A Curious Affair – Toward an Understanding of Art and Globalization
Forrest McGill, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco
August 25, 2023

How does an art object get from one place to another, and why does it move?

How does the maker of an art object envision the viewer or customer?

If the maker is emulating a model such as an imported object, does the maker know or care where the model object came from, or how it was used or what it signified in its home country?

Does a buyer know or care where the imported art object came from, or how it was used or what it signified in its home country?

If an artist is depicting a foreign place or person, where does the artist get their information from—direct observation, other artworks, book illustrations, verbal descriptions?

If an artist is depicting a foreign place or person, what’s their motive? Do they strive for “objectivity,” or do they have an agenda?

Why do buyers want art objects depicting foreign places or people?

**Historical periods (much simplified)**

- **Ottoman (Turkey, &c.)** 1300-1922
- **Safavid (Iran)** 1501-1722
- **Qajar (Iran)** 1724-1925
- **Mughal (India, Pakistan)** 1562-1857
- **British rule (India, Pakistan)** 1857-1947
  (British dominated parts of India earlier)
- **Toungoo (Burma/Myanmar)** 1510-1752
- **Konbaung (Burma/Myanmar)** 1752-1885
- **British domination** 1886-1948
  (British dominated parts of Burma earlier)
- **Ayutthaya (Thailand)** 1351-1767
- **Bangkok (Thailand)** 1782-present
- **Vietnamese kingdoms** 1400s-1800s
- **French domination in Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam** late 1800s-mid 1900s
- **Indonesian sultanates** 1500s-1800s
- **Dutch domination**
in parts or all of Indonesia  1600s-1949
Ming (China)  1368-1644
Qing (China)  1644-1911
Joseon (Korea)  1392-1920
Edo (Japan)  1615-1868
Meiji (Japan)  1868-1912

For further reading and browsing. A few recent works. There are many, many more.

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (Smithsonian Institution). The Tsars and the East: Gifts from Turkey and Iran in the Moscow Kremlin. 2009.


Dalal, Radha, Sean Roberts, and Jochen Sokoly, eds. Biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art and Culture. The Seas and the Mobility of Islamic Art. Yale University Press; in Association with Qatar Foundation; Virginia Commonwealth University; and Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar 2021.


YouTube Video

John Guy, “The Tang Shipwreck’s Ceramic and Precious Metal Cargo,” Asia Society, May 23, 2017 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUxSVX9qLio&t=1754s or search by title and John Guy’s name