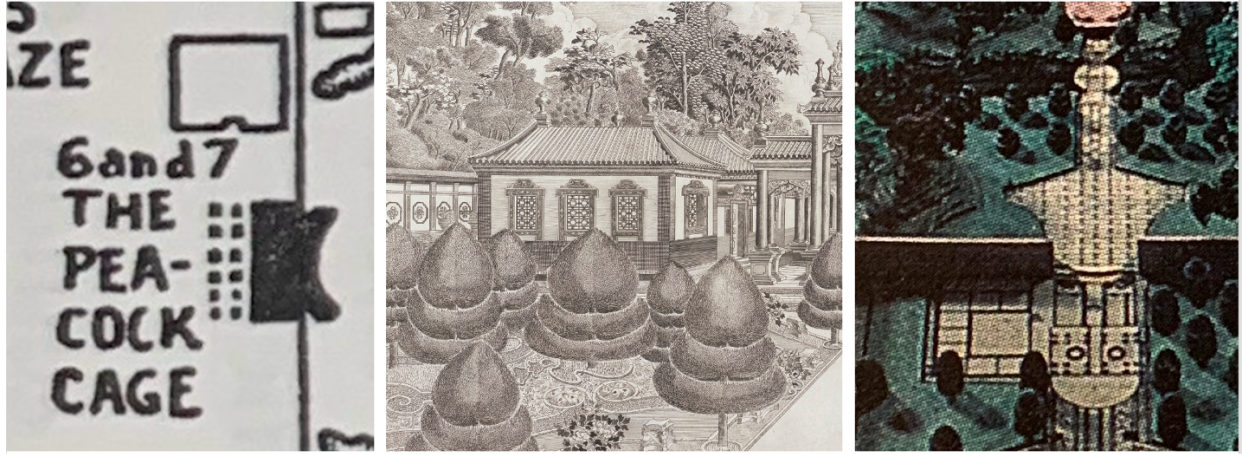


Fig. 18. Comparison of reconstruction map, detail of *West Façade of the Aviary*, and 1:500 reconstruction model. Carroll Malone (1934), 140; Yi Lantai, detail in *West façade of the Peacock Aviary* (1783-1786); Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, *Le Yuanmingyuan*, 37.



Fig. 19. Giuseppe Castiglione, *Peacock Spreading its Tail* (*Kongque kaiping tu* 孔雀開屏圖), 1758. Hanging Scroll. Color on silk. 328 x 282 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 20. Artifact found from 2015 excavation. Inscription: Peacock Archway (*Kongque pailou* 孔雀牌樓). The artifact was later exhibited to the public in the “Yuanming Yuan Archeology Exhibition” in 2017. See <http://inews.ifeng.com/51224177/news.shtml?&back>.



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Fig. 21. Peacock spread in *Album of Birds by Yu Sheng and Zhang Weibang after Jiang Tingxi* (*Yu Sheng Zhang Weibang hemo Jiang Tingxi niaopu* 余省張為邦合摹蔣廷錫鳥譜), 1750-1761. Album leaf. 41.1 x 44.1 cm. Color on silk. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

APPENDIX

Year	Event, site, or object	Interlocuter(s)	Description
138 BC	Emperor Wu's Imperial Park (Supreme Forest)	Emperor Wu of Han (漢武帝, 141-87 BC)	Emperor Wu's imperial park, or the Supreme Forest, included tangible specimens of every kind, which served as a microcosm and a replica of the cosmos.
40 BC	Varro's Aviary	Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 BC)	The aviary of Marcus Terentius Varro was located at his villa in Casinum. The villa was positioned on the Via Latina, midway between Rome and Naples. The aviary is recorded in the third volume of <i>De re rustica</i> (40 BC). It was later reconstructed by Pirro Ligorio (1510-1583) in 1558.
1534-1562	Hundred-Bird-Room (百鳥房)	Recorded by Shen Defu (沈德符, 1578-1642) from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).	沈德符《野獲編補遺·內監·內廷參畜》：“大內自畜虎豹諸奇獸外，又有百鳥房，則海外珍禽靡所不備，真足洞心駭目。”“明代西苑已有「百鳥房」專門飼養這些海內外進貢的珍禽。《金齏退食筆記》卷上就有記載：「(由太液池西南循池而北) 傍有百鳥房，多蓄奇禽異獸，如孔雀、金錢雞、五色鸚鵡、白鶴、文雉、貂鼠、舍狸獼、海豹之類，不可枚舉。」 See the first six volumes of the ninth book (第九冊前卷六) of <i>Biji xiaoshuo daguan san</i> 《筆記小說大觀三編》 (Taipei: Xinxing Bookstore, 1974), 5858.
1550-1553	Villa Giulia	Vignola (1507-1573)	On the east side of the villa was a pair of aviaries flanking a loggia with a trellised roof. The pair was constructed around October to December 1553.

1568-1578	Villa Lante, Bagnaia	Attributed to Vignola	Two pairs of aviaries were located symmetrically along the main axis in the garden on different levels. It is almost identical to the aviary at the Kenilworth Castle. They were built in "a classical style, with a round arch flanked by shell niches and two sets of pilasters." See Elisabeth Woodhouse, "Kenilworth, the Earl of Leicester's Pleasure Grounds Following Robert Laneham's Letter," in <i>Garden History</i> 27, no. 1 (1999): 136.
1575	Kenilworth Castle	Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester (1532-1588)	Leicester's aviary closely imitated the aviary of Varro, which was reconstructed by Ligorio in 1558. The aviary had fine wire mesh stretched over a flat roof. For more description on the aviary, see Woodhouse, "Kenilworth, the Earl of Leicester's Pleasure Grounds Following Robert Laneham's Letter," 136.
1599	<i>Ornithologiae</i>	Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522-1605)	Only four of the thirteen volumes were published in his lifetime. Subjects include but are not limited to: ornithology, insects, dragons, abnormal living creatures. The following topics are usually included for each entry: distribution, various names for the organism, dietary or medicinal uses, habits and differentiation...etc. Ulisse Aldrovandi, <i>Ornithologiae hoc est, De avibus historiae libri XII</i> (Bologna: Francesco de Franceschi, 1599).

1600-1633	Farnese Aviaries	<p>Authorship remains controversial. The aviaries have been attributed tentatively to Vignola (1507-1573), Girolamo Rainaldi (1570-1655), and Giacomo del Duca (1520-1604).</p>	<p>Similar to the Yuanming Yuan aviary, the Farnese aviary did not survive. Artists from the 17th-19th centuries have created etchings that record its appearance. For an extensive study on the Farnese aviaries, see Natsumi Nonaka, "The Aviaries of The Farnese Gardens on The Palatine: Roman Antiquity, The Levant, and The Architecture of Garden Pavilions," in <i>Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome</i> 59/60 (2014): 361–98.</p>
1616-19	<p>Padiglione dell' Uccelliera at Villa Borghese</p>	<p>Giovanni Vasantio (1550-1621) but it was first attributed to Girolamo Rainaldi (1570-1655)</p>	<p>The Padiglione dell'Uccelliera is the first high-style aviary to be built at Rome; it is also the only early modern Rome aviary that was adorned with high quality frescoes. Numerous archival documents, from the years 1616-19, attest to the presence of rare and precious birds that could be observed by visitors, both from the vaulted gallery between the two copper aviaries and from the large windows.</p>
1621	<p><i>Essay on the Marvels of Nature</i></p>	<p>Étienne Binet (1569-1639)</p>	<p><i>Essai des merveilles de nature et des plus nobles artifices pièce très nécessaire, à tous ceux qui font profession d' éloquence</i> ("Essay on the marvels of nature and the most noble artifices most necessary for those who profess eloquence"). It was first published in 1621 and republished a dozen times before 1660.</p>

1622	<i>Uccelliera</i>	Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588-1657)	<i>Uccelliera</i> bore the name of Giovanni Pietro Olina, however, it was entirely the work of Cassiano dal Pozzo. It provided instructions and illustrations on how to capture, feed, and kill birds; it is a bird-encyclopedia that has information on specific breeds and accompanying illustrations.
1637-1650	Oratorio dei Filippini	Francesco Borromini (1599-1667)	The Oratorio dei Filippini is a building located in Rome. It was erected between 1637-1650 under the supervision of Francesco Borromini. The oratory is adjacent to the Chiesa Nuova Santa Maria in Vallicella, the mother church of the congregation.
1642	Wimbledon House	André Mollet (1600-1665)	The aviary at Wimbledon, designed by André Mollet in 1642 for Henrietta Maria, was a combination of aviary and fountain, meant to be admired from a fine balcony that extended over it.
1664	Imperial Menagerie at Versailles	André Le Nôtre (1613-1700), Louis XIV (1638-1715), and Louis Le Vau (1612-1670)	The menagerie was a collaboration between Le Nôtre, Louis XIV, and Le Vau. It was mostly filled with birds and became available as models and inspirations, which were later found in early modern courts from Portugal to Germany. Animals seemed to have been selected from the sequence of Genesis. But similar to the fate of Yuanming Yuan, the menagerie did not survive the French Revolution and original architectural plans were lost.

Between 1735-1796	Imperial Menagerie in Qing China	Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799)	<i>The History of the Imperial House and Court (Guo chao gong shi 國朝宮史)</i> records Qianlong's imperial menagerie, which had one director and three eunuchs attached to it. It was responsible for “rearing and keeping livestock, fowl and beasts.”
1744	<i>Forty Scenes of Yuanming Yuan (圓明園四十景圖)</i>	Shen Yuan (沈源, birth and death dates unknown), Tang Dai (唐岱, 1673-1752), Wang Youdun (汪由敦, 1692-1758)	The forty scenes were painted by Shen Yuan and Tang Dai, and completed in collaboration with calligrapher Wang Youdun. Painted on silk, the album was commissioned by emperor Qianlong in 1744. The artists depicted mostly single-storied buildings that were linked together and formed parts of the views of Yuanming Yuan. The forty scenes were later copied into woodblock prints that were circulated among literati, but the original album was owned by the emperor himself. The woodcuts contain details omitted in the paintings but are predicted to be completed around the same time, estimated to have been published before 1750.
1747-51	Construction of the aviary's west facade at Yuanming Yuan	Jesuits and local craftsmen at the Qing court	The aviary's two facades were built in separate stages; the west façade was built first between 1747-51.

1750-1761	<i>Album of Birds (Niao Pu 鳥譜)</i>	Yu Sheng (余省, 1736-1795) and Zhang Weibang (張為邦, birth and death dates unknown)	Album of Birds by Yu Sheng and Zhang Weibang after Jiang Tingxi (<i>Yu Sheng Zhang Weibang hemo Jiang Tingxi niao pu</i> 余省張為邦合摹蔣廷錫鳥譜).
1752-1759	Construction of the aviary's east facade at Yuanming Yuan	Jesuits and local craftsmen at the Qing court	After emperor Qianlong decided to expand the European palace complex, the construction of the east façade – as well as other palace additions – was completed in 1759.
1758	<i>Peacock Spreading its Tail (Kongque kaiping tu 孔雀開屏圖)</i>	Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766), Fang Cong (方琮), Jin Tingbiao (金廷標)	<i>Peacock Spreading its Tail (Kongque kaiping tu 孔雀開屏圖)</i> . In 1758, Qianlong commissioned Castiglione to create a peacock painting. 乾隆二十三年(1758)六月, 西域哈密進貢孔雀, 乾隆皇帝作有〈孔雀開屏〉御製詩並書於畫上。同年七月十二日《活計檔·如意館》記錄:「著郎世寧畫開屏孔雀大畫一軸, 補景著方琮、金廷標合筆, 用白絹。」

1783-1786	Set of twenty engravings of the European palace complex	Yi Lantai (伊蘭泰, fl. 1749-86)	The aviary was engraved as the 6th and 7th in sequence. The complete sets of the Yuanming Yuan engravings are located at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris; the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; the New York Public Library; Chester Beatty Library, Dublin; the library of the Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin; and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. In addition, there are three sets in Beijing: at the National Library, the Palace Museum, and the Yuanming Yuan Museum. There are also a few incomplete sets in other institutions, including thirteen plates at the British Museum, London.
1787	Aviary at Castle De Hooze Vuursche	J. van der Wall	Some drawings by J. van der Wall (1787) of Castle De Hooze Vuursche show the aviary in the background reflected in the water. For more, see Annejuul Moll-Breebaart and Edward W. Leeuw, "Birds on De Hooze Vuursche: The Aviary of the Eighteenth-century Country Estate De Hooze Vuursche," in <i>Die Gartenkunst</i> (2008): 143-150.
1795-?	Drawings copies; twenty engravings of the European palace complex	Andreas Everardus van Braam Houckgeest (1739-1801)	One group of drawings is now in the Cabinet des Estampes at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris [...] Van Braam had these engravings copied in drawings, nineteen of which form the group in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

1860 onward	The sack of Yuanming Yuan	Lord Elgin and General Cousin-Montauban	Leftover objects from the Yuanming Yuan looting were sent to Queen Victoria and Napoleon III, most are now displayed at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the palace of Fontainebleau.
1870	Photograph, <i>Arch of the Aviary Door</i>	Anonymous	<i>Arche de la porte de la volière - vue vers le Palais mer calme.</i> Arch of the aviary door - view towards the Palace of the Calm Sea (Haiyantang). After Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, <i>Le Yuanmingyuan: Jeux d'eau et Palais Européen Du XVIII^e Siècle à La Cour de Chine</i> (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1988), 27.
1877	Photograph, <i>East Façade</i>	Thomas Child (1841-1898)	The photograph is at the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris. See Régine Thiriez, <i>Barbarian Lens</i> , Appendix Five.
1924	Photograph, <i>The Peacock Cage Being Torn Down</i>	Anonymous	The east facade of the aviary was disseminated overnight in 1924. After Carroll Malone, <i>History of the Peking Summer Palaces Under the Ch'ing Dynasty</i> (Illinois: University of Illinois, 1934), 147.
2015	Peacock Archway (<i>kongque pailou</i> 孔雀牌樓)	Group of researchers from the Beijing Municipal Administration of Cultural Heritage	An artifact found from the 2015 excavation. Inscribed as Peacock Archway (<i>kongque pailou</i> 孔雀牌樓). The artifact was later exhibited to the public in the "Yuanming Yuan Archeology Exhibition" in 2017.

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