

Justin Evershed-Martin

Fine Art and Design



A Set of Four Large Chinese Iron Wall Panels

A beautifully restrained and graphic complete set of four wrought iron 'paintings in iron' depicting orchids, chrysanthemum, prunus blossom and bamboo, known as the *Four Gentleman* or the *Four Plants of Virtue*. The minimalist presentation of the black iron against the handwoven paper was in reference to classical Chinese ink painting.

Retaining their original plum lacquer frames and back-boards.

Wuhu, China, c 1800

Each panel H 168 cm x W 41.5 cm x D 8 cm

(H 66¼ x x W 16 x D 7 in)

Justin Evershed-Martin

Fine Art and Design



Justin Evershed-Martin

Fine Art and Design



The sculpting of iron in low relief to form three dimensional silhouettes began in the 17th century in the city of Wuhu, in the Chinese province of Anhui.. The technique is derived from hammered iron candleholders in the shape of lotus flowers made for Buddhist temples, hence the name in Chinese tiehua, which literally translates as 'iron flowers'.

The first examples were attributed to a Wuhu blacksmith, Tang Peng (also known as Tang Tien-chi, 1644 – 1722), who was inspired by Chinese ink paintings depicting landscapes by the painter Xiao Yun-Cong (1596 – 1673) and vied to recreate these paintings in iron.

A set of four large panels were included in the exhibition *The Chinese Scholar's Studio*, the Asia Society Galleries, New York, 1987, cat. no. 68.

Another comparable set of iron paintings depicting four plants are also in the John Reilly Jr. collection and illustrated in *The Romance of Chinese Art*. Publ: R. L. Hobson, *The Romance of Chinese Art*, 1929, Garden City Publishing, New York, pl. 46-8, p. 163

Other panels decorated with flowering and fruiting branches are in the British Museum, London, visible on their website, nos 1928,0717.17 and 1928,0717.15.

A set of four showing the 'Four Gentlemanly Virtues' (plum blossom, orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum) on paper ground are in the National Museum of Scotland, published on their website, no. A.1902.463 and have been exhibited in their two exhibitions *Looking East: The Lady Ivy Wu Gallery* (29 July 2011 - 08 June 2014) and *Ming: The Golden Empire* (27 Jun 2014 - 19

