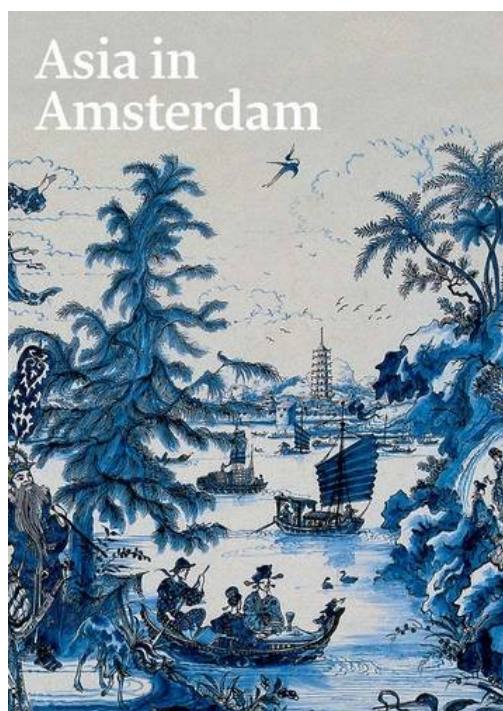


Asia in Amsterdam: The Culture of Luxury in the Golden Age

ed. by Karina H. Corrigan, Jan van Campen, and Femke Diercks. Yale University Press, December 2015. 356 p. ill. ISBN 9780300212877 (cl.), \$65.00.

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The Peabody Essex Museum and the Rijksmuseum have pooled their scholarly efforts and extensive collections for the exhibition Asia in Amsterdam. Appearing in both Holland and Massachusetts, the show brings together fine and decorative arts which speak to the interchange between the Netherlands and Asia during the Dutch Golden Age. Eye-catching enough to be a coffee table book, this exhibition catalog has both appealing style and intellectual substance.

Seven essays analyze the interplay between seventeenth-century Amsterdam and Asia. Beginning with the basic workings and diplomatic relations of the Dutch East India Company or Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), the authors go on to explore the social conditions of the colonial capital of Batavia (now Jakarta). Turning towards Amsterdam, the authors describe the ubiquity of Asian export goods in the homes and shops of the city, as well as

these items' influence on Dutch painting and decorative arts. Interspersed with these essays are 100 informative catalog entries. The text may have benefitted from the inclusion of chapter headings or sections, as the chosen arrangement can be initially confusing.

The authors successfully fulfill their aim of providing context for the influx of luxury goods into Amsterdam and exploring how these curiosities became a quintessential part of Dutch life. Moreover, they take special care to point out the human cost of these luxuries in the form of violence carried out by agents of the VOC. Because of this wide-ranging view, the text will not only entice art historians, but also students of the history of trade, colonialism, and diplomacy. In fact, several recent exhibitions point to rising interest in crosscurrents between Asia and

Europe, including *Looking East: How Japan Inspired Monet, Van Gogh, and Other Western Artists*, which was organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and ran concurrently with *Asia in Amsterdam*.

The porcelain, textiles, paintings, and other objects presented in the text are expertly photographed and presented in full color. Also included are a comprehensive index and a useful reference list, with approximately half of the references in Dutch. Written in a clear style free of academic jargon, the text provides enough background information to avoid alienating readers new to the topic. At the same time, those familiar with the subject matter will encounter novel approaches and original discoveries, such as new archival research into the concentration of East Indies shops in particular intersections in Amsterdam. This catalog is recommended for all art libraries, but has a wider appeal which makes it relevant for any academic collection.