

The Material Legacies of Nordic Empire, 1400–1979

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Eds. Bart Pushaw and Thor J. Mednick

Nordic colonialism united areas as disparate as Tranquebar and Tórshavn, Reykjavík and Riga, Ghana and Guovdageaidnu. These imperial intimacies entangled regions long associated with European imperialism—the Caribbean, West Africa—as well as those whose colonality is more contentious—the North Atlantic, Northeastern Europe. While Nordic colonialism faces more scholarly scrutiny than ever before, our understanding of the visual and material legacies of these empires remains inchoate.

Thanks to the recent work of scholars such as Wayne Modest and Tim Barringer, studies of colonial and post-colonial heritage have devoted increasingly careful attention to visual and material culture as repositories of an exploitative past. While investigations of larger historical processes are critical to exposing the structures and conditions of colonialism, analyses of its material traces allows for the more concrete recovery of its lived experience. The present volume therefore proposes to scrutinize the legacy of Nordic colonialism in both abstract and concrete senses.

Through a collection of object essays and topic articles, this volume explores the complex social histories embedded in material objects connected to the peoples and places of Nordic empire at global scales, from the founding of the Kalmar Union circa 1400 to the imposition of home rule in Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) in 1979. In doing so, the volume emphasizes how close interrogation of material evidence and visual culture challenges presumptions of Nordic benevolence, revealing instead direct complicity in such issues of global consequence as the enslavement trade, settler exploitation of the environment, and the state sponsorship of racial biology institutes.

We seek proposals for essays in one of two formats:

1. Succinct (500-1000-word) essays that explore the significance of a single object, revealing its material, iconographical, and/or social importance.
2. Article-length chapters (7,000 words including backmatter) that explore a theme, motif, or problem in the visual and material culture of the regions and histories under consideration.

We welcome proposals that address any aspect of visual and material culture, from literary and pictorial representations, to the material survival of objects, buildings, and infrastructure, primarily, but not exclusively related to the following geographies: Sápmi, the North Atlantic (the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Iceland), the Caribbean (the Danish West Indies/U.S. Virgin Islands, and

Swedish St. Barthelemy), the Gold Coast, Tranquebar, as well as Scandinavian rule over present-day Finland, Estonia, and Latvia.

Please send essay proposals of 250 words and a two-page CV to bcpushaw@gmail.com and tmednick@hotmail.com by October 15, 2020. We will notify authors by November 15, 2020. First drafts are due May 1, 2021. Feel free to contact us with any questions.

Reference:

CFP: The Material Legacies of Nordic Empire, 1400-1979. In: ArtHist.net, Sep 16, 2020 (accessed Jul 6, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/23550>>.