

*Anatomy of* 剖奧  
*a Masterpiece* 析妙



A Very Rare Pair of *Huanghuali* and  
Spotted Bamboo Scholar's Cabinets

黃花梨嵌湘妃竹圓角櫃一對

SALE INFO

*The Flacks Family Collection:  
A Very Personal Selection*

Christie's  
20 Rockefeller Plaza,  
New York, NY 10020

16 September 2016

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*A Very Rare Pair of Huanghuali  
and Spotted Bamboo Scholar's  
Cabinets, Yuanjiaogui*  
17th century

44½ in. (113 cm.) high  
26¾ in. (68 cm.) wide  
14½ in. (37 cm.) wide

PROVENANCE:

Cabinet 1:

Ho Cheng, Hong Kong, 1996  
MD Flacks Ltd., New York, 1996  
Eskenazi, London, 1995  
Ronald Longsdorf, 1998

Cabinet 2:

Hannah Chiang, Hong Kong, 1997

LITERATURE:

Marcus Flacks, *Classical Chinese Furniture: A Very Personal Point of View* (Rasika, London, 2011), pp. 142-151.

Zhang Jinhua, *Classical Chinese Furniture from Weiyang* (Rasika, London, 2016), pp. 198-201.

拍賣詳情

擇善藏私：馬克斯·弗拉克斯家族珍藏

2016年9月16日  
紐約佳士得  
洛克菲勒廣場20號

查詢

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十七世紀 黃花梨嵌湘妃竹圓角櫃一對

高44½吋 (113公分)  
寬26¾吋 (68公分)  
深14½吋 (37公分)

來源：

櫃一：

何祥，香港，1996年  
MD Flacks有限公司，紐約，1996年  
埃斯肯納齊，倫敦，1995年  
Ronald Longsdorf，1998年

櫃二：

蔣念慈，香港，1997年

著錄：

馬克斯·弗拉克斯著，《中國古典家具私房觀點》，Rasika出版，倫敦，2011年，142至151頁

張金華著，《維揚明式家具》，Rasika出版，倫敦，2016年，198至201頁

弗拉克斯家族珍藏這對櫃子，罕有地兼用斑竹及黃花梨，清逸雅致，工藝非凡，集十七世紀頂尖中國家具之大成。兩櫃疑為孤品，當中蘊藏中國文人理念，精緻上乘而不落俗套，美譽連連而殊不浮誇。

竹與中國文人雅士之關係源遠流長，歷代以竹為題屢見不鮮，地位斐然。竹隱含正直不屈、高風亮節而不拘一格之氣質，備受騷人墨客、有識之士所尊崇，甚至取之自喻。如此脫俗清秀之物，配上明末年間最為價值連城的黃花梨木，儼然一場劃時代的破格演繹。

佳士得能於本秋呈獻兩櫃，實在深感榮幸。我們於1996年舉行獨具開創性的中國古典家具博物館藏品拍賣，今年正好邁向二十週年，為是次拍賣錦上添花。願此對珍品能獲廿一世紀的鑑藏家所愛，成就古今同好之美事。

佳士得中國藝術品部副主席  
宋天娜

WITH THEIR RARE combination of spotted bamboo and precious *huanghuali*, this remarkable pair of cabinets from the Flacks Family Collection exhibits the sophisticated elegance and masterful craftsmanship that characterize the best of 17th-century Chinese furniture. Possibly unique, these cabinets are the embodiment of the Chinese literati ideal; refined and understated, yet void of any ostentation.

The affinity between the Chinese scholar and bamboo is amongst the most important and enduring themes in Chinese history. The upright and dignified, yet flexible, qualities of bamboo were greatly esteemed by scholars, who sought to emulate these qualities in their own lives. The daring use of this humble material in conjunction with *huanghuali*, one of the most costly timbers of the late Ming dynasty, is a testament to the status of bamboo at the time.

Christie's is honored to have the opportunity to present this remarkable pair of cabinets this fall, particularly as it marks the 20th anniversary of our groundbreaking sale of pieces from the Museum of Classical Chinese Furniture in 1996. It is our hope that their subtlety and elegance will be appreciated by a new audience of collectors in the 21st century.

Tina Zonars  
Deputy Chairman, Americas  
CHRISTIE'S





## Reflecting a Culture of Literati Ideal and Elegance

### A Pair of Small Speckled-Bamboo Cabinets

Speckled bamboo encasing a tea cabinet  
 Red clay molded as a rice-cooking stove  
 With the present fully sufficient  
 What need for superficial striving?

Bo Juyi's lines recall scenes of literati hermits in their mountain retreats or perhaps those forest gatherings, wherein a small tea cabinet and tea brazier are set out for the simple pleasure of visitors or those assembled in the name of virtuous pursuit (fig. 1). Bo's cabinet of 'speckled bamboo' is a rare, early reference to the genre, and also brings to mind the equally rare pair of speckled-bamboo cabinets now in the Flacks Family Collection. Both have given rise to the following work on the appreciation and use of this elegant, naturally spotted material within the context of the literati culture.

Material bamboo and its implied moral characteristics have ancient associations with literati gentry. Before the development of paper, classic texts and imperial edicts were recorded on uniform-length slips of bamboo, which were then one-by-one stitched together to form a scroll. The hierarchical association of bamboo with the literati official class is also evident in ancient texts. *The Book of Rites (Liji)* notes, 'For his memorandum-tablet, the son of Heaven used a piece of sonorous jade; the prince of a state, a piece of ivory; high officials, a piece of bamboo, ornamented with fishbone; ordinary officials, bamboo, adorned with ivory at the bottom'; the Western Han *Miscellaneous Records from the Western Capital (Xijing zaji)* further notes that the emperor used low tables (*ji*) of jade, while those used by high officials were of wood or bamboo.

After the collapse of the Han dynasty, many scholar-officials were frustrated by politics and chose to live a simple life in the countryside. Such were the 'Seven Sages of the Bamboo Forest', whose reclusive lifestyle became associated with bamboo.

An early expression of bamboo as a representation of a literati gentleman's moral character appears in the writings of the Tang dynasty scholar Liu Yanfu.

A *junzi*, or a truly moral gentleman, has to compare his morality to the bamboo. The bamboo stem is firm and its joints are strong. It does not succumb to snow. This is masculine toughness. Bamboo leaves are green and stirred by the wind. This is its feminine delicacy. The bamboo stem is straight and hollow inside. It has nothing to hide. This is its

## 反映古代文人理想與雅士文化的一對鑲湘妃竹櫃

斑竹盛茶櫃  
 紅泥罨飯爐  
 眼前無所闕  
 身外更何須

白居易的詩讓人回想起繪畫中的隱士或山林雅集，擺上小茶櫃和茶爐，享受友人來訪或共赴清高之行的純樸樂趣（參考圖1）。白居易所提的「斑竹茶櫃」是一個早期櫃子難得的參考依據，這也讓我想起弗拉克斯家族目前收藏的一對黃花梨鑲湘妃竹的櫃子。這兩樣資料也是促成筆者對文人文化情境下的湘妃竹之用途和欣賞做以下的研究。

竹子和竹所被賦予的人格特徵與古代文人士紳的關係源遠流長。造紙發明之前，經文與聖旨都記在竹簡上，後來編綴成書卷。竹與士人階級間的關係在古籍中斑斑有據。《禮記》中記載，「笏：天子以球玉；諸侯以象；大夫以魚須、文竹；士竹本，象可也。」西漢《西京雜記》中也記載，「天子玉几……公侯皆以竹木為幾」。

東漢王朝崩潰後，不少仕人失意於政治而歸隱山野田園，過著簡樸的生活。

例如竹林七賢的退隱生活風貌就與竹林有關。

早期以竹象徵文人品格的描繪可見於唐代劉岩夫的作品：

君子比德於竹焉：原夫勁本堅節，不受霜雪，剛也；綠葉萋萋，翠筠浮浮，柔也；虛心而直，無所隱蔽，忠也；不孤根以挺聳，必相依以林秀，義也；雖春陽氣旺，終不與眾木鬥榮，謙也；四時一貫，榮衰不殊，常也；……夫此數德，可以配君子，故岩夫列之於庭，

不植他木，欲令獨擅其美，且無以雜之乎。竊懼來者之未諭，故書曰《劉氏植竹記》，尚德也。

Fig. 1:  
 Painting detail from  
*Literary Gathering*, Zhao Ji,  
 Northern Song Dynasty

圖1 北宋趙佶  
 《文會圖》局部



loyalty. Bamboo does not stand high alone as do trees. It always grows in abundance and the plants rely on each other. This is righteousness. Although bamboo is full of vital force, it does not compete with other plants for splendidness. This is humbleness. Bamboo prospers for all four seasons and never fluctuates. This is its constancy... These good virtues are a good match for a gentleman. Therefore, I plant bamboo in my courtyard and exclude other plants. I want its singular beauty without distraction. I am afraid that some people may not understand me. Therefore, I wrote this book 'Liu's Journal of Planting Bamboo' as a tribute to its morality.

Somewhat later, Bo Juyi's *A Record of Growing Bamboo* also lists the inspirational qualities of bamboo. Likening bamboo to the scholar-official gentleman (*junzi*) became popular throughout the Tang dynasty, and by the Song dynasty, the aesthetic of bamboo further developed in association with the practice of self-cultivation.

The more qualified association of 'speckled bamboo' with the literati tradition has its origins with the legend of the sage king Shun and his two wives, as recorded in the Jin dynasty (265-420 CE) work *Bowu zhi*. Shun had judiciously ruled the region of the Xiang River, but suddenly died while helping his people. Upon receiving the news, the teardrops of his two grieving concubine-wives fell upon the local bamboo, and ever since, the bamboo there has grown with spotted markings. For this reason, it has been variously called 'bamboo of the Xiang concubines' (*xiang-feizhu*) 'teardrop bamboo' (*leizhu*) as well as 'speckled or spotted bamboo' (*banzhu*) in honor of their fidelity.

Speckled bamboo has been found in a number of regions in Southern China. The legendary origins associated with Shun's concubines took place in regions around the Jiuyi mountains in southern Hunan province. This mountainous region was also cited by the Yuan dynasty painter Li Yan in *Bamboo Compendium* (*Zhupuxianglu*) as a source for 'teardrop bamboo' (*leizhu*). The early Ming work *Geguyaolun* cited neighbouring Guangxi as a source and also noted its characteristic 'fine, haloed markings accented with purple spots at the centre, resembling those on the *luwei* reed'. These lovely haloed markings are said to result from fungal infections that are indigenous to the regions of its production. Those with sharp, concentric markings are most highly prized; those with obscure, indistinct markings are considered inferior. Recent supplies have been coming from Yunnan province.

Throughout the Tang dynasty, the varied references to 'speckled bamboo' began to appear with increasing frequency. Such is Bo Juyi's poem *Strolling on East Slope*, which contains the lines:

Idly wandering with a speckled-bamboo staff  
Slowly dragging yellow jute sandals  
Again the desire for recognition comes and goes  
Green weeds becoming a clear path

幾年後,白居易《養竹記》也提出具有啟示作用的竹特質。唐代把竹子比擬為君子的概念越來越普及,到了宋代,竹美學則進展到個人的修行實踐上。

品相更高的湘妃竹與文人傳統的源遠關係則可上溯一則古老的傳說,後記載於晉朝(公元265~420年)《博物誌》中:「堯之兒女、舜之二妃,曰湘夫人,舜崩,二妃啼,以淚揮竹,竹盡斑。」聖人舜帝住在湘河區,故名「湘妃竹」,又叫「淚竹」及「斑竹」以表她們的忠誠。

湘妃竹產於中國南方的一些地區。舜帝妃子淚灑竹子的傳說就在湖南南部九疑山區。元代畫家李衍的《竹譜詳錄》也記載:「淚竹生長湘九疑山中。」《格古要論》也記載:「湘竹出廣西,斑細而色淡,有暈中一點紫,與蘆葉上……」,據說這可愛的「暈中紫斑」是由一種真菌侵染苦竹而形成的一種病態現象。暈圈斑清晰明顯者,最為珍貴;混而不明者則為下品。近代的湘妃竹產地則來自云南省某些地區。

唐代時候,談論湘妃竹、斑竹、淚竹的著述越來越多。

例如白居易《步東坡》中的詩句:

閑攜斑竹杖  
徐曳黃麻屨  
欲識往來頻  
青蕪成白路



Fig. 3:  
Painting detail from  
*The Gathering in  
the Apricot Garden*,  
Cui Zizhong, Ming  
Dynasty

明代,崔子忠,  
《杏園宴集圖》局部

竹拐杖作為哲學家的智慧杖和法師的法器則是跨文化的象徵物,在此竹人格突然躍升,超過象徵儒家美德的範疇。

小管徑的湘妃竹特別適合用來做筆管。奈良正倉院珍藏的諸多唐朝寶物中就有幾個實物範例,可見當代的流行趨勢(參考圖2)。北宋《太平廣記》中還根據文章的風格選用不同材質的筆桿,將湘妃竹的氣質結合到詩文的傳統上。

常記錄忠臣義士及文章之美者,筆有三品。或以金銀雕飾,或用斑竹為管。忠孝全者用金管書之,德行清粹者用銀筆書之,文章贍麗者以斑竹書之。

南宋《槐蔭消夏圖》描寫文人躺在涼榻上休閒納涼,身後桌上的筆架立著兩支帶筆蓋的湘妃竹筆。晚明文震亨《長物志》更進一步的表態:「古有金銀管、象管、玳瑁管、玻璃管、鏤金、綠沈管,近有紫檀、雕花諸管,俱俗不可用」,又讚揚「惟斑管最雅」。所以,湘妃竹與文學作品的關係就在這數百年間奠定。



Here the bamboo staff, which is a cross-cultural symbol for philosophical and religious pursuit, catapults bamboo into realms outside of Confucian morality.

Speckled bamboo is generally of relatively small diameter and thus was especially well suited for brush handles. Such popularity during the Tang period is evident from the several examples that have survived at the Shosoin in Nara, Japan (fig. 2). Further association with the writing instruments of the poetic, literati tradition appears in the Northern Song work *Taiping Guangji* (d. 978):

Often recorded are the beautiful literary works of loyal ministers and righteous scholars whose works were written with three types of brushes: those with handles of gold or silver and ornamented with decoration, and those made with speckled bamboo. Works of loyalty and filial piety were all written with gold-handled brushes; works of pure moral integrity were written with silver-handled brushes; and those of elegant style were written with speckled-bamboo brushes.

In the Song painting *Whiling Away in the Summer Shade of a Locust Tree*, capped brushes of speckled bamboo stand in a brush rack on the table behind where a scholarly gentleman enjoys a leisurely nap upon a daybed. In the late Ming work *Zhangwuzhi*, Wen Zhenheng further acknowledged the various types of brush handles that had been used since ancient times, as well as the recent use of brushes with zitan handles or elaborately carved decoration; he proclaimed, however, that only those with speckled-bamboo handles fulfilled the standard of perfected elegance. Thus, over several hundred years, the association of speckled bamboo with the literary works of scholars had become established.

By the end of the Ming period, the use of speckled bamboo had also broadened considerably. A speckled-bamboo daybed is clearly illustrated by the Yuan dynasty Zhejiang artist Qian Xuan (ca 1235-1305) in *Helping the Drunkard*. Throughout the Ming period, the speckled-bamboo daybed was a common theme for artists. Wen Zhenheng, Gao Lian, and Tu Long, who were late Ming period aficionados of taste, frequently noted a preference for speckled-bamboo furnishings such as daybeds, meditation chairs, curtains, door decoration, brush pots and fan frames; its popularity is further evident from frequent depiction in Jiangnan literati paintings. Daybeds aside, meditation chairs also appear in works such as Du Jin's (1465-1528) *Seven Sages of the Bamboo Forest and Eighteen Scholars*, Qiu Ying's *Appreciating Antiques in the Bamboo Garden*, and Cui Zizhong's *The Gathering in the Apricot Garden* (fig. 3); and this is without specific mention of numerous other examples that also appear in late Ming period book illustrations.

While cabinets rarely appear in Ming dynasty paintings or illustrations, Wen's *Zhangwuzhi* entertains a relatively lengthy discussion upon the subject. Therein, he specifically extols the 'air of antiquity' of small cabinets made with speckled bamboo, *nanmu* burl, *chishui* or *luo* wood (these latter two still remaining a mystery).

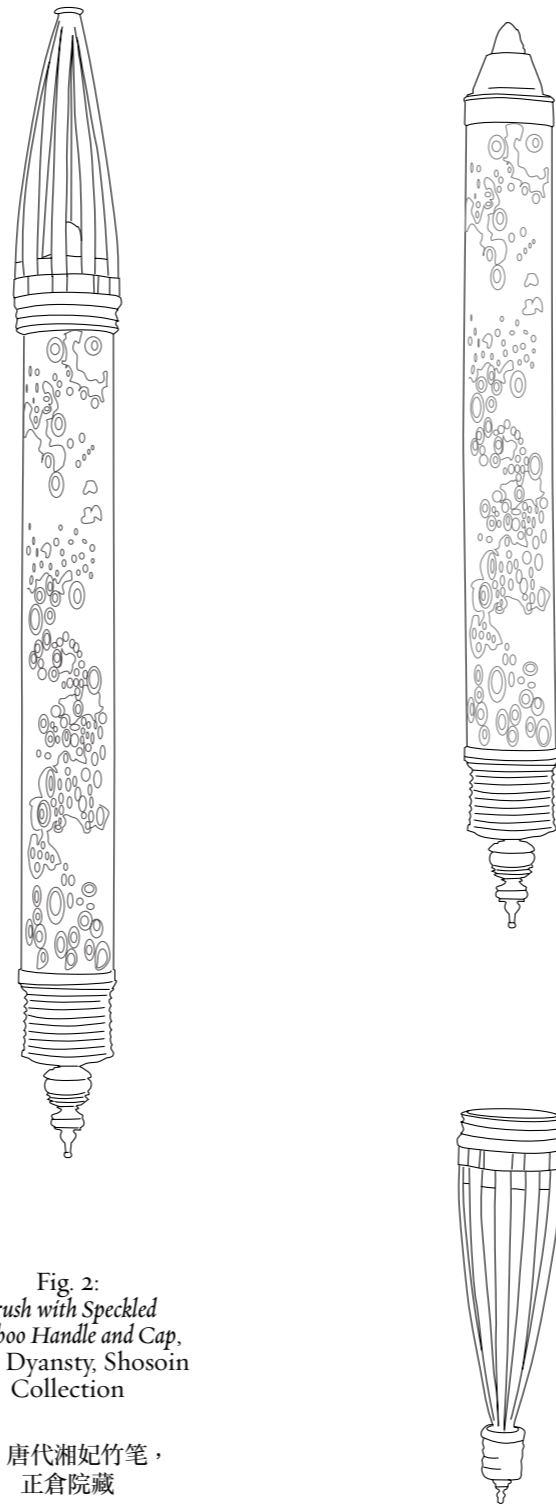


Fig. 2:  
Brush with Speckled  
Bamboo Handle and Cap,  
Tang Dynasty, Shosoin  
Collection

图2 唐代湘妃竹笔，  
正倉院藏

Fig. 4:  
From *Album of erotic paintings*,  
Yin Qi, active in mid-19th  
century. Photo. © 2016  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

殷奇(活躍於十九世紀中葉),  
《春宮畫冊》



到了明末，湘妃竹的用途擴增不少。元代浙江錢選《扶醉圖》中也有清晰刻畫斑紋的竹涼榻；到了明代，斑竹涼榻成了繪畫共同的主題。晚明時代，皆是深愛品味的文震亨、高廉、屠龍頻頻寫作，記錄他們偏好的湘妃竹家具，諸如涼榻、禪椅、窗簾、門裝飾、筆筒、扇骨等等。而江南畫家也常在畫作中描繪這類器物，可見它深獲人心。除了涼榻，杜堇的《竹林七賢》與《十八學士》，仇英的《竹林品古圖》（圖3）及崔子忠的《杏園宴集圖》中，都有湘妃竹禪椅的描繪，此外還有很多無法一一點名道姓的明晚期插畫中其它各類各色的例子。

雖然明繪畫中很少見到櫥櫃類別，《長物志》書中卻津津有味長篇討論這主題；文震亨特別讚美二尺高左右的小櫥櫃，「以湘妃竹及豆瓣楠，赤水，櫟木為古」——最具古風，又「以置古銅玉小器為宜」或者放在臥室中「以置藥玩器」。

弗拉克斯家族收藏的黃花梨鑲湘妃竹小櫃應該產於明晚期江南這樣的社會風潮下。對櫃以黃花梨木建構典型側腳櫃結體的框架部件，而整體比例和細節都顯示江南地區細緻工藝的標準。其分格型框板則反映早期明代的風格；雖然在清代也是司空見慣

Elsewhere he also suggests keeping such small cabinets in the bedroom for storing medicinals or curiosities.

The pair of small cabinets in the Flacks Family Collection may well have originated from such an ethos. They are of typical tapered-cabinet construction with frame members made of *huanghuali* wood, and the standard of Jiangnan region workmanship is evident in their overall proportions and detailing. The subdivided frames, with narrow waist panels, reflect an early style that was common throughout the Ming dynasty, and while also appearing throughout the Qing dynasty, the pattern appears as an archaic style in contrast to the single-panel constructions that had developed. Unique, however, are the door and side panels, which feature narrow strips of finely patterned spotted bamboo, which appear as curtain-like encasements rather than fixed partitions of security. Perhaps, too, there is a relationship to the treatment of architectural doors decorated with slanted strips of speckled bamboo—a decorative style in the Suzhou region that was also promoted by Wen. Besides their aesthetic qualities and cultural significance, these lovely cabinets are truly rare objects that stand far beyond the few others with bamboo-inlaid panels that are known.

During the early Qing period, the use of speckled bamboo (like many other aspects of the Jiangnan culture) found popularity at the Imperial Palace. Details from the series of paintings of the Yongzheng emperor's concubines depict chairs, stools and tables of speckled bamboo furnishing their elegant apartments. Tribute records from the Yongzheng and Qianlong reign periods also indicate a number of speckled-bamboo furnishings presented to the court from the Jiangsu region. Its common depiction in Qing period erotic art in scenes of lavishly furnished apartments also suggest that speckled bamboo became a fashionable luxury item amongst the

*nouveau riche* (fig. 4). Its expense also led to the technique of artificially marking plain bamboo with hot irons and coloured dye to produce a faux speckled appearance (*tangfei*). Notwithstanding, faux or genuine, due to the ephemeral nature of the material, few of these fine objects have survived. Today, small works of speckled bamboo are commonly found in the handicraft markets, reflecting the renaissance of crafts, new-found sources and ancient traditions.

Both the aesthetics and use of bamboo have evolved over the centuries. From the earliest times the material itself had associations with literati status, literature and the instruments of its creativity. Throughout the Tang and Song dynasties, an aesthetic of bamboo developed to mirror the moral virtues of the perfected scholar-official (*junzi*). Bamboo stained by the teardrops of the Emperor Shun's grieving widows further extended the aesthetic into the realms of constancy and fidelity, and calls to mind this sage king's counsel toward his successor, Yu the Great, who was initially overwhelmed with a lack of confidence when called to duty:

The mind of man is restless, prone (to err);  
its affinity to what is right is small.  
Be discriminating, be uniform,  
and sincerely hold fast to the Middle.

Perhaps after all, it is the transformation of invisible teardrops that truly gave rise to the concept of the bamboo-like sage. The affinity of speckled bamboo with the Jiangnan literati during the Ming dynasty largely appears in the context of retreat from the duties of the court and the pursuit of an elegant lifestyle. By the Qing dynasty, the fashion was both embraced at court and began to drift into mainstream secular life. Nonetheless, the Flacks Family cabinets, which fall in the midst of this reshaping dynamic, remain unique treasures that reflect a profound cultural aesthetic.

Shanghai, Spring 2016

的形式，但這與已發展出來的單板框架形式大相徑庭，顯然為尚古風格。不過，此櫃獨到之處是以紋理細緻的鑲湘妃竹細條，做出清涼又輕盈的竹簾式櫃門板和側板，取代固式板門的堅硬沉重感。也許，這特色也和文震亨提倡房門「用木為格，以湘妃竹橫斜釘之」的裝飾風格氣息相通。除了美學素質與文化價值外，這對人見人愛的櫃子的確是稀有之物；遠遠勝過其他幾件知名的鑲湘妃竹櫃子。

清早期，宮廷開始風行使用湘妃竹（正如同江南文化的諸多方面在宮廷中流行）。描繪雍正妃子的《十二美人圖》中，也能看到南方的湘妃竹文椅、繡墩及方桌所佈置典雅的房間。雍正、乾隆時的進貢檔案也顯示一些湘妃竹的家具貢品來自江南地區。慣以奢華房室為背景的清代春宮圖，也表明湘妃竹家具成為暴發戶生活裡的奢侈品（圖4）。明清之湘妃竹製品價格高昂，於是仿品出現，謂之「燙妃」，亦即在素竹上用烙鐵燙出斑痕並加以染色。不管是真是假，竹製品存放的時間有先天的限制，因此存世物品不多。時至今日，湘妃竹的小件物品常見於手工藝品市場，可見手工藝、新的竹產區和悠久的竹文化傳統正在復興。

竹的審美和用途二者顯然都隨著歷史的變遷而有所變革。從最初的竹子本身與文人身份，文人文學，及文人創作用的文房器具有關；到唐宋，品味竹子的美有如鏡照君子的美德。舜帝二妃淚滴竹上的傳說把斑竹的美推上忠貞不二的境界，連帶讓人也想到大禹接受治水的重大職責前，內心痛苦掙扎，舜帝訓以至嘉之言，期勉大禹不忘信念：

惟精惟一，允執厥中

也許，轉化無形的淚斑（痛苦）才能真正成就竹氣節般的聖賢。湘妃竹跟明代江南文人的密切關係在繪畫和著作這兩種參考資料上屢屢有目共睹，然而文人的這種愛好大致出現在退出仕途，隱身過著文雅生活的時空背景。到了清朝，湘妃竹的風潮不僅受到宮廷的擁護，同時也開始流向民間的世俗生活中。儘管在這樣不斷變化的情勢中，弗拉克斯家族的小櫃子依然是飽含深刻文化美學的絕世珍品。



