



Pictures for Use and Pleasure: Vernacular Painting in High Qing China

James Cahill

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In this groundbreaking book, James Cahill expands the field of Chinese pictorial art history, opening both scholarly studies and popular appreciation to vernacular paintings, "pictures for use and pleasure." These were works commissioned and appreciated during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by the non-elites of Chinese society, including women. Traditional Chinese collectors, like present-day scholars of Chinese painting, have favored the "literati" paintings of the Chinese male elite, disparaging vernacular works, often intended as decorations or produced to mark a special occasion. Cahill challenges the dominant dogma and doctrine of the literati, showing how the vernacular images, both beautiful and appealing, strengthen our understanding of High Qing culture. They bring to light the Qing or Manchu emperors' fascination with erotic culture in the thriving cities of the Yangtze Delta and demonstrate the growth of figure painting in and around Beijing's imperial court. They also revise our understanding of gender roles and show how Chinese artists made use of European styles. By introducing a large, rich body of works, *Pictures for Use and Pleasure* opens new windows on later Chinese life and society.

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