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Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek / Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art, vol. 79, 2029: Arts and Materials of the Dutch East India Company

The study of the Dutch East India Company or VOC (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie) has produced a veritable scholarly industry, both celebrating and pillorying the VOC as the "world's first multinational corporation" and "most profitable company" in history. The latest impulse was the launch of the GLOBALISE project in 2023, which offers AI-powered, digital access to the archival worlds of early modern Asia, Africa, and Australia. Although two exhibitions in the Rijksmuseum, The Dutch Encounter with Asia (2002) and Asia in Amsterdam (2015) broke new ground, most research on the VOC has been driven by historians of economics, politics, and diplomacy, leaving much of the relevant material culture related to the VOC for further exploration. In the case of art objects, the hierarchical division between western and all other art was institutionalized in museum collections which in turn influenced scholarship. Art museums drew art historians whereas anthropologists tended to study and interpret the objects in ethnographic museums.

In addition to employing artists, printmakers, and architects, the VOC traded in and commissioned materials such as ivory, ebony, lacquer, gemstones, mother-of-pearl, tortoiseshell, shagreen, and a variety of textiles. In the global world of the VOC, not only these raw materials but also objects, forms, and motifs were sourced, moved, and exchanged across the vast distances that connected Japan and China to Java, Australia, India, Persia, and South Africa – circulating within intra-Asian markets as well as reaching European and American consumers. Conversely, it was mostly Dutch bricks – brought as ballast on VOC ships – that now remain the lasting tangible remnant of the VOC's presence, in current-day Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Taiwan.

The material cultures of the VOC thus embodied various forms of agency, from that of patrons, traders, sailors, and middlemen to forced or enslaved labor and household consumers and scholars. While most people in these global chains of commerce remain unnamed, art historians also encounter familiar names such as Rembrandt's daughter Cornelia (who migrated to Java), Pieter van den Broecke (subject of the famous portrait by Frans Hals, and who participated in the VOC-sponsored genocide in Banda), or Amsterdam's mayor Nicolaes Witsen (whose collection of Asian art exceeded anything else in Europe).

For this volume of the Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art, we invite art historians to contribute to recovering the vast material and artistic world of the VOC. Essays may focus on (but do not need to remain limited to):
- The sourcing, shipping, trade and use of raw materials (from pigments to textiles, ceramics,

bricks, and more);
- Traveling artists and collectors and the role they played in dissemination of objects, motifs, and ideas;
- The role of slavery and enforced labor in the production of material culture;
- The printing industry and how it discussed, illustrated, and broadcast the material worlds of the VOC;
- The global migration and adaptation of iconographic motifs across VOC networks;
- The representation of VOC political power in painting, architecture and other media;
- The use and abuse of artworks as status symbols and diplomatic gifts;
- Legality in the VOC world: from the restrictions on private trade to sumptuary laws and patented new materials;
- The global worlds of the VOC cut to (miniature) size in ship models and doll's houses;
- The afterlife of the VOC in 19th-century monumental sculpture and history painting;
- Issues surrounding ownership, reparation and restitution of artworks;
- Present-day use in political art and debates: from Iswanto Hartono's performance art to the use of the VOC logo in media expressions of the Dutch far right.

The NKJ is dedicated to a particular theme each year and promotes innovative scholarship and articles that employ a diversity of approaches to the study of Netherlandish art in its wider context. For more information, see: https://brill.com/view/serial/NKJ.
Contributions to the NKJ are limited to a maximum of 7,500 words, excluding notes and bibliography. Following a peer review process and receipt of the complete text, the editorial board will make a final decision on the acceptance of a paper.

Please send a 500-word proposal and a short CV to all volume editors by 20 January 2027:
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Schedule:
20 January 2027: Deadline for submission of abstracts
February 2027: Notifications about abstracts
1 November 2027: Submission of full articles for peer review
Early 2028: Decision on acceptance based on peer reviews
1 July 2028: Deadline revised articles
1 September 2028: Final articles, including illustrations & copyrights
Early 2029: Publication

Reference:

CFP: Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek Vol. 79 (2029). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 17, 2026 (accessed Nov 9, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54658>.