

The Housing of Technology in Art

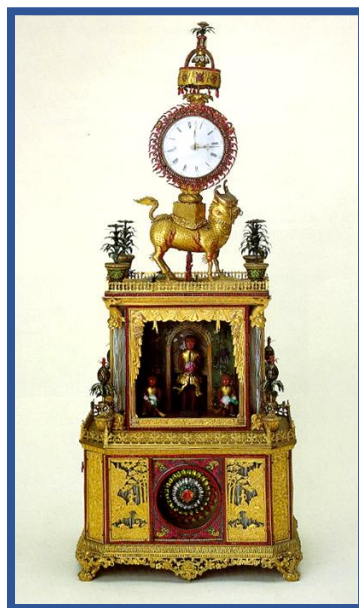
23 March 2018

University of Copenhagen



The workshop aims to explore the intersections and tensions between art and technology in the early modern era. It aims to bring together papers that nuance the standard narrative about material culture and adaptive technology to reassess connectedness. The workshop seeks to advance and develop the interdisciplinary scholarship that breaks down the boundaries that separate the sciences and the arts, by demonstrating that early modern transcultural techne opened up new frontiers of practice for both realms of knowledge.

The increased opportunities for travel and the circulation of aesthetic principles from across the globe impacted on early modern conceptualizations of the connections between technology and artistry. Moreover, current trends that seek to reassess connectedness in the early modern world in light of material culture necessitate an increased focus on the processes and rituals by which techno-aesthetic ideas circulated in early modern global trade.



Preliminary Programme

22 March 2018

15.00 - 16.00 – Tour of the National Museum of Denmark's unique collection of lacquerware.

Special presentation on the technology and materials used to create lacquerware and its imitations in the early modern period by Johanne Bornemann Mogensen and Martin Mortensen, National Museum of Denmark.

16.00- 17.00 – Wine reception at National Museum of Denmark

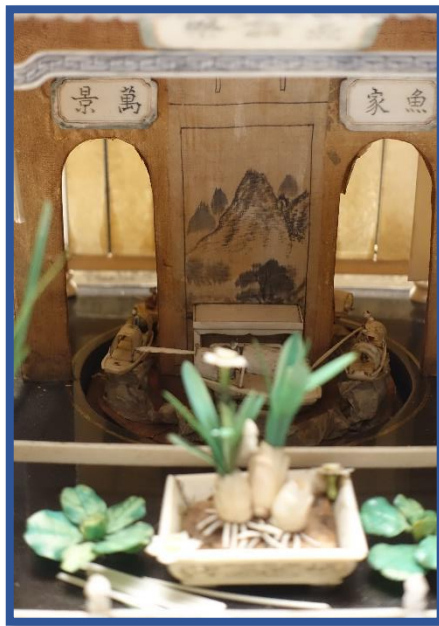


23 March 2018

09.00-09.15 - Registration

09.15-09.45 – Introduction

09.45-11.15 - Session: Early Modern Exchange Between China and Europe
Discussant: Sven Dupré, Utrecht University/ University of Amsterdam



1. Catherine Pagani, University of Alabama

Art and Technology Entwined: Elaborate Clockwork at the Chinese Court

The elaborate clocks made for the Chinese market in the eighteenth century are emblematic of the close connectedness of “East” and “West” and can tell much about how ideas circulated in the era of modern global trade. Made in a style known as chinoiserie – itself a mixture of European and Chinese aesthetics – these clocks’ whimsical and imaginative “Chinese” exteriors belied the seriousness of the European technology housed within.

The intersection of art and technology that characterize these “self-sounding bells” (so named for their ability to chime the hours on their own) gave them an appeal unlike any other European-styled objects the Chinese had encountered. These clocks, with clever automata that moved to the accompaniment of music, were based on a fundamental technology that had no direct precedent in China. Initially limited to court consumption, elaborate clocks soon were in demand not only by provincial officials wishing to have clocks to present as tribute to the emperor and but also by elites who used clocks as means of emulating court culture. Clock-making centers emerged in a number of

urban centers. It may be argued that it was owing to the intriguing packaging that this fundamental machine was able to penetrate the empire so quickly.

This paper focuses on elaborate clockwork to study Sino-European encounters and the cross-cultural transmission of ideas in the eighteenth century. Its interdisciplinary approach draws on primary textual sources that include writings by the Jesuits stationed at the palace, contemporary Chinese accounts, and imperial court documents, as well as the clocks themselves to lend insights into the understanding of cross-cultural interactions beyond what texts or objects alone can provide.

2. Josefine Baark, University of Copenhagen

Models of Canton Life: Reassessing Mercantile Connections Through Material Culture

This paper discusses the connections between merchant communities in Copenhagen and Canton created through the exchange of miniature portraits, houses and boats. These miniature models contain intricate, small-scale mechanical interiors that set them hammering their miniature hands up and down on a drum or steering their junk down the centre of a table. Meanwhile, the painted clay portrait models produced by 'face-makers' in Canton merely contain a system of weights attached to strings that allow them to nod along in endless agreement with their beholders. Both the miniature scenic models and the moving clay portraits were produced in Canton by local artisans and collected by European merchants and royalty. Their materials (ivory, lacquer, enamel, silk, porcelain or clay) point to a crafts workshop well versed in an astounding range of techniques. The production of clay portrait figures for European supercargoes has elicited a great deal of research, probably because it has been comparatively easy to establish their identities and roles in the commercial hierarchy of Canton. This paper will challenge and expand this cross-culturally informative, but ultimately euro-centric framework, by adding new research on the technology behind the exchange of Chinese models depicting elite life-styles.

3. Ricarda Brosch, Museum of Asian Art, Berlin

Divisible Characters – Müller's Chinese Typewriter

As early as 1670, the Prussian Sinologist Andreas Müller set about building his 'Typographia Sinica', a pseudo-typewriter with 3,287 moveable wooden types combining full-form characters and broken up component parts, i.e. divisible type. While seemingly a technological triumph - deconstructing the Chinese language into fundamental elements - it was never adopted in China. This paper seeks to explore Müller's attempts to subsume the immensity of the Chinese language under Western-alphabetic typography. I will discuss the historical backgrounds as well as the relative merits of the deconstructive break-up of Chinese characters governed by a Western *esprit d'analyse* against the traditional aesthetics of calligraphy and stroke order.

11.15-11.30 - Coffee

11.30-12.30 - Roundtable on Methodology

- **Chair: Jacob Wamberg, University of Aarhus**

12.30-13.30 – Lunch

13.30-15.00 - Session: The Role of Decorative Technology

Discussant: Jacob Wamberg, University of Aarhus



1. Markus Rath, University of Basel

Travels and Transgressions of the Fashion Mannequin

This paper explores the history and key characteristics of fashion mannequins from the 16th to the 19th century. The articulated figures, often highly developed dolls made of wood and other materials, have been travelling – even in times of war – to the courts throughout Europe to distribute the actual style. The broader view on the practical development, improvement and use of fashion models shows a stunning range of different technical and aesthetical applications and adoptions of these artificial models. Although different shapes and specificities and can be differentiated, the fashion mannequins nevertheless share common qualities, oscillating between human and artificial, static and moved, fixed and flexible.

2. Yijun Wang, Columbia University

Pewter, Silver, and the Maritime Trade

This paper examines the innovations in pewter crafting technology in workshops in Guangdong from 1700s to 1860s. Pewter (xi 錫), an alloy of tin, lead, and copper, was used to produce everyday objects in China. In the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), western traders brought Southeast Asia tin to China and the extensive material exchange inspired pewter artisans to create new designs and fashion. How did

Chinese pewter artisans learned to manipulate imported materials, how did export porcelain and silver influenced domestic pewter technology and taste, and how did pewter artisan appropriate western styles and silver techniques in pewter production?

3. Francesca Bray, University of Edinburgh (TBC)

15.00-15.15 - Coffee

15.15-16.45 - Session: Collection and Display

Discussant: Ester Fihl, University of Copenhagen or Mikkel Bille, Roskilde University



1. Rory McEvoy, Royal Observatory, Greenwich

Decoding Harrison: proof of concept by sculptural horology

This presentation provides an overview of a forty-year-long collaborative research project into the lesser-known pendulum clock-making endeavours of John Harrison, who is better known for his success in making the first practical marine timekeeper. The project culminated in successful trials, at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, of a sculptural mechanical clock that incorporated Harrison's unique theoretical approach to clock-making, as was understood by the researchers. Harrison published a book in his last years that ostensibly described his method of making a precision pendulum clock. However, this book is not an easy read and did not help to broadcast his ideas; instead, it helped to bury them in obscurity. One contemporary reviewer wrote that *every page of this performance bears marks of incoherence and*

absurdity, little short of insanity ... excused only by the debility of superannuated dotage. In the absence of an explicit reference, the theory was rebuilt from scattered manuscript references and those hidden in his last publication before being put into practice and publically trialled.

2. Jacob Thorek Jensen, Danish Museum of Science & Technology

New approaches to museum practice: collective curating processes based on interdisciplinarity and multivocality

The Danish Museum of Science & Technology is in a process of redefining its role and potential in the society. This includes rethinking of exhibitions and activities, developing the educational role of the museum and establishing learning partnerships with new stakeholders. This presentation focuses on how we can develop new approaches to museum practice based on collective curating processes.

In October 2017, the Danish Museum of Science & Technology opened its biggest exhibition project in the last 20 years. The exhibition 'Smartphonemania' investigates what the modern smartphone does to our way of life and how it effects how we communicate with each other. We use the museum collection to give perspectives on how communication technologies previously have changed the way we communicate, but everything is linked to present issues and human behaviour. The paper will address how we can develop museum practice in science museums, which are based on exhibitions, research and collection, which invites the citizens to share their knowledge and experiences. This is a practice with people at the core of the museum work and where citizens are invited to co-produce the knowledge that are presented in exhibitions. That means developing exhibitions based on contemporary issues and seeing the exhibition as a process instead of as a product. That's a dynamic transformative exhibition raising questions instead of giving answers and making room for dialogue and discussions.

1. Luca Molà, European University Institute/ University of Warwick (Abstract TBA)

16.45-18.00 - Roundtable on Curatorial Approaches

- Chair: Esther Fihl, University of Copenhagen

19.00 – Dinner

