The Global Life of Design

Art and design have always been shaped by the movement of people and resources. From the pre-modern era until today, trade has dispersed natural materials, technologies and techniques around the world. From pigments to natural produce, timber and textiles, the global exchange of materials influenced the rise of consumer culture and the development of the luxury goods market, along with innovations in art and design practices themselves.

The Global Life of Design presents design works and consumer goods created from or as a response to materials that became available because of global trade from 1000 CE to the current day. Showcasing works from across the NGV Collection, it examines and reveals the interlocking networks of power, economics and influence that shaped – and continue to shape – the design of goods used by people around the world. The history of trade – and of design itself – is intrinsically entangled with the history of colonialism. By creating dialogues between works from different times, places and traditions, this exhibition examines the complex design legacy of global trade and its continuing ramifications today.

Movement and knowledge

The world was global long before the modern era of globalisation. Since ancient times, people and things have moved vast distances across the world, bringing with them their own ideas, information, materials and knowledge systems. Although naval exploration and trade had existed since before the common era – including extensive early Melanesian and Polynesian exploration – the scale and influence of global trade and travel grew exponentially in the years between 1000 and 1800 CE. This growth was driven by many factors, including the territorial expansion of conquering forces, such as the Mongols throughout Europe and Asia; the development of sophisticated and competitive cities and states supported by reliable agricultural systems; and innovations in navigation, time keeping and naval technologies.

The works displayed here are a window into early cross-cultural encounters. Depicted are port cities, trading ships, merchants and maps – the people, places and infrastructure that underpinned and supported the commercial and cultural exchange of goods around the world. From depictions of Dutch traders in India during the 1700s, to a map of Chinese coastal ports, and a busy and cosmopolitan Mediterranean port scene, these works visualise the global exchanges that transformed design around the world.

Earth’s resources

Trade, fuelled by colonialism and imperial economics, made raw materials available to new parts of the world. The influx of resources into Europe such as precious timber, ivory and pigments and foods including tea, coffee, sugar and chocolate precipitated artistic and design innovations. The new beverages and foods led to the development of specialised serving wares, the luxury of which contrasted with the exploitive and cruel labour practices used in the production of these foodstuffs. The introduction of new species of timber from Asia, Africa and South America revolutionised European furniture design and contributed to the rise of new, luxury consumer goods.

Growing consumer and industry demand for imported raw and processed materials exerted a strong influence on the politics of colonialism and territorial expansion. Design emanating from imperial centres drew on seemingly unlimited supplies of resources extracted from their territories. Competition over the control of trade and supply created tension between trading powers and had long lasting consequences on the people, economies and geographic boundaries of colonised regions.

Commodifying luxury

Global trade played a vital role in the development of the modern idea of luxury goods from the sixteenth century onwards. Imported materials and consumer goods were rare and expensive in the early modern world, and the physical distance these items travelled enhanced their value and desirability. Royal and imperial courts were the primary markets for luxury goods in the early years of global trade, but by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the market widened to include new classes of wealthy, non-titled consumers. Developments in commerce, trade networks and naval transportation made goods from Asia and materials from the Americas and Pacific more readily available.

Merchants and traders marketed these goods based on taste and fashion, building the association between imported luxury goods and a sophisticated, cosmopolitan way of life. European-made imitations of luxury goods from Asia generated more new products and markets. The refined consumer culture made possible by global trade was underpinned by exploitive labour systems, including the use of enslaved labour and colonial expansion. The rise of luxury was central to the economic and design developments of the modern era, as well as a potent symbol of imperial power and control.

Technology and technique

The movement of goods and materials around the world facilitated the spread of technical knowledge and provoked technological experimentation, adaptation and innovation. Knowledge about the production and manufacture of designed goods was disseminated through many – often interwoven – channels. Artisans and merchants brought technology and techniques with them on their travels, sometimes by any means, such as when twenty-two Korean potters were kidnapped and brought to Japan in 1601, taking with them the secrets of Korean ceramics. Proximity to new resources and equipment also led to the circulation and adaptation of technical knowledge, explaining why port cities such as Venice and Genoa became hubs of the European silk industry.

Technology was also embedded in the physical product itself. Physical contact with new, imported goods led to speculation about how they were made. This technological curiosity, coupled with the commercial incentive to supply public demand for the new goods, encouraged local manufacturers to dissect, experiment and adapt existing techniques to replicate imported commodities. The imitation of imported products also resulted in the development of new techniques and new types of goods, the effects of which were felt by faraway economies and industries.

Japanese

Incense burner

19th century Japan

porcelain, enamel (Arita ware)

Purchased, 1881

2114.a-b-D1A

Porcelain was first made in Japan in the early seventeenth century at kilns in and around Arita, in the northern part of the western island of Kyushu. The earliest pieces were designed for the domestic market. When the decline of the Ming dynasty in China during the 1650s disrupted porcelain production at Jingdezhen – China's ceramic manufacturing centre – the production of Japanese porcelain intended for export to Europe increased. This incense burner was exhibited at the Melbourne International Exhibition in 1880, where it was purchased by the NGV. Japanese wares were highly fashionable by this time and became more and more accessible in colonial cities, such as Melbourne, where import businesses were established.

Guy Keulemans
Australian born 1975
Kiyotaka Hashimoto
Japanese born 1951, arrived Australia 1991

Archaeologic vase (series 5)
2019 Sydney, New South Wales
stoneware, paint, sterling silver staples

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2019 2019.259

This vase has been purposely broken and reassembled using silver staples. Ceramic stapling is one of the most ancient and effective means to repair ceramics, dating back to the beginnings of metallurgy in China. In making this work, the designers question the reasons for the decline of ceramic stapling, including the invention of petrochemical glues, the increased cost of labour and the rise of inexpensive, mass produced and disposable ceramic wares. The designers believe that in the context of a transition towards climate-friendly, low-energy futures, the innovations of old technologies have the potential to reduce waste, revitalise repair and extend material lifetimes.

Richard Malone, London fashion house
English est. 2014

Richard Malone designer
Irish born 1990, worked in England 2014–

Look 12

2018 *Market* collection, autumn–winter 2018–19
London, England
recycled plastic viscose, recycled acrylic yarn,
wool (twill), leather

Purchased, 2018 NGV Gala Fund, 2019

2019.246.a-e

Richard Malone is interested in using new and traditional textile technologies to combat the waste created by the modern fashion industry and the global supply chains that support it. The trousers in this ensemble are made from handwoven British wool, made using natural dyes. The fabric used in the halter top and bag is created from recycled ocean plastic. The textile is woven by the Oshadi weaving workshop located in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Here, the female workers are guaranteed almost quadruple the fair-trade wage, and provided with housing, apprenticeships and education for their children. This collaboration aims to reintroduce traditional jacquard weaving techniques in experimental, sustainable new forms.

England

Dress

c. 1815 England
cotton, wool

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Fashion and Textiles, 2018

2018.1048

In 1815, Indian muslin was more fashionable than locally produced alternatives, despite being more expensive. This popularity was driven by textile merchants' marketing strategies. Indian muslin was romanticised and exoticised by British importers, who conflated the textile's fragility and purity with femininity and virtue. In Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1817), the character of Henry Tilney claims to be an expert in distinguishing 'true Indian' muslin from inferior domestic imitations. The wearing of the latter reflected poorly on a woman's taste and feminine sensibility. By the mid-1800s, however, Britain had taken over the cotton and muslin industries, and was selling cloth back to India, reversing the balance of trade. The trajectory of Indian muslin demonstrates how imperial economics reordered global trading hierarchies.

England

Dress

c. 1820 England
cotton

Gift of Misses M. K. and A. E.Butler, 1948

765B-D4

Fine, muslin was introduced to England from India in the seventeenth century. Produced in Bengal, the fabric was almost impossibly soft and delicate and proved difficult for British weavers to imitate. Its simplicity and elegance suited the shift towards refined, neoclassical styles of fashion, inspired by the drapery of ancient Greek statuary. The popularity of the fabric encouraged British textile manufacturers to develop technology to replicate Indian muslin domestically. British appropriation of Indian weaving techniques, coupled with the British East India Company's colonisation of the Bengal Delta in the eighteenth century, effectively ended India's export market for muslin.

Indian

Battle scene from Ramayana

18th century Coromandel Coast, India
cotton, natural dyes, motdant

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Michael Abbott, Founder Benefactor, 1985 AS50-1985

This textile depicts a scene from the Hindu epic, the Ramayana, in which the hero, Rama, an incarnation of the god Vishnu, battles with the multi-headed demon Ravana. Rama is supported by the monkey army of his ally, Hanuman. The work was collected in Bali and illustrates the trade in Indian textiles that occurred over centuries throughout South-East Asia. Initially exchanged for a wide range of goods, many Indian textiles were subsequently kept as heirlooms for future generations, and became embedded in the ceremonial life of regions far distant from the coastal trading centres where they had first arrived in South-East Asia.

England

Day dress

c. 1830 England
cotton (muslin)

The Schofield Collection. Purchased with the assistance of a special grant from the Government of Victoria, 1974

D123-1974

India

Fragment of embroidery

1700–1720 India

cotton, silk (thread)

Purchased, 1913

1012B-D2

India

Fragment of embroidery

1700–1720 India

cotton, silk (thread)

Purchased, 1913

1012A-D2

Mughal

Prince Parviz

c. 1620–1625 India
opaque watercolour on paper

Felton Bequest, 1980 AS18-1980

Indian

Maharaja Pratap Singh of Jaipur

c. 1800 Jaipur, Rajasthan, India
opaque watercolour and gold paint on paper

Felton Bequest, 1980 AS46-1980

Cobalt

Cobalt has always been synonymous with blue. Since ancient Mesopotamia, this metal has lent itself to a rich, inky colour that has been at the heart of enduring aesthetic innovations in glass, painting, textiles and, most commonly, in earthenware. Although often associated with Ming-dynasty porcelain, this particular blue has existed throughout history, its influence facilitating the exchange of artistic styles and charting the maritime trade routes around Asia. Innovations in blue-and-white ceramics have followed the import and export flows of cobalt ore. Mined historically in West Asia, early experiments in the blue-and-white design have been found in Iraq, dating to the Abbasid

Caliphate (750–1258). Although local experiments with cobalt have been discovered, the rise of Persian cobalt and Islamic pottery exports to China during the Tang dynasty (618–907) seems to have strongly inspired Chinese artisans to try their own hand at this style. These wares were exported to the Middle East, South-East Asia, the rest of East Asia and, eventually, Europe, where they found great favour and were in turn mimicked by local artisans. These local variations, although highly influenced by this combination of Chinese techniques and Islamic trade, developed their own unique forms and designs.

Chinese

Tripod dish

700 CE – 750 CE Henan/Shaanxi province, north China, China

earthenware

Gift of H. W. Kent, 1938 3689-D3

This Tang dynasty (618–907) three-footed offering plate or dish is decorated with sancai (three-colour) lead glazes. The term actually covers a palette that could include more than three colours, and, in this example, cobalt oxide blue glaze, a mineral pigment introduced into Chinese ceramics at this time, has been added to the standard three colours of brown, cream and green. Cobalt would later be used in blue-and-white underglaze decoration, beginning in the Yuan dynasty. The cobalt blue was probably imported from sources in Persia, reflecting the cosmopolitanism of Tang-period China.

Persian

Bowl

early 13th century

earthenware

Presented by the Ewing Family in memory
of Dr S. A. Ewing, 1976

AS110-1976

A glimpse into thriving Indian Ocean trade during the thirteenth century, this Persian bowl reveals a cross pollination between the Middle East and China in the early development of the blue-and-white style. The ornate arabesque patterns on the bowl, painted on the rim, pay homage to the ceramic designs of the Yuan dynasty, while infusing local Islamic culture and motifs. The Islamic market was most likely the originator of the taste for blue-and-white porcelain, which was largely an export product until the mid-Ming dynasty.

Eckert & Co. manufacturer

Plate

19th century

circular, jewelled outer border & cobalt blue inner border enriched with scrolling gilt foliage

Gift of Mrs L.B. Bryers, 1978 D41-19–78

‘Cobalt’ has Germanic origins in the word ‘kobold’ or goblin – a nod to the difficultly European miners had when smelting the ore. Originally on the quest to extract copper or silver, miners instead extracted cobalt and the highly toxic arsenic oxide. By the nineteenth century, flourishing cobalt mines in Europe saw a rise in its use in decorating porcelain. Having already had a history of imitating the highly prized Chinese blue-and-white ceramics, European artisans also employed this rich blue pigment in their own styles. Made for a luxury market, cobalt wares were often highly sumptuous pieces adorned with precious metals such as gold. In this plate, the cobalt is used as a rich background.

Japanese

Summer kimono
Yukata

Meiji period 1868–1912
Japan
cotton

Purchased with funds donated by the
Hon. Michael Watt QC and Cecilie Hall, 2013

2013.696

During the Meiji period, the Japanese textile industry underwent huge changes. Having grown and spun cotton domestically since the sixteenth century using traditional, hand-spinning techniques, the adoption of new Western technology transformed Japanese cotton production from a cottage industry to a large-scale manufacturing powerhouse.
The production and export of cotton was an essential driver of Japan's economic modernisation and, by the 1930s, Japan was the world's largest manufacturer of cotton. Despite the introduction of chemical dyes, which allowed for the mass production of coloured fabric, domestic demand for hand-produced textiles, using indigo dyes first introduced to Japan from China around the seventh century, remained.

Chinese

Vase

Qing dynasty, Kangxi period (1662–1722)
Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province, south-east China, China
porcelain

Anonymous gift, 1980 AS5-1980

By the Kangxi period, cobalt-decorated blue-and-white wares were the most ubiquitous class of Chinese porcelain and exported in great quantities to Europe, where they were highly desired luxury objects. The form of this Kangxi vase is not Chinese in origin, but ultimately derives from a Middle Eastern metal form, reminding us that Iran and the Middle East had been the first great export market for Chinese porcelain, as well as the origin of the taste for blue-and-white decoration – a palette that, even as late as the early Ming period, was considered vulgar by some Han Chinese connoisseurs.

Italy, Florence manufacturer
Giunta di Tugio workshop of

Pharmacy jar from Santa Maria Nuova

c. 1430 Florence, Tuscany, Italy
earthenware (maiolica)

Felton Bequest, 1936

3649-D3

The Italian maiolica (tin-glazed earthenware) industry developed in response to the popularity of ceramics imported from Spain, where a rich ceramic tradition originally developed under Islamic rule. The decoration of this handled jar produced for the pharmacy of the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova in Florence shows the continuing influence of the Hispano-Moresque pottery tradition cultivated in Muslim Spain. The underglaze blue decoration of the oak leaves and rampant hound is executed in cobalt oxide, most likely obtained from North Africa or the Eastern Mediterranean, where it would have arrived via overland trade routes from Iran.

Chinese

Pouring bowl

14th century Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province, south-east China, China
porcelain (blue-and-white ware)

Felton Bequest, 1962 429-D5

A typical example of the blue-and-white porcelain pioneered during the Yuan dynasty, this bowl's transcultural history is revealed through its shape, which was most likely based on a Persian metal prototype. In addition, the twining floral borders pay homage to arabesque patterns common in Islamic art. Paired with Chinese porcelain techniques, in particular the technique for Qingbai ware, which produced a glossy white porcelain base, this bowl showcases the ingenuity of Jingdezhen kilns as they rose to prominence in the fourteenth century. By painting auspicious local cultural flourishes in 'Muslim blue', as it was referred to at the time, on top of the clean white base, the striking blue-and-white combination developed into the porcelain style that we know today.

Chinese

Stem cup

Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province, south-east China, China
porcelain (blue-and-white ware)

Presented by the Felton Bequest to honour Dr Leonard B. Cox for his contribution to the Felton Bequest's Commitee and the National Gallery of Victoria, 1974 AS44-1974

A shape favoured during Mongol rule, stem cups originate their form from bronze wine goblets. Introduced around the Yuan dynasty, these porcelain stem cups were often decorated with auspicious motifs, such as dragons, phoenixes and lotuses and were usually reserved for special occasions and imperial use. The inscription at the centre dates this stem cup to the Xuande period, an early period of the Ming dynasty that was known for its artistic and cultural progressiveness. With imperial support, the manufacture of porcelain during this time was expanded greatly and regulated to ensure consistency and quality. Jingdezhen became the porcelain capital of China, its wares supplying important figures all over the country, as well as being an important export of the thriving trade with Europe and Japan.

Japanese

Jar

18th century Japan
porcelain (Imari ware)

Felton Bequest, 1968

1537-D5

Korean

Dragon jar

18th century Korea

porcelain

Purchased, NGV Foundation, NGV Supporters of Asian Art and the Lillian Ernestine Lobb Bequest, 2007 2007.540

Porcelain jars decorated with dragons painted in cobalt blue were popular in Korea from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. Many were used as flower vases in official court ceremonies. Korea only had access to inferior cobalt sources and was forced to import the mineral from China, making it very costly. It has been suggested that this contributed to the very spare use of cobalt blue decoration typical of Joseon dynasty porcelain. Dragons symbolise the authority of the ruler, and were a common decorative motif at the Korean royal court during the Joseon dynasty. Jars, such as this one, could only be used on occasions when the ruler was present. Cobalt blue was an expensive imported material and used in objects intended for the royal family.

Dale Hardiman
Australian born 1990
Stephen Royce
Australian born 1976

Open garden: Digital mirror
2020 Melbourne, Victoria
LCD panels, single board computer, camera, electrical components

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Contemporary Design and Architecture, 2020 2020.742

Although the popularity of cobalt has waned in the face of pigment advancements it continues to be a medium in contemporary modes of art production. As artists experiment with digital technologies, the legacy of cobalt trade remains. A crucial component of smartphones, the fever for cobalt now outstrips the rush for when it was prized as a pigment. In *Open garden: Digital mirror*, Dale Hardiman and Stephen Royce repurpose discarded phones to capture audiences' reflection in a haunting mirror. A comment against 'walled gardens' or the deliberate limitation of consumer technologies with the intention of creating a monopoly, *Open garden* brings to light our dissociation from the complex materials of our daily devices and our complicity in the cycle of e-waste.

Christien Meindertsma designer
Dutch born 1980
Label/Breed, Amsterdam manufacturer
Dutch est. 2005

Flax chair

2015 designed, 2017 manufactured Amsterdam, the Netherlands
flax fibre (Linum usitatissimum), polylactic acid
ed. 12/150

Purchased with funds donated by Gordon Moffatt AM, 2018 2017.1218

Christien Meindertsma's practice draws attention to the way technology and mass-manufacturing can obscure a product's supply chain. *Flax chair* reflects Meindertsma's research into the cultivation, farming and processing of flax in the Netherlands. Historically, flax was cultivated to produce linen cloth – once a booming industry in the area. Today, Dutch linen mills lie dormant, and the flax is exported to mega-scale textile factories in Asia. Global production has moved to wherever the labour is cheapest. The chair is made from a new bioplastic material comprising flax and polylactic acid, which was invented as part of this research project by Meindertsma in collaboration with Amsterdam-based manufacturer Label/Breed and textiles company Enkev.

KUSAKABE Kimbei
Japanese 1841–1934

Feeding silk worms
page 28 from the *No title (Landscapes and Portraits)* album 1880s–1910s
Japan
albumen silver photograph, watercolour

Presented through the NGV Foundation
by Joyce Evans, 2003 2003.12

Silk was Japan's number one export product in the Meiji period, with enormous demand from the overseas market. Eighty percent of the workforce in the silk industry comprised young women, mainly from rural areas, living in crowded dormitories, underpaid and working long hours. Yet even under these harsh conditions, this lifestyle offered certain advances for those aspiring to gain economic mobility, independence and become part of the growing urban middle class.

Yoshu CHIKANOBU
Japanese 1838–1912

Wigs
1887 Japan
colour woodblock

Purchased, NGV Asian Art Acquisition Fund, 2014 2014.277

Yoshu Chikanobu fused traditional Japanese design with the modern, Western visual styles entering Japan during the Meiji period (1868–1912). His woodblock prints illuminate the transition of Japan into modernity. *Wigs* is a humorous and visually descriptive print depicting recently introduced Western influences on women's fashion and social trends during the Meiji period. Women in Western clothing of the period discuss and select a desirable hairstyle and hat from a selection that are individually labelled with text in adjoining boxes. The work speaks to the cultural and social impact of Japan's opening to trade and influence from the West.

Japanese

Box of decorative fabric samples

Edo period 1600–1868 Japan
silk, gilt thread

Purchased, NGV Asian Art Acquisition Fund, 2014 2014.34

England

Dress

c. 1770, c. 1860 remade England
silk

Bequest of Mrs Caroline P. Nicholas, 1961

262-D5

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, textiles – particularly silk – were incredibly valuable, luxury commodities. While textiles were costly, labour was inexpensive, so refashioning garments into updated styles was a practical solution. Although not a new phenomenon, refashioning garments became increasingly relevant in the eighteenth century, as the rise of consumer culture – aided by new, imported materials and technological advancements – saw changes to style become more dynamic. This silk dress was originally made around 1770 and probably remade several times over the next one hundred years, finding its final form in the mid nineteenth–century style seen here.

Thomas de KEYSER

Dutch 1596–1667

Frederick van Velthuysen and his wife, Josina

1636

oil on wood panel

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria in memory of their parents Eric and Marian Morgan by Lynton and Nigel Morgan, Founder Benefactors, 1987 E1-1987

Frame: reproduction, 2000, based on a Dutch frame from 1636

Frederick van Velthuysen (d. 1658) was a Dutch merchant who traded extensively with Italy. His mercantile connections are reflected in the Italianate town landscape that forms the backdrop of this marriage portrait, which shows off the wealth and social status of its sitters. Josina's black ensemble represents the sombre luxury favoured by the Dutch elite. The patterned textile of her dress is likely Italian velvet from Venice or Genoa, made using silk thread imported from modern day Syria and Iran, and drawing on weaving techniques introduced into Italy by Persian exiles, after first originating in China at the beginning of the first millennium. Both Genoa and Venice used their positions as seaports to export cloth to both the European and Eastern markets – sending finished textiles back to the Ottoman ports from which they sourced their thread.

Flanders

The Virgin and Child

mid 15th century – late 15th century
oil on wood panel

Felton Bequest, 1923

1275-3

Frame: by F. A. Pollak, London, 1954

The luxurious green and gold velvet canopy in the background of this painting reflects Mary's high status and importance. It is an example of cisele velvet, a Venetian invention that involved manipulating the heights of the fabric's warp threads to create textured patterns and also features loops of metal thread that produce a sparkling effect, referred to as *allucciolati*. Renaissance-era Flemish painters kept collections of these textiles in their studios to use as reference material, and integrated velvet into their compositions as a symbol of status, honour and wealth. The pomegranate motif on the velvet in this painting was a symbol of fertility, eternity and resurrection, introduced into European culture through trade with the Ottoman Empire.

Iran

Textile

1000–1050 Iran
silk

Purchased, 1971

D204-1971

Silk was the most important trading commodity between China and Persia at the start of the first millennium, giving its name to the world's most famous trading route: the Silk Road. Its strategic position midway between China, India and Byzantium made Persia the centre of the silk trade between the East and West. After introducing domestic silk worm cultivation around 500 CE, silk production became a major industry, attracting European merchants to Persia. Hunting scenes shown in a beaded circle, like the one on this textile, were characteristic of Persians designs of this era, which were imitated by Byzantine and Chinese weavers. This work is the oldest example of silk in the NGV Collection.

Italy

Panel

16th century Italy
silk (velvet)

Purchased, 1953

1327-D4

France

Coat (Banyan)

1730–1750; 1730s fabric France
silk brocade, silk thread and wood (buttons)

Purchased, 1970

D19-1970

Men’s fashion styles were influenced by both imported textiles and Eastern clothing styles in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Dutch East India Company delegations trading out of the Nagasaki harbour were sometimes gifted kimonos by Japanese officials. These robes, along with Persian and Indian garments, inspired a European male fashion for morning gowns, known as banyans. Although it would only have been worn at home, this Banyan is made from luxurious patterned silk that combines European architectural forms with luxuriant blooms similar to those seen on Indian textiles that were popular in Europe at the time. The expensive textile, as well as the international connotations of the garment’s design, reflected sophistication and worldliness of the wearer.

Southern Italy

Border

16th century Italy
linen, silk (thread)

Purchased, 1895 292-D2

Italy

Border

17th century Italy
linen, silk (embroidery)

Purchased, 1896 327-D2

Italy

Border

16th century Italy
silk, linen

Purchased, 1895 266-D2

Japanese

Box of decorative fabric samples

Edo period 1600–1868 Japan
silk, gilt thread

Purchased, NGV Asian Art Acquisition Fund, 2014 2014.34

Oki Sato designer
Canadian born 1977, Japanese
Nendo, Tokyo design studio
Japanese est. 2002

Cabbage chair (mixed)

2008 Japan
fabric, paper, resin

Suzanne Dawbarn Bequest, 2018

2017.1252

Oki Sato created *Cabbage chair* in response to Japanese fashion designer Issey Miyake's request that he design a furniture piece made out of the pleated paper produced in mass quantities – and usually abandoned as an unwanted by-product – during the process of creating pleated fabric. Finding a new use for this waste material, Sato, with his design company, Nendo, transformed a roll of pleated paper into a small chair that appears naturally when peeled back one layer at a time. The work is both a response to the waste created by the luxury fashion industry and a luxury design item in its own right.

Chinese

Coromandel screen

18th century China
pigments and lacquer on wood, metal

Felton Bequest, 1959

92-D5

The title of this work refers to the Coromandel Coast in south-eastern India, where the Portuguese, English, French and Dutch established trading ports in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The term became a shorthand for the Chinese lacquerware that was consolidated and loaded onto ships to Europe at Coromandel ports. The technique to create Coromandel screens emerged during the late Ming dynasty (1368–1644) and involved coating the screen with dark lacquer before carving designs into the screen's surface and applying coloured pigments into the incised lines. Although popular domestically, by the eighteenth century these screens were produced in high volume for the export market. As lacquer was not produced in Europe, imported screens were rare and luxurious objects for fashionable European homes.

Jennens & Bettridge manufacturer

Writing box

19th century
rectangular, slanting lid, compartments
for implements, lid inlaid mother-of-pearl, painted and gilt

Gift of Miss R. Barnard, 1976 D55-1976

This papier-mâché box imitates fashionable Edo period Japanese lacquerwares. The Birmingham-based company Jennens & Bettridge were innovators in this area, developing a patented method of cutting pearl shell for the decoration of the box. The heavy black varnish applied to the surface gives it the look of lacquer. This technique was called ‘Jappaning’. Jennens & Bettridge served as ‘Japanners in Ordinary’ to King George IV and were praised in the 1850s for their works that ‘could be compared to the most beautiful results obtained in Japan and India’. Despite being imitations, these were luxury products in their own right and expensive to produce, leading the firm to go out of business in 1864.

Japanese

Writing box

17th century – 18th century Japan
lacquer on wood, gilt, silver, mother-of-pearl, inkstone

Felton Bequest, 1973 AS3.a-e-1973

Since the sixteenth century, Japanese lacquerwares were one of the most popular items imported into Europe. The reflective, gleaming surface of Japanese lacquerware was immensely appealing to European taste and was compared to the surface of shiny smooth leather and mirrored glass. The earliest style of Japanese export lacquerware, *nanban* lacquer, incorporated mother-of-pearl, but this style was superseded in the late 1630s by wares similar to this writing box, with its black ground decorated with raised and sprinkled gold (*takamakie* and *hiramkie*).

Wenceslaus Hollar

Bohemian 1607–1677, lived in England 1636–44, 1652–77, Flanders 1644–52

Autumn

plate 3 from the *Whole-length Women as Allegories of The Four Seasons* series 1643–44
1644
etching

Felton Bequest, 1950 2290.3-4

Ostrich feathers were introduced to Europe in the thirteenth century from sub-Saharan Africa via Mediterranean merchant networks. Their importation led to new design and craft specialisations and the establishment of feather-worker guilds for artisans in important court and trade cities, such as Antwerp, Paris, Prague, Seville and Brussels. Ostrich plumes and fans – introduced into Europe from Asia at around same period – appear in portraits of Italian, Spanish and British aristocracy along with the Dutch bourgeoisie from the 1500s. For citizens of cities and states whose wealth was based on the trade of rare goods from around the world, the ostrich feather was a fitting and conspicuous symbol of imperial conquest, power and luxury.

Wenceslaus Hollar

Bohemian 1607–1677, lived in England 1636–44, 1652–77, Flanders 1644–52

Still life with a group of muffs, a pair of gloves and two kerchiefs

from the *Muffs* series 1645–47

1647

etching

Felton Bequest, 1921

1171-3

Wenceslaus Hollar

Bohemian 1607–1677, lived in England 1636–44, 1652–77, Flanders 1644–52

Mulier Nobilis Hispanica

from the *Theatrum Mulierum* / *Aula Veneris* series 1640s–1650

1649

etching

Felton Bequest, 1926

2167C-3

Wenceslaus Hollar

Bohemian 1607–1677, lived in England 1636–44, 1652–77, Flanders 1644–52

Wife of the Lord Mayor of London
Dni. Mairis sive Prętoris Londinensis Vxoris hab

from the *Theatrum Mulierum* / *Aula Veneris* series 1640s–1650

1649

etching

2nd state

Felton Bequest, 1926

2167R-3

Duvelleroy, Paris maker and retailer
French 1827–1981

Fan

c. 1900
ostrich feathers, mother-of-pearl, silver leaf, silk ribbon, brass

Gift of Margaret Lindesay Clark, 2009 2009.597

The late nineteenth century was the peak of ostrich feather popularity in Europe. By 1900, a sophisticated global network of predominantly Jewish merchants were importing huge supplies of feathers into Europe, working with Muslim agents in North Africa, as well as directly with suppliers in South Africa, where ninety percent of feather merchants and exporters were Jewish immigrants. Most ostrich feathers were sent to processing workshops in London, Paris and New York, where feathers were dyed, curled, layered and sewn together by a predominantly female workforce. Ostrich feather curlers were specialised and valued artisans responsible for sculpting plumes into elegant shapes for fashion items.

France

Fan

1715–1774

gouache on paper and ivory, mother-of-pearl, paste, metal

Gift of Mr and Mrs E. S. Makower, 1927 2836-D3

England/France

Fan

1920–1925 England/France

feathers (ostrich), tortoiseshell, brass, metal

Gift from the Estate of Lady Grimwade, 1974 D3-1974

France

Fan

1774 France

paper, gouache, ivory, pearl, feathers

Gift of Mr and Mrs E. S. Mahower, 1927 2823-D3

This fan is a truly Chinoiserie confection, combining Chinese lacquered sticks with a leaf decorated in Europe. The naivety of the decoration recalls the role of the amateur artist, usually female, in Chinoiserie. Designers' source books, such as *The Ladies Amusement* by Robert Sayer (1760), provided patterns that could be used to create Chinoiserie articles at home. The European appearance of the figures' faces and clothes suggests the fan was made in the West, by a person with limited knowledge or understanding of a China outside of the European imagination.

England

Fan

1870–1880 England

ostrich feathers, tortoiseshell, gold, brass, metal

The Schofield Collection. Purchased with the assistance of a special grant from the Government of Victoria, 1974 D392-1974

Chinese

Folding fan

late 18th century – early 19th century China

ivory, silk, mother-of-pearl, metal

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914 1701-D3

Chinese fans were exported to Europe from the seventeenth century. The designs of fans made for the export market were very different from those made for local consumption and were rarely used by the Chinese. Export fans were decorated with traditional motifs adapted for foreign taste and often combined with elements of Western design. This fan is made from a combination of luxury materials including ivory, silk and mother-of-pearl. The ivory strips are carved forming a picture of figures and animals suited to Western taste.

England

Fan

1870–1880 England

ostrich feathers, tortoiseshell, gold, brass, metal

The Schofield Collection. Purchased with the assistance of a special grant from the Government of Victoria, 1974

D392-1974

England

Cape

1935–1939 England

feathers (swan, ostrich), synthetic fabric

Gift from an anonymous Estate, 1984 CT15-1984

Unknown, Australia

Evening cape

1893–1896 Australia
wool, silk, feathers (ostrich), glass,
metal (beads)

Gift of Mr J. G. H. Sprigg, 1971 D106-1971

Ai Weiwei

Chinese born 1957, worked in United States 1981–93

Cube of tea

2006 Beijing, China
tea, wood

Loti & Victor Smorgon Fund, 2017

2015.554

Considered to have medicinal properties, Pu'er tea is traditionally dried and compressed into solid shapes for storage, preservation and transportation purposes. Because of its storage longevity, the tea was highly prized throughout history by merchants, households and emperors, and was a popular commodity to be collected and gifted. Even today Pu'er tea maintains its high value, fetching high prices per kilo and in China is considered a luxury product related to social and business success. In *Cube of tea*, Ai has contrasted the minimalist form, with the extravagant nature of a compressed cubic tonne of Pu'er tea leaves. By presenting this historic commodity on a new, surprising scale, Ai speaks to China's rise to a global power, its burgeoning population and international trade dominance.

Antonibon Factory, Nove manufacturer
1728–1896

Coffee pot

1737–1760 Nove, Italy
earthenware (maiolica)

Felton Bequest, 1939 4553B.a-b-D3

England manufacturer

Tea table

c. 1760 England
mahogany (*Swietenia* sp.), brass

Purchased, 1950

993-D4

Mahogany was a relatively new material in eighteenth-century Europe. It was imported to England from its colony, Jamaica, from the 1720s, before the depletion of trees on the island gave rise to a search for new sources of the timber. Growing consumer demand precipitated a fierce and sometimes violent competition for control of supply, leading to an increased use of enslaved labour, as well as deforestation. Britain's search for reliable mahogany supply was closely tied to its colonial ambitions. Shortages of mahogany during conflicts like the Seven Years War and the American Revolution, for example, intensified Britain's desire for a strong territorial footprint in the Atlantic.

Chinese

Tea bowl

11th century – early 12th century Dingzhou, Hebei province, north China, China
porcelain, gold (Ding ware)

Gift of H. W. Kent, 1938

3700-D3

Producing porcelain that was famously white in colour, Ding kilns were also known for their technique of firing upside-down and for having a delicate rim, usually banded with metal. Produced between the Tang and Yuan dynasties, Ding wares peaked under Northern Song rule, where their ivory glazed wares became so popular that kilns in other regions were prompted to emulate its shapes and patterns. The extension of Ding ware production had a far-reaching impact on China's porcelain industry, particularly in influencing the early white wares of Jingdezhen, which eventually eclipsed it and led to the development of blue-and-white porcelain that China is most famous for today.

Korean

Tea bowl

Joseon Dynasty (1392–1897)
stoneware

Lillian Ernestine Lobb Bequest, 2003

Tea culture entered Korea from China during the Unified Silla dynasty (698–945) and was popularised with the spread of Buddhism. Porcelain was not yet widely produced in Korea during this period, so tea bowls were imported from China. As tea plants began to be grown domestically and tea drinking became widespread, demand for tea vessels and utensils grew. Tea bowls were the most popular item when porcelain started to be produced in Korea during the Goryeo dynasty (918–1392). An envoy from China to the Goryeo court in 1123 described the customs and utensils of Goryeo tea drinking in detail, noting that tea was drunk three times a day.

Korean

Tea bowl with incised floral design

13th century – 14th century Korea
stoneware (celadon ware)

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria, in memory of George Ewing by Mrs M. E. Cutten, Founder Benefactor, 1979

AS41-1979

Celadon ware describes ceramics with a soft, green-coloured glaze, created by firing the glazed vessel – made from iron-rich clay – at a high temperature for several days, during which time the glaze slowly turned green. Considered the representative art form of the Goryeo dynasty (918–1392), celadon ceramic techniques were introduced from China to Korea around the ninth century, where it developed into a distinct artistic tradition. Porcelain production was tightly controlled by the government, with the Gangjin kilns in the Jeolla Province on Korea's southern coast producing high-quality wares for use by the royal family and for export to China.

The introduction and enthusiasm for tea in England had a huge impact on the design and manufacturing industries. When tea was first imported in large quantities into England from China by the British East India Company in 1669, there was not a specific vessel among European drinkware for its use. Over the subsequent decades, a thriving industry formed to serve the British public with tea equipage, as well as decorative items for the consumption, storage and presentation of the new and precious commodity. These items were modelled on Chinese tea implements, also imported by East India Company. English and European tastes and preferences were fed back to Chinese manufacturers, who began creating tea, as well as coffee, chocolate and drinkware specifically for the export market. English and European ceramicists imitated Chinese designs and porcelain methods and also developed their own styles and techniques.

Chelsea Porcelain Factory, London
manufacturer
English c. 1744–1769

Pair of tea bowls
c. 1747–1750 manufactured, c. 1760 decorated London, England
porcelain (soft-paste)

The Colin Templeton Collection. Gift of Mrs Colin Templeton, 1942 412.1-2-D4

These tea bowls are among the earliest products of the Chelsea Porcelain Factory, which became a leading porcelain factory during the nineteenth century. Both their shape and decoration are an imitation of Chinese tea bowls, imported into Europe from the 1640s. By the early eighteenth century, Chinese tea ware was being imported vast quantities; the East India ship *Loyal Bliss* is recorded as carrying 110,000 tea bowls and saucers on her 1710–12 voyage. The bowls' diminutive size reflects tea's status as a luxury product.

Austria, Vienna

Teabowl and saucer

c. 1725 Vienna, Austria
porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

4467.a-b-D3

Meissen Porcelain Factory, Meissen
manufacturer
German est. 1710
the Netherlands decorator

Teabowl and saucer

c. 1720–1725 manufactured, c. 1740 decorated Meissen, Germany
porcelain (hard-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939

4576.a-b-D3

This *Teabowl and saucer* are executed in Böttger porcelain, the earliest hard-paste porcelain formula employed at the Meissen factory – the first European factory to develop the secrets of hard-paste porcelain. The form of the tea bowl is based on a silver design by Johann Jacob Irminger, the Saxon court silversmith. The set would have left the factory at Meissen as an undecorated blank, a common practice in the early years before Meissen established its own decorating studios, and was enamelled in the Netherlands by an independent decorator in the style of imported Japanese Kakiemon wares.

Lowestoft Porcelain Factory, Lowestoft, Suffolk manufacturer
English 1757–1801

Teapot

1760–1770 Lowestoft, Suffolk, England
porcelain (soft-paste)

Felton Bequest, 1939 4512.a-b-D3

Rene Dubois
French 1737–1799

Writing cabinet
Secrétaire à abattant
c. 1780 France
Kingwood, Tulipwood, Satinwood, wood, gilt-bronze (ormolu), marble, leather, steel, brass

Felton Bequest, 1948 705.a-i-D4

This writing cabinet is made from multiple types of timbers imported into Europe from colonised territories: Kingswood from Brazil, Tulipwood from North America and Satinwood from the West Indies. The importation of these new timbers into Europe had a significant impact on furniture design, particularly at the luxury end of the market. As well as using imported timbers, Dubois drew on fashionable, East Asian–inspired designs for the cabinet's decoration. The vases and decorative items depicted through the marquetry inlay are inspired by Chinese ceramic forms. The cabinet is an example of Chinoiserie – the visual interpretation and appropriation of Chinese aesthetics and motifs through a European lens and a highly popular decorative style in the eighteenth century.

Jacque Collot

French 1592–1635, worked in Italy

(c. 1611–1621)

The slave market
Le Marché d'esclaves

1629

etching

1st of 6 states

Purchased, 1950 2225-4

The sugar industry was facilitated by the use and trade of enslaved labour. Hundreds of thousands of people from Africa were forcibly transported to the colonised West Indies to work on sugar plantations. The difficult work and conditions caused the death of many enslaved workers, leading to the constant importation of newly enslaved people to replace those who had died. In the years between 1748 and 1788, 335,000 enslaved Africans were brought to Britain's largest sugar producing colony, Jamaica. The barbarity of slavery stands in stark contrast to the refined, even frivolous, dining equipment developed for European consumption and display of sugar, symbolised in this case by decorative sugar tongs.

John Gear, London manufacturer

English active c. 1804

Sugar tongs

c. 1804 London, England

silver

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914 1447-D3

Sugar tongs

perhaps by Thos. Wallis or Thos. Willmore, London

Gift of Mrs A. Sinclair, 1963 461-D5

England manufacturer

Sugar tongs

c. 1800 England

silver

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914 1448-D3

Ireland, Dublin manufacturer

Sugar tongs

early 19th century Dublin, Ireland

silver

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914 1445-D3

Sugar tongs

18th century

silver silver

Bequest of Mrs Hilda Lampe, 1978 D67-1978

Solomon Hougham, London

manufacturer

English 1793–1818

Sugar tongs

1806–1807 London, England

silver

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914 1449-D3

Unknown

English active late 18th century – early 19th century

Dealer in tea, coffee, etc

1789–1808 London, England
hand-coloured etching

Felton Bequest, 1926 2445-3

Mennecy Porcelain Factory, Mennecy manufacturer
French 1734–1812
François Joubert silversmith
French active 1749–1793
Louis Samson II silversmith
French 1710–1781

Travelling chocolate service *Nécessaire de voyage*

c. 1765
porcelain, glass, silver, leather, wood, brass, other materials

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Decorative Arts, 2012 2012.128.a-t

A *nécessaire de voyage* was a portable case or coffer containing all of the accoutrements that one required for a given activity. They came in a range of sizes and complexities, with the most luxurious examples containing all of the necessities for tea, coffee and chocolate preparation and drinking, dining, grooming, sewing and letter writing. This example contains equipment for the partaking of chocolate and a knife, fork and spoon for dining. The drawer in the bottom of the case may once have held a small serving tray, perhaps made of Japanese lacquer.

England manufacturer

Tea caddy

c. 1800 England
tortoiseshell, ivory, wood, brass, (other materials), steel, velvet, silver

Gift of Mrs J. Hinde, 1974 D15.a-c-1974

In eighteenth-century England, tea was one of the most expensive household commodities and kept under lock and key in a tea caddy. As well as serving the functional purpose of keeping tea safe and fresh, tea caddies developed into decorative objects made in a vast variety of styles and materials. Tortoiseshell and ivory were expensive, imported materials sought after for their unusual finish and associations with luxury. The Far Eastern Hawksbill Turtle was considered the best source of tortoiseshell for its flexibility as a material. Around twenty-two tonnes of tortoiseshell was imported into England each year by the mid nineteenth century.

THOMAS PITTS, London manufacturer
English active 1744–1793

Epergne

1762–1763 London, England
silver

Felton Bequest, 1932

3304.a-w-D3

A centrepiece for the serving of confectionary and desserts, the epergne occupied a prominent position on the eighteenth-century dessert table from the 1740s onwards. It would have sat in the centre of the table with the baskets filled with seasonal and imported fresh fruit, nuts or sugared sweets. This example has a Chinese-inspired, pagoda-like form. Its trellised canopy is covered in foliage and swagged with flowers and crowned by a pineapple – an exotic fruit in the eighteenth century and a symbol of hospitality, as well as wealth and cosmopolitanism.

THOMAS HEMING manufacturer
English active 1738 – c. 1801

Chocolate pot

1767–1768 London, England
silver, wood

Gift of Mr I. G. Robinson, 1943

4800.a-b-D3

Chocolate pots often took the same form as coffee pots during the eighteenth century. Chocolate pots are distinguished, however, by their removable or swivelling finial, which allows a stirrer to be inserted to froth up the chocolate tablet in the hot milk or water. The use of wood, ivory or leather and cane wrapped around the handle provided insulation from the hot vessel. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, chocolate pots were made from either silver or porcelain – both valuable materials that reflected chocolate's status as a rare and expensive commodity and status symbol.

Chinese

Pair of coffee cups

c. 1760 China
porcelain, enamel (*famille rose* ware)

Gift of Mrs Oscar Hammerstein II, 1961

197.1-2-D5

These coffee cups were produced in China for the Western market. The colour scheme of the cups and the neighbouring *Coffee pot* was referred to Europeans as *famille rose* (pink family) and refers to the pink, yellow and white enamels that became possible via new firing techniques in the seventeenth century. The colours were introduced into China by Jesuit missionaries in the late 1600s, and perfected via experimentation and adaptation by Chinese porcelain artisans in the early 1700s. Large quantities of *famille rose* wares produced in the porcelain centre of Jingdezhen were exported to Europe and, later, the United States.

Chinese

Coffee pot

c. 1760 China

porcelain, enamel (*famille rose* ware)

Gift of Mrs Oscar Hammerstein II, 1961

198.a-b-D5

England, Staffordshire manufacturer

Coffee pot

c. 1780 Staffordshire, England
stoneware (salt-glaze)

The Colin Templeton Collection. Gift of Mrs Colin Templeton, 1942 360.a-b-D4

Simon Patin II, London manufacturer
English 1729–1733

Coffee pot

1732–1733 London, England
silver, ivory

Bequest of an anonymous donor, 1980

D23-1980

Along with the development of new wares for taking tea, new forms of equipage relating to the consumption of coffee also developed in the late seventeenth century. Like tea wares that were originally influenced by Chinese forms – China being the source for tea into Europe – the earliest European coffee pots were based upon Turkish coffee pots and had a tapering, cylindrical form with a high-domed lid. Later on in the eighteenth century, the handles of coffee and chocolate pots were often moved to the side, at right angles to the pot.

England

Folding screen

c. 1765 England

rosewood, wall paper, pen and ink wash and paint on paper, wood, brass

Felton Bequest, 1948

716-D4

Okimono are small sculptures depicting a range of subjects, including animals, popular fables, mythological characters and humorous scenes of daily life. They developed out of the craft of *netsuke*, which were miniature sculptural toggles used to secure an *inrō* (a small pouch) to a man's obi waist sash. With the influx of Western clothing during the Meiji period, traditional Japanese dress became outdated and *netsuke* no longer served a practical purpose. Recognising the uniqueness of the craft, *netsuke*-craftspeople with decades of finely honed ivory carving skills turned their attention to the international market, and produced elaborate ornamental figurines for export and domestic purchase by Western tourists.

Ivory

Historically, ivory was valued as an art material due to its natural beauty and association with the majestic elephant. However, due to the cruelty involved in ivory harvesting and its devastating impact on the international elephant population, its use is no longer condoned. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) intergovernmental agreement effectively banned the international commercial ivory trade in 1989, and Australian regulations prohibit the domestic trade of ivory objects produced after 1975. The works in this case were produced prior to 1900 and have been included in this display due to their fine artisanship and historic and cultural significance.

French Indian/Anglo-Indian

Sewing box

19th century India

wood, ivory, metal, velvet

Felton Bequest, 1931 3256-D3

Visakhapatnam is a harbour city that was identified as a strategic location for a new trading port by the British East India Company during the mid seventeenth century. It came under French rule in the mid eighteenth century but was reclaimed in 1804 by the British, until India's independence in 1947. Amid the struggle for colonial influence, the Kamsali people of Andhra Pradesh seized the opportunity of a newly accessible market. Local artisans combined their renowned carpentry and ivory carving skills to produce unique objects for export. This sewing box is stylistically influenced by the region's earlier Mughal period but designed to appeal to the tastes of Western-European consumers.

Japanese

Men discovering a giant shell, okimono

Meiji period (1868–1912) Japan

ivory, ink

Gift of the Cleland Family in memory of Allan Rex and Joan Muriel Cleland, 2018

2018.1417

Japanese

Horseman taking a rest and horse with character for gold, okimono

Meiji period (1868–1912) Japan

ivory, ink

Gift of the Cleland Family in memory of Allan Rex and Joan Muriel Cleland, 2018

2018.1425

Japanese

Mother with child, okimono

Meiji period (1868–1912) Japan

ivory, ink

Gift of the Cleland Family in memory of Allan Rex and Joan Muriel Cleland, 2018

2018.1418

Japanese

Elderly man collecting insects with children, okimono

Meiji period (1868–1912) Japan

ivory, ink

Gift of the Cleland Family in memory of Allan Rex and Joan Muriel Cleland, 2018

2018.1427

Japanese

Farmer with hoe, okimono

Meiji period (1868–1912) Japan

ivory, ink, glass

Gift of the Cleland Family in memory of Allan Rex and Joan Muriel Cleland, 2018

2018.1415

Japanese

Man with pitchfork, okimono

Meiji period (1868–1912) Japan

ivory, ink, Ebony (*Diospyros* sp.)

Gift of the Cleland Family in memory of Allan Rex and Joan Muriel Cleland, 2018

2018.1423

Japanese

Bishamon (God of fortune in war), okimono

Bishamonten okimono

毘沙門天置物

Meiji period (1868–1912) Japan

ivory, ink

Felton Bequest, 1932

3278-D3

Japanese

Woman with peonies, okimono

Meiji period (1868–1912) Japan

ivory, ink

Gift of the Cleland Family in memory of Allan Rex
and Joan Muriel Cleland, 2018 2018.1420

Japanese

Woman with gourd, okimono

Meiji period (1868–1912) Japan

ivory, ink

Gift of the Cleland Family in memory of Allan Rex
and Joan Muriel Cleland, 2018 2018.1419

Verified

Japanese

The seven lucky gods in the treasure ship, okimono

Meiji period (1868–1912) Japan

ivory, ink

Gift of the Cleland Family in memory of Allan Rex and Joan Muriel Cleland, 2018

2018.1430

Yoshu CHIKANOBU

Japanese 1838–1912

Children having a snowball fight

1887 Japan
colour woodblock

Purchased, NGV Asian Art Acquisition Fund, 2014 2014.278

Yoshu Chikanobu fused traditional Japanese design with the modern, Western visual styles entering Japan during the Meiji period (1868–1912). His woodblock prints illuminate the transition of Japan into modernity. This work blends a classical Japanese seasonal scene of winter and plum blossoms with a contemporary depiction of the Meiji Imperial court. It depicts a modern, Western style imperial villa with the Meiji emperor seated inside, wearing formal military uniform. The empress and other family members ascending the staircase and standing on the verandah are wearing the latest European style fashions, which the empress formally adopted in 1886. These fashions were a symbol of Westernisation, modernity and status.

Japanese

Covered bowls with nanban design

late 18th century – early 19th century Japan
porcelain, enamel, gilt (Arita ware)

Purchased, NGV Asian Art Acquisition Fund, 2011 2011.5.a-d

An example of porcelain from Arita, whose kilns were at the forefront of mid seventeenth-century Japanese developments in overglaze techniques, these porcelain bowls decorated with underglaze blue, overglaze coloured enamels and gold gilt depict Dutchmen and Dutch ships in vivid colours on their exterior and simple blue motives on their interior. During the Edo period, the Japanese likened Dutch trading ships to Takarabune (ships of good fortune) and Dutch people were likened to gods of good luck, due to the wealth they brought to local traders. This unusual symbolism, clearly illustrating early exchanges between Japan and Europe, was often further enforced with the inclusion of local motifs, such as the two scrolls (appearing on the lid and base), indicating happiness and good fortune for the domestic household.

England

Bed curtain

1720–1730 England
linen (twill), wool (thread)

Felton Bequest, 1928

2922-D3

Crewel work embroideries were the standard textiles used for bed hangings in seventeenth-century Europe. This embroidered panel was probably a bed curtain, and the flowering tree motif with its exuberant flowers illustrates the hybrid nature of the designs used, incorporating Asian and European decorative elements and embroidery techniques. Needlework of this type was made by female members of the household who would typically embroider an entire set of hangings, comprising curtains for all sides of the bed and valances for its canopy. The work illuminates the far-reaching influence of imported design styles and techniques, revealing Chinese, Persian, Indian and European elements, coalesced over centuries of trade and modified for European tastes.

Canaletto

Italian 1697–1768, lived in England 1746–55

Bacino di S. Marco: From the Piazzetta

c. 1750

oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1986 E1-1986

Venice was one of Europe's most important trading powers from the twelfth century until its takeover by Napoleonic forces in 1797. Due to its early commercial links with Constantinople, Venice was the European gateway for trade, products and artistic traditions from the Byzantine Empire, including frescoes and wall painting. The city also became a manufacturing hub during the Renaissance, supplying markets in Europe and the East with luxury products such as silk. By the eighteenth century, Venice's position as a trading superpower was in decline, but the city remained a cosmopolitan centre, attracting tens of thousands of visitors per year. Canaletto's views of Venice were produced primarily for the developing tourist market in Italy.

Gerritt Berckheyde
Dutch 1638–1698

The Town Hall, Amsterdam
1690
oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1920

1050-3

Frame: reproduction, 2005, based on a Dutch frame from 1695

In 1728, English journalist Daniel Defoe wrote, ‘The Dutch are the carriers of the World, the middle persons in Trade, the Factors and Brokers of Europe; they buy to sell again, take in to send out; and the greatest part of their vast commerce consists in beyond supply’d from all parts of the World, that they may supply all the World again’. The Amsterdam Town Hall is a potent symbol of the wealth and power that the Netherlands accumulated as a result of its central role in early modern global trade. The bustling scene in the foreground features figures in non-Western dress, reflecting the city’s status as a cosmopolitan, commercial metropolis, which attracted visitors from around the world.

Renier Nooms
Dutch c. 1623–1664

Bay with two large Dutch sailing vessels
plate 2 from the *Various Seaports (Quelque port de Meer)*
series 1656
1656 Amsterdam, the Netherlands
etching
2nd of 2 states

Felton Bequest, 1923

1278.122-3

Sailor and draughtsperson Renier Nooms worked at a time when Dutch companies dominated international trade. Seaports and shipping vessels were essential components in the operation of Dutch trading networks, and Nooms used his intimate knowledge of sailing to accurately document the inner workings of maritime commerce. Dutch sailors were known for their efficiency and economy and shipbuilding was an important national industry. Dutch trading ships were often operated via a model of dividend ownership – allowing a vessel to be owned by up to sixty people. This system distributed both the risks and the profits of trading ships among the middle class, rather than consolidating power and wealth in the hands of a few. All these factors contributed to Dutch supremacy in global trade during the seventeenth century.

Unknown
Carle Vernet after
French 1758–1836

L’ Interieur du Port de Marseille

1764
engraving

Felton Bequest, 1926 2349-3

Wenceslaus Hollar

Bohemian 1607–1677, lived in England 1636–44, 1652–77, Flanders 1644–52

Titlepage

for *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham Emperor of China* by Johannes Nieuhof, translated and published by John Ogilby, London, 1669
1668 London, England
etching
3rd of 3 states

Felton Bequest, 1923

1278.1380-3

Wenceslaus Hollar's illustration serves as the title page for this influential book by Dutch writer Johannes Nieuhof, which narrates the two-year visit of a Dutch embassy to China from 1655 to 1667. The Dutch delegation's visit aimed to forge formal trading links between the Qing dynasty and the Dutch East India Company (VOC) via diplomatic negotiation, following various military skirmishes over trade between China and the VOC in previous years. The delegation hoped to secure free and unlimited trade with mainland China, in return for sending a tribute-bearing delegation to the Qing court every five years. The lengthy and expensive Dutch mission, however, ended with a vague imperial decree and in the years following, VOC trade with China continued to be centred on the transit point of Taiwan.

Jan Baptist Weenix

Dutch 1621–1660, worked in Italy 1642/43–47

A Mediterranean port scene

1652

oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1977

E1-1977

Jan Baptist Weenix, a Dutch painter who worked in Italy for several years, introduced an Italianate style into Dutch landscape painting. This work illuminates the commercial importance of the Mediterranean Sea for Europe's commercial maritime activities and the far-flung influence of Dutch wealth and commerce. Among the mix of trade, travel and industry taking place at this portside taven is a woman carrying a parasol, a fashionable accessory recently introduced into Europe from Asia. A man in Turkish costume appears to be having his palm read in the tavern's interior.

Javanese

Dutch policeman, wayang klitik puppet

early 19th century Java, Indonesia
painted and gilt-wood, bamboo, leather, cotton
(thread and string)

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Asian Art, 2021 2021.139

Dutch trading companies – later amalgamated into the Dutch East India Company (VOC) – entered Java in 1602, expelling Portuguese traders out of the region and establishing Batavia (modern day Jakarta) as the VOC headquarters in 1619. While not interested in traditional, large-scale territorial colonisation, VOC became deeply involved in Javanese politics and enforced harsh trade restrictions, breaches out of which were used to justify massacres and forced relocation of local peoples. Batavia became the centre of the VOC's intra-Asia trade. While Dutch workers lived relatively separately from the local Indonesian population, they became characters to be satirised in traditional Javanese wayang klitik puppet theatre.

Javanese

Dutch officer, wayang klitik puppet

early 19th century Java, Indonesia
painted and gilt-wood, bamboo, leather, cotton (thread and string)

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Asian Art, 2021 2021.140

Victor Pillement engraver
French 1767–1814
François Denis NÉE engraver
French 1732–1817
Charles-Alexandre Lesueur after
French 1778–1846

View of the town and the Dutch fort, Kupang, Timor
Vue de la ville et du fort de Coupang, sur l'ile de Timor

plate 37 in the *Voyage de Découvertes aux Terres Australes (Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands) Atlas*. Arthus Bertrand, Paris, 1824, 2nd edition
1824 Paris, France
engraving and etching

Joe White Bequest, 2010

2010.96.38

Indian

A Dutchman

c. 1715–1720 Udaipur, Rajasthan, India
opaque watercolour and gold paint on paper

Felton Bequest, 1980 AS86-1980

England manufacturer
Joseph Windmills movement maker
English 1671–1737

Long-case clock

c. 1695 London, England
oak (*Quercus* sp.), walnut (*Juglans* sp.), glass, brass, gilt-bronze (ormolu), steel

Felton Bequest, 1953 1281-D4

Japanese

Clock

Edo period (1603–1867)
mottled brass case, coral bead on face, weights, carved wood stand

Felton Bequest, 1921 2348-D3

The movement of people and things around the world also precipitated the exchange of ideas, technology and knowledge systems. The spread of a universal system of timekeeping based on standardised, mechanical clocks was an important facilitator – as well as a lasting legacy – of global trade. Mechanical clocks were introduced to Japan by Jesuit missionaries in the sixteenth century, who used clocks as gifts to gain access to the ruling elite. After Christianity was prohibited in 1614 and missionaries expelled, local craftspeople continued to use and adapt this technology. This clock is an amalgamation of Western mechanical technology with the traditional Japanese zodiac timekeeping system. The clock face shows the twelve hours of Edo time and the twelve animals of the zodiac.

Chinese

Coastal map of China

Qing dynasty 1644–1912 (18th century – 19th century) China
ink and colour on paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

The handscroll begins with an inscription and then a map of the known world in the form of a circle with the North Pole at the top and Australia at the bottom. The coastal regions, inscribed with place names, begin from northern China with the Great Wall of China depicted, moving to southern China and ending with Taiwan. Extensive land surveying during the Qing dynasty contributed to maps such as this one, which were more accurate in their representation of the coastline and location of islands than the maps produced in the preceding Ming dynasty. The significant number of coastal maps produced during this period reflects the importance placed on the sea by ruling authorities.

Lukas Wegwerth
Germany born 1984

Crystallization 152
2019
porcelain, salt crystals

Purchased with funds donated by Esther Frenkiel OAM and David Frenkiel, 2020 2020.116

Lukas Wegwerth repurposes existing ceramic vessels by transforming them into hosts for the growth of salt crystals. Submerging the vessels in a chemical solution, cracks and chips are slowly colonised by crystal formations over time. Through this process Wegwerth references the fifteenth-century Japanese art of fixing broken pottery called Kintsugi or ‘golden repair’. For Wegwerth, restoring the ceramic vessels using the crystallisation process symbolises the interdependence of the human-made environment with the natural. Recognising that we are a part of, and not separate from nature, is central to charting a sustainable future.

Yinka Shonibare

England born 1962

A masked ball
Un ballo in maschera

2004

colour high-definition digital video, sound, 32 mins

Purchased with funds donated by Joan and Peter Clemenger AM, 2008 2008.25

Un ballo in maschera is the first film made by British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare, who works across a wide range of media to explore contemporary cultural identities and the legacies of European colonialism. Shonibare is best known for his use of the brightly coloured fabrics called Dutch wax prints. Commonly perceived as being typically 'African', the patterned fabrics were appropriated from traditional Javanese batik by Dutch colonisers in the nineteenth century, and exported to Africa from Europe during a period of widespread colonisation of the continent.

This film is based on the assassination of King Gustav III of Sweden at a masquerade ball in 1792 (both the king and his assassin are played by female performers), which was immortalised in the Verdi opera from which Shonibare has drawn his title.

'My aim with the film has been to question power in relation to race, gender, and history and to push the boundaries by finding new ways to interrupt the narrative moment in cinema and by reconsidering costume and its possibilities'
– Yinka Shonibare, 2005