Dutch Americas Symposium

On December 9-10, 2022, the Newcomb Art Department will host a symposium marking the end of the first iteration of the Dutch Americas humanities lab, co-taught by Stephanie Porras at Tulane and Aaron Hyman at Johns Hopkins. On Friday, December 9th, Professor Carrie Anderson will deliver a keynote address on the topic of the Dutch West India Company’s presence in the Atlantic world. The following day, graduate students from Hopkins and Tulane will be presenting their final projects - object-based research on the visual and material culture of the Dutch West India Company (WIC). The WIC, founded in 1621, traded across the Atlantic, with footholds in regions of New York, Curaçao, Guyana, Brazil, Suriname, Ghana and Benin – dealing primarily in fur, tobacco, sugar, gold and enslaved Africans. Modeled on laboratory courses in the sciences, the seminar saw teams comprising of students from both schools working on a specific geography (New Netherland/New York, the Caribbean, West Africa, Brazil) working together in order to identify, research, catalog, and publish relevant items in a web-based database. This symposium celebrates and reflects on this groundbreaking foundational research in an emerging field of art historical scholarship, the assembly of a corpus of objects, sites, and materials related to the Dutch trading companies present in the Americas.

The symposium is supported by Johns Hopkins and the Newcomb College Institute’s Dorothy Beckemeyer Skau Art and Music Fund.

Woldenberg Art Center

The keynote address and symposium presentations will be held in Stone Auditorium, room 210 of the Woldenberg Art Center, which is home to the Newcomb Art Department’s History of Art and Studio Art undergraduate and graduate programs, as well as the Carroll Gallery and Newcomb Art Museum.

Dutch Americas

A symposium marking the end of the first iteration of the Dutch Americas humanities lab, co-taught by Stephanie Porras at Tulane and Aaron Hyman at Johns Hopkins University.
Keynote: Carrie Anderson
Friday, December 9, 5:30pm
Material Matters in the Dutch Atlantic World: Albert Eckhout's Paintings of an African Man and Woman

Abstract Art historians have largely abandoned the notion that artist Albert Eckhout's (1610-1665) series of so-called ethnographic portraits offer transparent portrayals of the people with whom the Dutch had contact in New Holland, the name given to the northeast region of Brazil during Dutch occupancy (1630-1654). More recent studies have instead shed light on the Eurocentric assumptions and hierarchies integral to the conception and interpretation of the series. Acknowledging the critical importance of these studies, this talk seeks to reframe the parameters of the discussion by reestablishing the crucial connections between material culture and social identity—which are evident even when bound by the pictorial conventions of oppressive colonial forces. Drawing on recent research related to an ongoing, collaborative digital art history project, this talk will focus primarily on the blue-and-white textiles worn by the figures in Eckhout's paintings of an African Man and Woman, garments that gesture towards the complexities of Dutch global trade networks, but also make visible the complex negotiations that informed social identities in the early modern Atlantic world.

Bio Carrie Anderson is an associate professor of art history at Middlebury College in Vermont. Her primary area of research is the art of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, within which she focuses on themes related to intra- and intercultural diplomacy and gift exchange. Her first book, The Art of Diplomacy in the Early Modern Netherlands: Gift-giving at Home and Abroad, repositions Dutch diplomacy within the array of texts, images, and objects that shaped the practice (under contract with Amsterdam University Press).

Presentations:
Saturday, December 10, 1-5pm

1:00 Introduction by Aaron Hyman and Stephanie Porras

1:15 Hannah Kay Prescott, University of Maryland: Between East and West: An Akan Sword in the Danish Royal Kunstkammer

1:35 Xena Fitzgerald, Tulane: Crossing Colonies, Crossing Christianities: A Baptismal Font as Christian Gift Across the South American Atlantic

1:50 Marco Pomini, Johns Hopkins: Frans Post's Sacrifice of Manoah: The Biblical Past and the Brazilian Landscape

2:20 Final Discussion

3:00 Coffee Break

3:30 Alex Landry, Tulane: Not Intended for Trade: Local West African Objects and the Dutch West India Company

3:50 Lauren Cook, Johns Hopkins: Collecting the Caribbean: The Souvenirs of Gerrit Schouten

4:10 Kaillee Coleman, Tulane: Present Labor, Absented Bodies: Shifting Labor-Landscapes in the Dutch Caribbean Imaginary

4:30 Final discussion