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Anna Grasskamp

Art and Ocean Objects of Early Modern Eurasia

Shells, Bodies, and Materiality

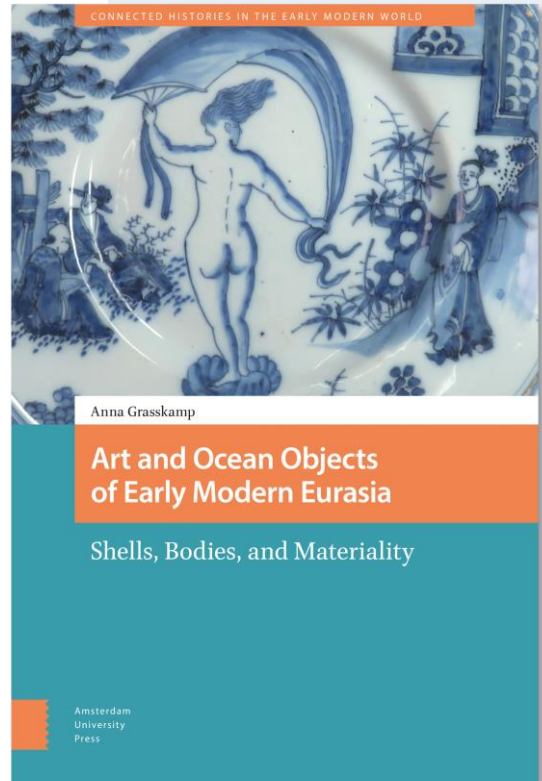
During the early modern period, objects of maritime material culture were removed from their places of origin and traded, collected and displayed worldwide. Focusing on shells and pearls exchanged within local and global networks, this monograph compares and connects Asian, in particular Chinese, and European practices of oceanic exploitation in the framework of a transcultural history of art with an understanding of maritime material culture as gendered. Perceiving the ocean as mother of all things, as womb and birthplace, Chinese and European artists and collectors exoticized and eroticized shells' shapes and surfaces. Defining China and Europe as spaces entangled with South and Southeast Asian sites of knowledge production, source and supply between 1500 and 1700, the book understands oceanic goods and maritime networks as transcending and subverting territorial and topographical boundaries. It also links the study of globally connected port cities to local ecologies of oceanic exploitation and creative practices.

BIOGRAPHY

Anna Grasskamp is Assistant Professor at the Academy of Visual Arts, Hong Kong Baptist University. She co-edited *EurAsian Matters: China, Europe, and the Transcultural Object, 1600-1800* (2018) and is the author of *Objects in Frames: Displaying Foreign Collectibles in Early Modern China and Europe* (2019).

"This fascinating study is meticulously researched and presented with verve. Anna Grasskamp is a rare scholar who is equally conversant with the European archives and the Chinese ones. Her examination of shells and other maritime organisms as collectible transcultural objects casts new light on these objects, and reveals attitudes towards alien creatures, faraway places, and the natural world that are quite different from modern attitudes."

- Dorothy Ko, Barnard College



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