

China: Globalization and Glocalization, Graduate Conference, 6-7 September

Panel: China and the Global: Visual and Material Culture

Leiden University, LIPSIUS Room 148, 6 September 15.30 – 17.30

Panel respondents: dr Oliver Moore, prof dr Kitty Zijlmans

Speakers: prof dr Kitty Zijlmans, Bogdan Stămoran, Rosalien van der Poel,
Jiaqi Angela Sun, Anna Grasskamp

Moderator: Eline van den Berg

Paper Abstracts

Wanted: contemporary art from China.

Transcultural exchange or inverted chinoiserie?

Kitty Zijlmans

In the Netherlands (and many other countries) contemporary art from China is in the lift: we see it at the Art Amsterdam fair, exhibitions in museums and galleries, and outdoor presentations, such as in The Hague this Summer. What art do we get to see at these presentations? Which, or perhaps whose 'China' is represented? How do traces of interculturalization processes come to the fore? China and the Netherlands have had a long-standing trade relationship; from 1600 onwards the exchange with China has left its mark on Dutch art, craft and design. But together with goods, ideas and concepts travelled along and have permeated the various cultures in the course of time. Indeed, globalization started far earlier than just a few decades ago. 'Made in China' is not a recent phenomenon, nor is the involvement of the art market. Different perhaps is the way Chinese art functions as a cultural ambassador. Is the art we get to see watered down and tailor-made to Western taste? The success of artists such as Sui Jianguo (of the dinosaurs) or the ever laughing Yue Minjun seem to massage the international mood towards China. And what role do (also extremely successful) counter voices such as Ai Weiwei play? In this talk I will present some thoughts on the agency of contemporary art.

“Holland Village” in Shenyang, a place in China

Bogdan Stamoran

“Holland Village” in Shenyang, Liaoning Province in north-eastern China was a large theme park and real estate project designed by a Dutch architect in the late 1990s to the request of Yang Bin, an influential Chinese businessman with Dutch citizenship. It included numerous 1:1 scale replicas of historical architectural landmarks from the Netherlands. After the sudden demise and imprisonment of Yang Bin, it has undergone major changes.

“Holland Village” is part of a massive trend of similar projects in the urbanization of reform-era China. “European” architectural styles are widely employed in residential, commercial and government projects as well as theme parks. In the case of real estate and civic buildings, these forms (from a far-away place and time) are employed mainly due to 1) the low building and design costs afforded by the large scale production of ready-made standardized decorative motifs and forms and 2) the cachet of these forms’ symbolism. “Holland Village” will be studied within its historical context and with the help of theory. These visual conjectures of “Europe” in China are strategies for creating a new, multi-scalar place due to, within and for the market.

**The Westward Movement of Chinese Export Harbour Views:
Significant Paintings with a Social Function**

Rosalien van der Poel

In the nineteenth century, when globalization is taking place, new emphasis on the achievements of the individual merchant-entrepreneur to China encouraged (visual) documentation of his exploits. The Western navigators themselves became potential patrons of art and were ready customers for Chinese goods and (stereotyped) scenes of China. As a result we find paintings, which would stand as records of their travels, personal and significant in the context of their own enterprises. If we were to sort those Dutch public collections comprising Chinese paintings made for export (or exported) into subject matter, we would see that a substantial number have a recurring maritime leitmotif. This essay offers a closer examination of these harbour views and, in doing so, reveals that waterfronts and ports – essential places in the transcontinental movement of commodities – were a significant topic of ‘Chinese export paintings’.

The presentation, including a case study on a nineteenth-century Chinese port scene in the collection of the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, demonstrates that Chinese export harbour views are social agents and active players in a network relating material goods, human practices and current ideas and concepts.

Copies of China:

The Atlas of Dutch Collector J.T. Royer (1737-1807)

Jiaqi Angela Sun

The Royer Collection of Volkenkunde in Leiden holds a complete set of a China Atlas (the Ming), which was hand copied by the collector himself. Jean Theodore Royer (1737-1807) was a Den Haag lawyer, who had devoted considerable time and effort in studying China, which earned him the fame as a proto-sinologist. However, he never visited China, and therefore, this Atlas was not a study of his first-hand experience. Rather, it is copied after the *Map of China* drawn by the 17th-century Polish Jesuit, Michal Piotr Boym (卜彌格) (c.1612–1659). The Polish Jesuit reached Macao in 1643, and despite the turbulent time of his arrival, he had managed to travel across China to complete his *Map of the Central Empire* (中國圖). Boym's Atlas is mainly based on a Chinese map from 1555, *The Guang-Yu-Tu* (廣輿圖), but more informative and descriptive than the original. When compare the two Atlases, one sees that Royer had also made several alterations during his visual translation. With the comparisons, I will try to demonstrate the collector's intellectual interest and situate my case study within the cartographic traditions in Europe, particularly the Netherlands.

Global Arts at the Observatory
Staging Globes in China and Europe ca. 1598-1673

Anna Grasskamp

In 1673, Chinese emperor Kangxi 康熙 (r.1662-1722) commissioned Chinese craftsmen under Jesuit supervision to install astronomical instruments at his Imperial Observatory. Several of these objects have survived to this day, others appear in the woodcut prints of *Xinzhì yìxiàng tú* 新制仪象图 [Images of the Newly Constructed Astronomical Instruments, 1674]. While previous scholarship has emphasized the resemblances between the Chinese scientific objects and preceding European instruments, my research draws attention to the differences. Kangxi's objects deviate from their European counterparts through spectacularly designed Chinese pedestals and their two-dimensional representations differ from preceding European images through elements that frame the actual instruments (e.g. Asian landscape backgrounds).

I use the Kantian/Derridean model of the parergon to examine the material and visual 'frames' of astronomical objects in early modern China and Europe and further situate the instruments within the wider frames of collecting and display. I reinterpret the objects as indicators of a conscious appropriation of foreign material culture through Qing imperial collecting and hereby showcase the glocalization of the globe as scientific object, crafted artifact and political symbol.