

Thijs Weststeijn, Eric Jorink, and Frits Scholten (eds.), *Netherlandish Art in its Global Context* (*Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art*, 66) (Leiden: Brill, 2016, 295 pp., ISBN 978 90 04 33497 7).<sup>1</sup>

The subject of this volume partly overlaps that of an earlier volume, *Picturing the Exotic 1550-1950. Peasants and Outlandish People in Netherlandish Art* (53, 2002): almost half of the articles here deal with the depiction of non-Europeans. The subject of relations with ‘the Other’, whether or not in a (post)colonial context, is popular in current art history.

This volume contains nine articles, preceded by an introduction by one of the editors, Thijs Weststeijn. One of his topics is the relation between China and the Netherlands, which was the theme of an exhibition he organised in the Frans Hals Museum in Haarlem in 2017. The volume ends with an article by Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, an *éminence grise* of the ‘geohistory of art’ (the importance of geography for art and art history).

The articles can be divided into four categories. Those in the first and second categories can be seen broadly as iconographical studies. The first category is concerned with the depiction of non-Europeans. One article by Nicole Blackwood is on two (lost) portraits of an Inuit man by the Dutch artist Cornelis Ketel (the man had been brought to London by the Cathay Company, which had been trying to find its way to China via the Northwest Passage). Another by Barbara Uppenkamp considers ‘Indian’ motifs, including human figures in Rubens’s altarpieces. Another is on the identity of a ‘Korean’ man in one of Rubens’s altarpieces, here identified as the Chinese merchant Yppong, who visited the Dutch town of Middelburg in 1600. This article is by Thijs Weststeijn and Lennert Gesterkamp. Drawings of the South African Khoikhoi (formerly known as Hottentots) – shown in a 2017 exhibition about South Africa in the Rijksmuseum – are discussed by Julie Berger Hochstrasser, who published *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age* (2007), an important book in the postcolonial critical tradition. Both Ketel and the draughtsman who depicted the Khoikhoi around 1700 had their subjects in front of them. Rubens, however, based his renderings of ‘foreigners’ on publications such as *Historia India Orientalis* (Frankfurt 1598) by the De Bry brothers. (There is an important article about this book by the Dutch historian Ernst van den Boogaart in the 2002 *Yearbook*.)

The second category of articles deals with the depiction of non-European artifacts – the other aspect of Rubens’s ‘Indian’ motifs’ – such as ‘Indian daggers with idols’ (Javanese krisses) in the paintings of the Antwerp artist Frans Francken by Christine Göttler.

The third category comprises two articles about objects made in Europe and Asia. Annemarie Klootwijk discusses Dutch imitation lacquer. While Weststeijn in his Introduction states that ‘Art historians have come relatively late to such a global perspective’ (compared to scholars of social and political history), the study of *chine de commande* – porcelain made to order in China for the VOC or other European trading companies – and Japanese export lacquer has a venerable tradition that goes back to at least the 1960s. Ebeltje Hartkamp-Jonxis, who writes about ivory objects made in Sri Lanka for Dutch patrons (1640–1710), organised an exhibition about Indian chintz in 1987–1988 (*Sits: Oost–West relaties in textiel*). The exhibition *Chinoiserie: China–Delft–Europa*, with catalogue, was held in Delft even earlier, in 1976. For specialists in the decorative arts this global perspective is nothing new.

Two further articles form a fourth, mixed, category. One is concerned with a Chinese eighteenth-century woodcut modelled on a print after Abraham Bloemaert (1610–1611). This article, by Ching-Ling Wang, is written from a Chinese rather than a European point of view, which is unusual. It is a pity that Weststeijn in his Introduction only illustrates one of a series of Chinese prints after 48 paintings made in Munich, and does not analyse it. These miniature paintings after designs by famous Dutch and Flemish artists were presented by a German Jesuit missionary to the Chinese emperor in 1640. They have not survived, but their remarkable transformation can be guessed when one compares the simple lines of a woodcut by the Chinese artist with its ultimate model, a very elaborate engraving by Hendrick Goltzius with many grey tints. It is regrettable that we do not know the Munich intermediary.

The other article in the fourth category, by Stephanie Porras, is on the spread of the motif of the Archangel Michael from an altarpiece painted by the Antwerp artist Maerten de Vos (1581, now in Cuautitlán Cathedral, Mexico) throughout South America. The idea of this motif going ‘viral’, with local differences, is imaginative and appealing. But one cannot help wondering whether it is really necessary to use recent theories of the internet to explain this dispersal. The subject is not confined to the spreading of European images beyond Europe: the amazing speed with which some sixteenth- and seventeenth-century prints and copies found their way across Europe while others did not, and how they were modified locally, deserves a *Yearbook* of its own.

The Introduction states that the editors did not aim to revive the nineteenth-century tradition of comparative art history, or to write a global art history: they merely envisaged a shift in focus on cross-cultural interactions. DaCosta Kaufmann however did want to write a global history of art. To do so he tried to design a Netherlandish model in contrast to the Italian

model devised by Fernand Braudel of the *Annales* school in 1974 to consider the influence of the Italian Renaissance. Just as ideas, economic forms, artists, architects and objects spread out from Italy, so they did from the Netherlands. After discussing a series of *Annales* concepts – influence, dissemination, diffusion, circulation and mediation – DaCosta Kaufmann concludes that the first three concepts are Eurocentric and cannot serve for a global art history. The other two do not presume one centre from which artworks, people or ideas originate, but have a polycentric paradigm: through mediation the forms, people and ideas change when they move from one centre to the other.

Conceptually there is some tension between the idea of a Netherlandish (or Italian) model and the aim of writing of a history of world art without Eurocentrism. In this Netherlandish model the Netherlanders play an active and dominant role, as they initiate and maintain the circulation of images, objects and ideas (e.g. by the VOC or the production in the print centres in Antwerp and Amsterdam), although non-Europeans add to the ideas and artifacts and thus do have some agency. DaCosta Kaufmann's article raises several questions. Does he really mean that the trading practices of the VOC belong to the same Netherlandish model as the methods with which the Jesuits tried to win souls in China? Is the Netherlandish model really comparable to the Italian model? Will each former colonial empire have its own model? If so, is there also a British model (cf. the article about Ketel's Inuits), and a Spanish one (cf. the article on St. Michael)? Must all those models have been developed before a global art history can be written?

It is clear that this Netherlandish model deserves further elaboration. In the meantime, historians and art historians interested in relations between Netherlandish and non-European art can benefit from reading this volume.

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