

Acknowledgements

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This publication was developed to accompany the exhibition, “Women Cross Media. Photography, Porcelain and Prints from Japan and China, Dresden • Europa • Welt,” held in the Sponsel Room, Grünes Gewölbe, Dresden, March 3 to June 5, 2017. The exhibit was made possible through generous support of the Europa/Welt research program of the Museum & Research Foundation GmbH and the Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe.

The larger project entitled, “Formative Decades: Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Chinese Narrative Porcelains Collected and Manufactured by August the Strong, Dresden-Meissen,” is based on a formal cooperation agreement between the Porzellansammlung [Porcelain Collection], Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden and the Institute of East Asian Art History (IKO), Heidelberg University, which began in 2014.¹ The initial collaboration—which made this volume possible—was funded by Heidelberg University’s Field of Focus 3 “Cultural Dynamics in Globalised Worlds.” The Field of Focus 3 Initiative concentrates on the construction and dynamics of cultural spaces to better understand urgent problems of cultural identity, social and religious conflicts, and transcultural processes caused, for example, by accelerated mobility, migration or historical entanglements.

As leader of the Heidelberg project, a member of NET 1 “Arts and the Transcultural” at the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context,” and Chair of East Asian Art History at the Institute of East Asian Art History, I initially envisioned that our seminars, fieldwork, and workshops would systematically investigate the narrative complexities of August the Strong’s collection of East Asian porcelain (approx. 8.000 pieces) and examine the circulation and interaction of iconography across media in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.² The classification of porcelain motifs was a priority for Dresden and much of our early work focused on content and identification. A larger goal of the project was to investigate the impact of Asian themes on the production of European Chinoiseries, especially the ways in which East Asian motifs inspired Meissen porcelain and German architectural design. In its broadest terms, the purpose of the project was to situate European Chinoiseries in a larger, transcultural frame, linking it to the history of porcelain trade during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and Ming Chinese naval and diplomatic expeditions, which brought ceramics within Europe’s reach for the first time.

After several intensive seminars and fieldtrips in Dresden, it became evident that gender played a key role in the transformation of Japanese and Chinese porcelain in the seventeenth-eighteenth century; the dramatic appearance of women in late Ming and early Qing porcelain has been vastly overlooked in scholarship. Thus, it was clear to me that the presence of women in expanding narratives should also be a central research question. Fortunately, the immense breadth and truly global reach of the Dresden collections made it possible to broaden the research inquiry; in addition to the extensive ceramics and rare print collection, Cora Würmell and Agnes Matthias also made accessible key portions of the nearly

¹ Further description on Field of Focus, Heidelberg-Dresden Collaboration, last accessed August 1, 2018 https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/research/profile/field_of_focus_3/research/2015_fraser.html.

² IKO: Last accessed August 1, 2018 <https://www.zo.uni-heidelberg.de/iko/>; NET 1: Last accessed August 1, 2018 <http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/people/all/person/persdetail/fraser.html>.

250,000 photographs amassed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, now part of the Museen für Völkerkunde Leipzig, Dresden, Herrnhut within the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. With these additional materials, it was feasible to explore how gendered themes, developed in prints and porcelain in the early modern period, endured and crossed mediums in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Motifs of women in gardens and beauties framed on porcelain surfaces resurfaced in staged photographic spaces. Agnes and Cora developed the exhibition and generously worked with Heidelberg student curators and writers.

The curatorial and administrative staff were unfailingly generous with their time and expertise during our three fieldtrips to the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden during May 2014, December 2014 and June 2016; students presented their research to professional curators who provided feedback and shared critical materials. These fieldtrips took place in the context of three popular Heidelberg University seminars I offered: “Images of Brush and Shutter: Porcelain, Export Painting and Colonial Photography” (April-July 2014); “Eighteenth Century Material Culture: the Asian Imaginary in the Sachsen (German) Court” (October 2014-February 2015); and “Photography, Porcelain, and Prints: Cross-Media Research” (April-July 2016). At the Institute of East Asian Art, Heidelberg University we also co-organized a workshop with Dresden curatorial staff and Heidelberg student researchers entitled “Cross Media Porcelain,” March 31-April 2016, which included faculty from the Czech Republic, the U.K., and the U.S.

During the fieldtrips the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden Directors and Curators generously opened photographic collections, stunning lacquer holdings, architectural spaces of the Sachsen court including the Japanisches Palais, Schloss und Park Pillnitz including the Chinesischer Pavillon, the Porzellansammlung (the Porcelain Collection), the Staatliche Porzellan-Manufaktur Meissen, the Kupferstich-Kabinett, and numerous archives throughout Dresden. Moving forward to a new phase of the project in 2018-2019, I will offer a fourth seminar in the winter semester entitled, “Objects of Wonder,” to explore the relationship of West Asian and Islamic displays of porcelain and transcultural European appropriation of ceramic culture. A symposium will be held at Heidelberg University, December 7-8, 2018.

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