Alfred and Isabel Bader Lecture on European Art 2025

With Dr Stephanie Porras *The Dutch in the Americas*
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TRANSCRIPT

Dr Suzanne van de Meerendonk: Hello, everyone. Welcome to today's program, The Isabel and Alfred Bader Lecture in European Art, which is given this year by Dr. Stephanie Porras. My name is Susanne van de Meerendonk and I am the Bader Curator of European Art at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre here at Queen's University. And before we begin this conversation tonight, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge that Queen's University is situated on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Huron-Wendat. There are many indigenous people from these nations as well as others from across Turtle Island who continue to live on and in relation to this land and whom I would like to recognize for their role as stewards and as our ultimate hosts while we gather here this evening. Kingston or Cataraqui belongs to territories falling under the dish with one spoon wampum, which urges us to peaceably share resources. It is referred to in Treaty 57 as land acquired in the 1783 Crawford Purchase, which is only one episode in a longer colonial history that both predates that unrecorded event and also extends into our present moment. As a Dutch citizen and as a caretaker of a large collection of Netherlandish art, I want to acknowledge the long history of Dutch settler colonialism on Turtle Island and beyond, which we will also hear much more about this evening. And as part of this history, it should also be recalled that Dutch settlers concluded a treaty with Haudenosaunee representatives known as the Two Row Wampum in 1613, which meant to agree on basic principles of equality and friendship between our peoples and also pertains to these lands. While seemingly reflecting a desire to enact a relation of reciprocal respect, Europeans disregard of their responsibilities under this treaty are recorded throughout history. And as we continue our work as stewards of culture in our own ways, this lecture tonight invites us to think about the manifold ways in which early modern cultures across the Atlantic came into contact and mutually transformed each other in ways that are still felt and relevant today. And now it is my pleasure to introduce the person we're all joining to hear speak tonight, of course, Dr. Stephanie Porras. Stephanie Porras is professor of art history and

chair of the Newcomb Art Department at Tulane University in New Orleans. She specializes in the visual and material cultures of Northern Europe, the Spanish world, and the Dutch Atlantic from the 15th to the 17th centuries. She's also the outgoings reviews editor for the Art Bulletin and serves on the editorial board of the Netherlandish yearbook for the history of art, which is also known as the Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek. Her latest book, the one I just referred to, The First Viral Images: Maerten de Vos, Antwerp Prints, and the Early Modern Globe, was published last year in 2023 with Penn State University Press. She's also the author of Pieter Bruegel's Historical Imagination and the Art of the Northern Renaissance: Courts, Commerce, and Devotion. So please join me in welcoming Dr. Stephanie Porras.

Dr Stephanie Porras: Thank you so much, Susanne, and for all the people that she thanked, to thank them again, both here at the Isabel and at the Agnes. I must also thank my collaborator, Dr. Aaron Hyman, who is professor of art history at the Universitat Basel. Tonight's talk draws on the introduction that we co-wrote of -- to a forthcoming volume on this very topic of the Dutch Americas that's coming out next year in the Netherlandish yearbook for the history of art. And I want to start tonight's talk with an image of -- oh, there's my nice slide, you can admire my graphic design for a second. With an image of Amsterdam from 1611 when the printmaker and publisher, Claes Jansz. Visscher, produced this lavish broadsheet to celebrate the wealth and status of the city. Now sitting enthroned at the centre of the broadsheet is the maid of Amsterdam who balances the city's coat of arms on her lap and she's flanked on either side by a row of approaching figures. On the right, there's a procession bearing domestically sourced products, so fish and game, eggs, milk, cheese, all harvested from the land and the sea of the newly formed Dutch Republic. But to the left of the maid of Amsterdam, there's a line of figures from further afield, indeed from the very furthest corners of the early modern globe. Closest to the maid is the East -- "East Indian", who brings the riches of Asia listed in the text below as "pepper, cloves, pearls, precious stones, abundant porcelains, nutmeg, birds of paradise, silk, masks." Asia's preeminence in this allegorical scene makes good sense. The Dutch East India Company or the VOC had been founded not even a decade before Visscher's print was published, yet already the goods and wealth engendered by the Asia trade had transformed Dutch life as well as its material and visual culture. Yet, this is not the only representative of overseas trade in Visscher's print. Next to Asia, there is the figure of the "West Indian", who strides forward holding a spear and a heavy log of Brazilwood, atop which is perched a quetzal, a green-blue bird of the forests of the Yucatan and highland Guatemala.

His feathered headdress and skirt mark him as a stereotyped representation of the Americas, an allegorical type made familiar in the century since Europe's first contact with the Americas. Now, Visscher's textual legend below this image tells of the treasures that this figure has in tow. "The West Indians bring salt, sugar, pearls, as well as costly precious stones, gold, silver, Brazilwood, tobacco, parrots, and many kinds of feathers." Now, to pictorially twin the East and the West Indies in 1611, as Visscher does here, was a bold,

proleptic statement. For the West India Company would only be founded a decade after this print was published in 1621, when the 12 years' truce with Spain expired. Although the Dutch had given up territorial ambitions in the Americas as part of this conditional peace, Visscher, already in 1611, conceived of Dutch involvement in Asia and the Americas as flip sides of the same coin, a key part of Amsterdam's global retinue. Tonight, I want to talk about the Dutch role in the Americas embodied in Visscher's West Indian figure and sketching out the Dutch mercantile and colonial experience in the Americas via the transatlantic traffic in raw materials, refined artistic products, and people, both willing settlers and enslaved labourers. I want to consider how the Dutch experience in the Americas impacted visual and material culture, both in the Netherlands and in its colonial holdings across the Atlantic. While Visscher's print so evocatively treats the East and West Indies as a pair and gives relatively equal visual and descriptive weight to the goods and commodities generated from each of these territorial spheres, previous art historical scholarship has definitely privileged Asia over the Americas.

Indeed, art historians' interest in the global dimensions of this so-called Dutch Golden Age, that is, the period from the establishment of the -- from the period of the establishment of the Dutch Republic to the French invasion of the collapse in 1672, has almost invariably centred connections with the East and the ways in which the Dutch East India Company or the VOC trade produced a flood of goods that saturated Dutch markets and households and thereby changed the economic and visual dimensions of life in the Low Countries. Now, landmark exhibitions have put these goods on literal display and scholars now routinely treat the axis between the Netherlands and Asia as a critical facet of Dutch 17th century visual culture in teaching and publications and museum exhibitions. We learn about the taste for the Kraak porcelain, for silk, for spices, and lacquerware. Amsterdam is discussed alongside VOC factories in the Indian subcontinent or on the island of Deshima in Japan or in the Dutch mercantile capital of Batavia, now Jakarta. But where exactly were the Dutch Americas? Around 1630, the Amsterdam-based cartographer and publisher, Willem Blaeu, produced a so-called West Indische Pascaert. This map usefully circumscribes and describes the geographies of the Americas from a particularly Dutch perspective, focussing on the coasts of a highly specific subselection of geographies. The eastern coast of North America, extending far inland, the Caribbean islands, and excuse, this is a fun one because it's oriented, this is the north coast of Brazil, right?

So it's not how we think of this region, but it's fun. The north coastlines of South America, so I'm showing you a scene of Brazil, and the west coast of Africa. These are the territories critical to the Dutch Americas. New Netherland was the east coast of United -- what is now the United States and Canada, was the first space in which the Dutch were able to establish an American territorial foothold. Early on, the Dutch also set their eyes on Brazil, then controlled by Portugal to fulfil a global lust for sugar. This territory would almost as quickly be relinquished as it was gained, but the memory of its possession would fuel Dutch thinking about what it meant to control and profit from American territory for decades or

even longer. Now the Caribbean, including the coastal regions of Suriname and Guyana, alternatively, holds the last dominions that the Dutch would hold onto and, in some cases, still hold onto. A maritime expanse contested by world powers, most importantly the Spanish, the French, and the English, various indigenous groups and pirates alike, the Caribbean was a stage for imperial strife, but it was also where the Dutch established their most enduring plantation economies dependant on the African slave trade. The last of our geographic zones, West Africa, may at first be surprising in a talk about the Americas, but to put it simply, there could be no Dutch Americas without the Dutch presence in West Africa. The WIC campaign of capturing Portuguese forts alongside the so-called Gold Coast enabled the Dutch to both ally themselves with local African rulers and to capitalize on the trafficking of enslaved people of African origin. These transatlantic geographies were also connected by the particular historical actors that traversed them.

Johan Maurits, the governor of Dutch Brazil, launched military campaigns to capture Fort Elmina, in today's Ghana, in 1637. In 1642-'43, Maurits received diplomatic missions from the African courts of Daniel de Silva, the Count of Songo, and King Garcia II of Congo at his residence in Mauritsstad, which is now Recife in Brazil. But enslaved people of African descent were not only found in Dutch Brazil. Enslaved Africans were brought to New Netherland as early as 1628, while Curacao would become a key centre for the trade later in the 17th and 18th centuries. The WIC held a Dutch monopoly on the traffic in enslaved African persons, but the West African coast was also a meeting point, key to both the West India Company and the East India Company's mercantile success, and the only point at which the two companies' shipping routes overlapped significantly. Blaeu's map, then, usefully visualizes the space of the African coast as critical to the ambitions of the Dutch Americas. Following the model of the map then, tonight, I'll pay close attention to the integral role of Africa in the Americas while also highlighting the attenuated distances, geographic, temporal, conceptual that configure that relationship. The way in which Blaeu's Paskaert centres the ocean seems to presage the idea of a "Dutch Atlantic" as first described in 1999 by the historians, Piet Emmer and Wim Klooster. With its insistence upon coastlines, island territories, and the watery routes between them, the map powerfully visualizes Donna Merrick's notion of a Dutch empire constructed along shore. While the possession and exploitation of land was critical to the Dutch enterprise in the Americas, these territories nevertheless comprised relatively narrow bands bordering the Atlantic and the Caribbean.

Such a long shore model of colonial possession stands in stark contrast to the territorial claims of more familiar imperial superpowers of the early Americas, the Spanish and Portuguese, and later the French and the English, who coveted and controlled immense geographic territory. Now, even at their most land oriented, in regions where colonial extraction entailed the establishment of plantation settlement and farming, the Dutch tended to be anchored along coasts, rivers, and other major waterways. An 18th century map of Suriname produced by Alexander de Lavaux visualizes something of this orientation

to the American landscape. Heightened by the hand colouring of this particular printed impression, lush forests of green give way to geometrically precise rectangular plots along the undulating Suriname and Commewijne rivers carved from an overgrown landscape, an abstract fantasy of wilderness tamed through perfect geometric partitioning. But seen from above, these slim units end up projecting less colonial authority than a lingering anxiety about what the vast unmapped interior of this territory. Lavaux's map is explicit about its dangerous dynamics. This map was in fact produced in response to numerous maroon uprisings, that is, self-emancipated, formerly enslaved African and Afro-Indigenous communities in Suriname that broke free of their plantations and established alternative villages. These settlements are marked on the map as that of maroons and "rebel slaves", so you can see this here, as well as encampments of so-called free Indians. In a landscape so difficult to traverse and so hospitable to these kinds of lurking surprises to Dutch colonial settlers, it seemingly was best to keep to the shore. In this, the map perhaps registers something of this Dutch anxiety about colonial possession and of existing as such a vulnerable minority in expansive American spaces. These two maps, I suggest, give us a sense of the Dutch Americas as in a long shore empire. And as I hope to sketch out tonight, the very question of defining the Dutch Americas asks art historians to take seriously the idea that there are essential things to learn about Dutch art by focalizing attention on American spaces. And that critical aspects of "American visual culture" are Dutch-derived and that Dutch art of the vaunted 17th century and beyond could not have looked as it does without the contributions, material, artistic, and conceptual of people and things that either originated in or circulated through North America, South America, and the Caribbean.

Now the publication of de Lavaux's 1737 map reminds us that the Dutch involvement in the Americas was not limited to the so-called golden age of the 17th century. The Dutch occupation of the Americas was characterized and punctuated by a series of false starts and stops, a recursive temporality intensely perceived by period actors that in itself became a constitutive theme of artistic production. Consider, for instance, Frans Post's 1662 View of Olinda. Now this is a picture very typical of Post's oeuvre, offering a sweeping, rather generic Brazilian landscape that is particularized through the recognizable facade of the Cathedral of Olinda, with the detailed inclusion of flora and fauna in the background that Post ostensibly studied from life while he was in Brazil when it was occupied by the Dutch. A pineapple, a frog, an armadillo, these are tropical novelties from a 17th century perspective, giving us an impression that we're staring over the artist's shoulders as he's composing the scene from life.

This panel, however, was painted more than 20 years after Post returned from the Americas to the Netherlands and nearly a decade after the Portuguese rule in Brazil had been reinstated, following that brief period of Dutch control. Despite this geopolitical reality, Post would never stop producing such pictures of the South American landscape and he was not alone in clinging to a colonial space that had been forfeited. Although the Brazilian colony only lasted a few decades, this nostalgic representation of Dutch Brazil took

place alongside a continued publication of books and maps about the region, publications that continued -- contributed to the still emergent project of Dutch nation building, long after these American territories had been ceded. The complicated retrospective and recursive temporalities of the Dutch perspective on the Americas, as much as the lived experience of the region, is allegorized in Post's picture, where Orlinda's cathedral seems to erode before our eyes. The crumbling masonry is being brought down by dense vegetation. But inspecting more closely, we might notice that there are two friars who are welcoming people of African or mixed-race descent into the church's interior. So this is not a vision of Dutch inhabitation but one of subsequent possession by Portuguese forces and their Catholic ministers. The Dutch may have left the Catholic building to decay, but it has been reoccupied here. Post's painting allegorizes the very idea of Dutch Brazil, which has itself been turned into a ruin, a mere historical memory by the time of this painting's creation. Another example from Recife, once called Mauritsstad, the capital of Dutch Brazil, gives us a sense of the vibrancy of these colonial residues.

Now, the Dutch brought distinctive Delft tiles with them everywhere in the Americas, both to Brazil and to other regions once under Netherlandish control. And I'm showing you some tiles from various American sites, North American sites, featuring vases of flowers, frolicking animals, horse and rider combinations, and even windmills. These blue and white tiles adorn the walls of Dutch merchant houses. But once Recife was returned to the Portuguese, these tiles from the merchant houses of Mauritsstad were slowly gathered up and installed in the interior of the Franciscan Convento de Santo Antonio at some point in the 18th century. And you can see they're grouped by subject, so they have put them in panels of all the horse and rider scenes or all the little animal scenes grouped together. Much more elaborate religious scenes composed of imported blue and white tiles of Portuguese manufacture azulejos were installed around the same time at the ground -- on the ground floor of the convent. So the -- or the monastery. The building's two stories of opposing architectural decoration reflect and reenact the layers of the city's colonial history from Portuguese to Dutch and back again. These are the recursive and protracted material histories that emerge from the start-stop-backward-forward endeavors of the Dutch in the Americas. In the initial years after the WIC's founding, it seemed better to outmanoeuvre the Spanish and Dutch Portuguese fleets -- Spanish and Portuguese fleets on the high seas as opposed to going toe to toe with imperial -- European imperial opponents on land. The short-lived capture of San Salvador in 1624 tempered Dutch expectations. It was taken briefly by the Dutch and then almost as quickly lost within a few weeks.

In its early years then, the WIC undertook a campaign of privateering, so state-sponsored piracy, aimed in equal parts at disrupting Spanish and Portuguese trade routes and gleaning rich instantaneous rewards without the inconvenience of having to maintain a colonial settlement. The most convincing of these early company victories was, without doubt, Piet Heyn's capture of the so-called Silverfleet, the Spanish galleon fleet bearing American silver taken by Dutch ships off the shores of Cuba in 1628, which set the stage for, and directly

financed, the Dutch takeover of northeast Brazil in 1630. Now, meanwhile, established between 1624 and 1625, the New Netherland was the first Dutch colonial territory across the Atlantic. These lands would eventually be ceded to the English in 1667 and the Dutch Republic infamously agreed to this concession in return for Spices, a small, nutmeg-rich island in the Banda Sea, but they were also offered control of territories in South America, that is present-day Suriname and Guyana, that would become critical for the control of the Caribbean. The Dutch would regain New Netherland in 1673, only to immediately hand it back to the English the following year following the Treaty of Westminster, which ends officially New Netherland. In that same year, in 1674, the WIC declares bankruptcy, but the company was immediately reconstituted as a new company with an updated charger. Now, this brief, kind of confusing history of territorial occupation and shifting military strategies is meant to illustrate a key point. In contrast to other European colonial and imperial powers, the Dutch Republic's involvement in the Atlantic and the Caribbean trade relied on constantly shifting territorial claims that complicate a linear temporal narrative of historical events. In attempting to study and describe the Dutch Americas then, the issue of overlapping and refracted geographic relationships must also contend with discontinuous timelines and histories.

This is not just a conceptual issue, but also one that pushes at much more pragmatic limits. The longue duree of Dutch commercial and colonial interests in the Americas, coupled with these geopolitical shifts, means the corpus of objects related to the Dutch Americas often falls outside the temporalities and materials most familiar to historians of early modern Dutch art, like myself, whose training and focus tends to lie in the 17th century or earlier. Yet, working across temporalities is essential both to adequately represent the cultural heritage of the Dutch Americas and to reassess objects seen as more canonical within art history. We might begin, for instance, with this carved calabash, representative of a large corpus of objects made in Suriname that mostly survived from the 19th and early 20th century, with its incised bands of patterning, which give way to a scene of vegetation and heavenly stars and an angel with a trumpet, that are all offset through the application of white kaolin clay. In the combination of its decorative motifs and materials, the carved calabash reflects a local practice that emerged at the intersection of African and indigenous residents of Dutch-controlled Suriname. Now, 17th and 18th century objects made by these communities rarely survive, and there's the necessity then of working with objects like this one that were created much later in the 19th and the 20th centuries in order to think about how to recover and foreground indigenous and African artistic agency within the spaces of the Dutch Americas. And temporal backcasting of this type, while widely practised in fields like anthropology, is somewhat uncomfortable for scholars who are with more strictly historicist inclinations, but at the same time, so too are the colonialist practices of 17th and 18th-century collectors that seemingly saw little need to collect or document such materials.

Centring these later objects allows us to more clearly recognize earlier artistic impacts of African and indigenous communities in the Dutch Americas. So this kind of gourd vessel was pictured, for instance, by the Dutch painter, Dirk Valkenburg, who had been employed by Jonas Witsen, city secretary of Amsterdam, to document life on Witsen's Suriname plantation in the early 18th century. In the foreground of his painting of a gathering of enslaved people on Witsen's plantation, Valkenburg has laid two calabashes, one uncarved and oiled, and the other cut across its base to serve as a drinking vessel next to the feet of the lone woman with a child who stares out at us at the picture from the lower right. Now this woman sits on a long wooden drum pointing to another category of Afro-indigenous made thing that has come down to us from colonial spaces. Two men straddle such instruments in the middle ground, as well, tapping upon their stretched hides. And it was on this animal skin of the drum that Valkenburg chose to sign his name, inscribing the hide with a monogram akin to a brand. Now that was a bold choice. The painter defined his own authorship and creative act via, or at least in relation, to those of the enslaved diasporic community that he pictures here. And he restages that sort of -- that type of Dutch Afro-indigenous twinning with the gourds as well. Just to the left of the two gourds in the foreground, one finds a long-handled white clay pipe, perhaps the most prototypically Dutch object of the 17th century found in great quantities wherever the Dutch settled. And I'm showing you pictures from -- of these pipes that are in Recife, as well as sites -- archaeological sites from Manhattan.

Now, Valkenburg was not the only artist to define Dutch authorship via such kinds of juxtapositions. In Post's 1662 View of Olinda, discussed earlier, the painter pointedly figured his signature as an inscription carved into a still-growing gourd above the tortoise in the left foreground. And Post deployed this device of an incised gourd throughout his career. I'm showing you another one on the right. Now, Valkenburg likely knew Post's pictures, as well as those of his fellow painter of Dutch Brazil, Albert Eckhout. And he may have even turned to these works in preparing for his own "documentary voyage" across the Atlantic. But in the end, both artists notably ended up responding to local American material practices, placing the inscriptions of Post and Valkenburg back in dialogue with a type of ornamentation proper to the Americas, emerging from both indigenous and diasporic African communities, reveals a longue duree of thinking about mark-making that moved recursively across the Atlantic in the 17th and 18th centuries. Now, we might find this kind of history pushed back even further into the Dutch experience in the Americas. On the 10th of July, 1657, a group of Lenape signed a deed ceding part of what would come to be known as Staten Island, to them, [inaudible], to Lubbertus van Dincklage, an attorney of Henrick van der Capelle. And on the signatory page, in reverse direction to the text, the notary sketched an impression of the scene of the signing of this document, picturing three native men with fantastically formed heads or headdresses and bearing staffs or spears who stand next to a comically sort of caricature of a Dutchman, his weapon traded for an exaggeratedly long-stemmed smoking pipe.

Above or below this, depending on your orientation here, the signatures themselves also bear the traces of transatlantic exchange, but here, something of a semiotic level. The 20 Lenape signatories have not so much added their names as agreed to -- with the symbols that represent them. The notary has glossed each one of them so that the names of each individual is rendered both in graphic mark and in alphabetic script that has been used to phonetically transpose their names. Now, such symbolic marks for these men have very few pre-Dutch contact corollary practices in the Lenape tradition. But they emerged in the matter of a Dutch merchant mark to both render and legally authenticate identity within the legal formulae and structures that had been imported across the Atlantic. And I'm talking about these marks here. And then these are the phonetic inscriptions of the individual's names with their mark. So if one is willing to think and work in this kind of discontiguous geographic and temporal frames, these are the kinds of refracted histories of the Dutch Americas that could be productively built out. The colonial logic of brands and merchant marks might, at first glance, have little to do with calabash carving and artist signatures. But placing them together, we see a rich tapestry of colonial mark-making that sutured Netherlandish, indigenous, and diasporic African identities and were the very means by which that identity was routinely communicated to one another. The legacies of the Dutch Americas necessitate thinking forward as much as backwards. Dutch presence in American spaces, particularly the Caribbean, Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao, Sint Maarten, Sint Eustatius, Saba, Guyana, Suriname, was and still is enduring. Suriname only gained independence in 1975. And it was as late as 2010 that Curacao became an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

That is, centuries of colonial rule are not just a matter of historical recovery but are still potently present in the Americas. If plantations or land houses in such regions are no longer operative, converted instead into hotels and museums, contemporary artists have also tried to reclaim and activate these spaces in order to wrangle with ongoing legacies of Dutch colonial extraction, indigenous dispossession, and the exploitation of enslaved labour. Within the Netherlands, too, museums have commissioned curators and artists to work towards integrating histories of enslavement and colonial exploitation into the public national consciousness. Essential difficulty in accounting for the historical agency and subjecthood of enslaved and indigenous peoples impacted their lives transformed by Dutch colonialism has been in navigating the many lacunae of material and textual archives, which reflect practices of record-keeping and collecting that deliberately obfuscated or excluded those perspectives. Studying the Dutch Americas then, we must compensate for this kind of paucity of viewpoints from certain kinds of historical actors.

Now, the relatively simple form of a silver beaker made for a merchant in the Hudson River Valley belies the incredibly complex entanglements of identities that were constructed around and through its creation. The cup fortresses a reckoning with how we define and use a term like Dutchness in the Americas. Now, passed down for generation in the Sanders, which was shortened from Sandersen in Dutch family before being donated to the

Yale University Art Gallery, the beaker is inscribed with the name of its first owner, Robert Sandersen, in the year 1685, who received the cup as a gift for acting as a translator in negotiating the purchase of lands outside of Schenectady, present-day upstate New York, from Iroquois -- from its Iroquois inhabitants. The maker's mark identifies the beaker's maker as Cornelius van der Burgh, a smith active in the same area at the end of the 17th century. From its earliest publication, the beaker has been heralded as "an impressive piece of early American silver", and its maker as "the earliest native New York silversmith thus far recorded." These framings of the beaker and its maker have come to define the object's reception and historiography, as the cup is invariably positioned as a point of origin for American colonial silver. Perhaps predictably, it's not featured in any text devoted to Dutch art of the 17th century. Its date, 1685, places the object within a distinct historical mythological frame. After all, the Dutch had finally and completely ceded New Netherland to the British about a decade before this cup was made. The beaker is thus firmly positioned in a teleology in which British-occupied lands would eventually yield to a new nation, that is, the United States. In several ways, however, the beaker speaks of the enduring influence of Dutch traditions rather than indicating a rupture or a new beginning. The beaker's form, for instance, draws directly from Dutch presidents, its tall, sloping, slightly flared sides are most readily comparable to Dutch ecclesiastic examples. The most direct precedents [inaudible] are these two silver beakers, famously produced, the one on the left for -- was imported by the first Dutch-reformed church of Albany, once called Beverwijk or Beavertown, super fun, was made in the Netherlands. And the other was fabricated in Albany to match it. While the silversmith, van der Burgh, was indeed born on American soil, he was of himself of Dutch-German heritage and worked in a community of silversmiths established decades earlier and dominated by Dutch descendant masters, one who still regularly welcomes new immigrants from the Netherlands to settle in these communities.

All of these Dutch, rather than Anglo-American, facets of the beaker's character are reinforced by a decorative program. The incised animals that ring its form were carefully copied from a series of engravings designed by Adriaen van de Venne to accompany a collection of aphorisms and emblems by the Dutch poet, Jacob Cats. First published in 1618, these engravings would be republished several times and Cats was one of the Dutch Republic's chief literary figures and cultural commentators in the 17th century. The ease in which the Sandersen beaker has nevertheless been cast as part of an early American, rather than late Dutch colonial legacy, speaks to the general lack of interest that scholars of Netherlandish art have shown vis-a-vis the territories and traditions on the other side of the Atlantic. Now, surveys of early North American furniture and silver may reference Dutch forms or makers, and they might also note the use of American woods, for example, in Dutch-style furniture, but these Dutch-American forms are rarely considered as part of a broader or kind of unified phenomenon. And this flies in the face of our historical reality, as it was in North America that the Dutch themselves mounted perhaps the most fervent campaign to implant a sense of Dutchness outside of the Dutch Republic. There, some of

the largest tracts of American territory were settled by the Dutch in a system of patronships, a quasi-feudal model designed to actively encourage settler colonialism. Early depictions of New Amsterdam feature -- ooh, sorry, I'm [inaudible], feature windmills, church spires, and stepped gables, actively selling this colonial space as a direct extension of life in the Netherlands. And more than anywhere else, Dutch household goods, from tiles to furniture and painting collections, were both sent with those would-be colonists and/or imported later for their comfort.

The Sandersen beaker reminds us of how seldom Dutchness has been pulled out to explain or undergird North American identity. While Anglo, French, and Spanish colonial heritage regularly figure in the popular imagination, the Dutch role is much less well-known, despite the fact that the only US president to not speak English as his first name, Martin Van Buren from Kinderhook, New York, and no less than American icon than Sojourner Truth, both spoke Dutch as their first language. And so many objects, like the speaker, speak this -- of this Dutch influence on early American material culture. Now, at the same time, it's critical to underscore that Dutch identity in the Americas was far from homogeneous, such that reclaiming Dutch contributions in these spheres also means centring groups and histories that at first glance might not read as Netherlandish. The earliest histories of New Netherland illustrate these slippages and instabilities. It was the English captain, Henry Hudson, after all, who was first hired by the VOC, that is the Dutch East India Company, to find the fabled Northwest Passage, and who sailed up the North American river that now bears his name. A few years later, in 1613, Juan Rodriguez, an Afro-Portuguese man from Santo Domingo employed by the Dutch as a translator, decided to leave his post on the Dutch ship, Jonge Tobias, and he arguably became the first non-indigenous resident of the island of Manhattan, where he would eventually serve as a translator when the Dutch returned to the region. Now, neither Hudson nor Rodriguez was Dutch by birth or by citizenship, but each played a key role in establishing the Dutch foothold in the Americas. The Dutch approach to colonialism, driven by state-backed trading companies, was somewhat different than the English or the Spanish imperial projects, foregrounding trade as opposed to large-scale land grabs with accompanying projects of religious conversion and enforced cultural hegemony.

The West India Company eagerly employed French Huguenots, Germans, Swedes and Englishmen as both sailors and merchants. Dutchness then was also quite a fluid category and be quite difficult to recover and describe. It's useful to consider the Dutch in the Americas as an expansive and relational category. As in the case of the Yale Beaker, Dutchness might at first read as English. And Dutch history is also undergirded by indigenous and African diasporic identities as well. Remember this is a cup given in thanks for serving as a translator with indigenous peoples. Now, these communities left traces at the very heart of a canonically Dutch visual tradition. We might turn to, for instance, the wide-brimmed felt hats that typified Dutch middle-class identity and feature in some of the most enduring portraits produced in 17th century Holland. The ready supply of beaver

pelts, whose furs were pelted into the sheets that made these hats, was the very reason the Dutch coveted and controlled New Netherlands as long as they did. Now, freshly captured beaver pelts were less desirable than those furs that could be procured directly from indigenous communities, ones that had been worn on the body for at least a season, if not more. The heat, sweat, and friction of the body caused those pelts to shed coarse hairs, leaving behind only that downy undercoat, whose shorter fibers were far superior for felting. If we thread these kinds of trade histories into the art historical record in this way, we find embodied haptic histories of the indigenous Americas in a very quintessentially Dutch object. And we can connect the bodies that wore these same furs, albeit in very different forms, on both sides of the Atlantic.

Now, people also moved in ways that were only possible because of the Dutch control of American territories. And their diasporic identities have produced visual legacies marked by and marking the Dutch Americas. Perhaps no group traversed the Americas more than the Sephardic Jews, who having been expelled from the Iberian Peninsula, were allowed to settle and practice their religion in the comparatively tolerant Dutch Republic. Their Portuguese language skills made them a key population in Dutch Brazil and this community played a critical role in the urban planning and infrastructure of Moritzstadt, now Recife, where the first synagogue in the Americas, Kahal Zur Israel, was founded in 1636. When the Portuguese recaptured the region, a large portion of this Jewish community resettled in Suriname, in New Amsterdam, that is Manhattan, and Curaçao. In Curaçao, that presence is felt actively at Mikveh Israel-Emanuel, a sand-floored synagogue that boasts of being the oldest continuously operating synagogue in the Western Hemisphere. A building is hardly difficult to spot, but some traces of Jewish-Dutch identity require digging below the surface. Archaeological work around areas inhabited by Jewish groups in Suriname, beginning in the 17th century, led to the recent designation of the Jodensavanne settlement in the Cassipora Creek Cemetery as UNESCO Heritage Sites last year in 2023. The 1682 will of Asser Levy, born in Poland and resident of Amsterdam before he settled in New Amsterdam in 1654, illustrates the ways in which early modern Dutch identity transgressed geopolitical and even confessional bound borders. Levy's will, executed close to a decade after the English took back control of the -- or took control of the North American colony, is written in English but it includes many Dutch words and documents many debts to Dutch individuals. And his belongings, too, suggest the continuation of, quote-unquote, Dutch material culture in New York long after the dissolution of New Netherland as a Dutch colonial holding.

Such diasporic mobilities as Levy's were crucial to the mercantile ambitions of the WIC and also to the history of a diasporic Jewish community that came to stretch, much like Dutch identity itself, across several oceans. In a seeming nod to the importance of these diasporic transatlantic networks, the Jewish community of Amsterdam drew upon the material wealth of the Americas in furnishing the New Amsterdam Esnoga, a synagogue built in 1675. The Torah Ark and the bimah, all the church-born furniture here, or the synagogue

furniture, were hewn from Brazilian rosewood, or jacaranda, implanting a material manifestation of the Americas within the spiritual home of the community in Europe. Meanwhile, also in Amsterdam, at the Rasphuis, a prison- rehabilitation centre, inmates were forced to rasp Brazilwood as punishment for their crimes. The precious dyewood needed to be pulverized in order to render its pigment fully potent. And images of the Rasphuis collapsed overseas and domestic experiences of labour within a framework of salvation and the morality of the young republic. While tonight I focussed on how we can locate and describe Dutchness in the Americas, Amsterdam's synagogue and the Rasphuis helpfully illustrate that it's just as important to ask where one goes to look for the Americas in the Netherlands. So, as my last examples here, Gesina ter Borch, an affluent, educated female artist living in Zwolle, produced this fantastically imagined watercolour of her niece in Curaçao, without leaving her hometown to produce it. A few decades earlier, in 1654, Johan Maurits, now former governor of Dutch Brazil, presented the king of Denmark, Frederick III, with 26 paintings of Brazilian people, flora, and fauna, one of a series of such gifts that Maurits made in hopes of currying royal favour. Imagined, exploited, and repurposed then, the Dutch Americas, as I hope to have sketched for you tonight, was present and tangible for a variety of historical actors and helped to shape visual and material cultures on both sides of the Atlantic. These are the histories of the Dutch Americas that are still waiting to be written. Thank you.

Dr. Suzanne van de Meerendonk: OK. Thank you so much, Stephanie, that was such a wonderful presentation. We will have time for Q&A now and both my colleague Charlotte and I will have mics. Please, if you have a question, raise your hand, we will come to you. Please wait with posing your question until the mic is with you so that people on the live stream will also be able to hear your questions. So please raise your hand if you have any.

Question #1: You use the word Dutch as if it was a homogeneous notion. How variable were, in fact, the nationalities that today we assume are a Dutch nationality?

Dr Stephanie Porras: I was just trying to indicate, so the West India Company employed a whole range of people, right? Englishmen, French, Swedes, Germans. So, part of what I was trying to indicate in the sort of last little section of the talk is that Dutchness is a very fluid category, even in the period. But what I think we can -- what's useful about it is thinking about how Dutchness is mobilized by these different identities, right? So, when someone like Juan Rodriguez is left in Manhattan, he's left -- he leaves WIC, West India Company employment and that is a state-backed corporation, essentially, and then continues to work for that state-backed corporation. So, there's -- he is not -- there's no reason he's there except for the Dutch, right? So, I think there's a way in which, without collapsing it into a, about specific kind of nationality as understood in the period, but understanding that there is Dutch agency even if it's not located in individual citizenship, right? That's, for me, the example of both this first resident of Manhattan and, you know, Henry Hudson, right? That this -- it was -- he's in the service of the VOC when he sails up the river. So, I think it's a

great question because these are not stable categories. At the same time, there is a particular way in which the Dutch state is involved in these West India -- in the West India Company, and then later the Suriname Society, and that it is -- these are state-backed enterprises.
Questioner #1: Thanks for a great answer.

Questioner #2: Just like Dutch, the term Americas is also fraught. We're Canadians and we're Americans. What can you tell us -- we know a little bit. There's some prominent Dutch citizens or people here tonight and I know of a family who came out over as loyalists from Manhattan once the sail went through, or later. Anyway, what can you tell us about the Dutch in Canada?

Dr Stephanie Porras: Well, New Netherlands, right? If you look at that map I showed you, it extends and as the boundaries go I think across what is now the, you know, the parallel, right? The Treaty of Westminster brings it all back into English hands and so that blurs -- muddies the water a little bit for us. But certainly, those kinds of settlements and the beaver trade is extending into what is now Canada. And this is what becomes -- it becomes very tricky, right? So, the Americas as a concept, we're talking about a kind of vast swathes of territory. And this is one of those things where, you know, America in English has this problematic thing where it collapses onto the US -- as synonymous to US. But what I'm using it in these terms is the geographic range of the Americas which I try and use it as a plural always because it's not the United States. And I try to be careful when saying where it becomes the colonial United States. In the case of this silverware, for example, of silverwork that I showed you, it becomes so foundational to a myth of kind of early colonial US silver, which of course has this lineage of Paul Revere. You know, there's a kind of particular narrative that that builds up to, to separate it from Dutchness. But if it's connected it to this broader material culture, I think then there's ways in which it disturbs this assumption that it's somehow uniquely to the US. I hope that answers your question.

Dr Suzanne van de Meerendonk: While people are gathering their thoughts, I'll sneak a question in which is a bit related to the ones we've talked about because it's also, I'm very interested in the way you speak about Dutchness or the Dutch as a way that is, you know, sort of trying to describe a phenomenon. You said it's more like an expensive and relational sort of category to kind of think about. And of course in art history, nationalism is such a sort of strong force in 19th century when, as a discipline, art history comes into being. So, I was just wondering if you could elaborate a bit on, you know, thinking about this historiographically and sort of the kind of research and the approach you're talking about, sort of how that graphs on to these sort of larger historiographies in art history.

Dr Stephanie Porras: Yeah, no. I mean, I think that's precisely the issue, right, is that there is this 19th century idea about national schools that are mapped on to 19th century geopolitical borders which are not early modern political borders. And so, a sort of

counterexample, not from tonight's talk, but if you talk about within the Spanish Empire, Flamencos, so residents of today's Belgium, Flemish residents, are considered Spanish citizens, right? They're part of the Spanish Empire. And so, there are many Flamencos that live in Mexico City, in Peru, in Spanish territories. And when we study colonial Latin American art, they kind of can become, by virtue of the Hispanicization of their name, described as new Spanish artists, right? So, there is -- and in the kind of later, early 20th century moment when Mexican art historians are kind of claiming, writing their own kind of histories of art, though those become really important figures. It's a slight detour to get back to this. But this idea that there was stable national identity in an earlier period is just not true, right? That these -- especially in these imperial domains where you are talking about large swathes of territory. And the populations like, you know, the Jewish diaspora which are displaced from Iberia, welcomed to some degree in the Netherlands but are then moving through all of these different spaces. It's like their nationality is complicated because there's historic ties via the Sephardim to other communities, right?

So, I think in some ways, I'm asking through this project to think about, not so much about those geographic markers of identity as fixed, as nationality, but thinking about how these spaces are being navigated by all these different people. And it kind of goes back to the gentleman's question earlier about, you know, what makes it Dutch then? Well, I mean, these are only movements that are enabled by the Dutch West India Company. And they're in service of this kind of a nationally defined project even if the people involved in that project are not all necessarily Dutch citizens. So, I meandered around that question.

Dr Suzanne van de Meerendonk: Thanks, Steph. That, you know, explain the relationships between these objects, as you mentioned, that seem kind of disparate but these are the way that they relate, right?

Dr Stephanie Porras: Yeah, trying to get there. Trying to make that make sense.

Dr Suzanne van de Meerendonk: I just want to follow up with an additional question or sort of to ask whether, you know, can you kind of assert -- I mean, these are company identities. These are economic identities which are really superseding, perhaps, many, many, many other identities. And I'm wondering if it's fair to even move it further into that direction.

Dr Stephanie Porras: Yeah, I think this is a really interesting question, right? How much of this is about a West India Company project? What becomes slightly complicated is that the West India Company kind of collapses in the 1670s and is reconstituted but then becomes this other -- there's the Suriname Society, there's like these other kind of always have some state involvement, these kind of public-private vehicles for sort of colonial expansion. And this is one thing that historians of the Dutch Atlantic grapple with, right? How much of it is company history versus cultural history? And this is where I think art history is in a unique position because something like the patronship system, it's, you know, it's set up by the

West India Company, but it's also those individuals are not necessarily employees. They're brought over, but they're brought over to colonize, right, to settle. And so, that's like a slightly different sort of pushing against that a bit, but I think it's a really a question that we've been dealing with when we're working on this material, like how much of this is about the West India Company? I mentioned this to some people before. I've been teaching a seminar on this material over the last couple years and we have the students in teams by geographies, like working on objects. And at the end of the semester, we always ask them like, you know, do you think there should be a different team or what -- and the first semester, they were like there should be a Sephardic Jewish team, basically, because these people traverse all these geographies and they move depending on what moment in history we are. And there was an argument to be made for WIC, for company items, right? So, objects that are produced in the Netherlands, or move between places, or things that are specifically taken by the company back to company headquarters. And it's difficult, right? They move between these geographies, but somehow the geographies themselves are necessary to get at the indigenous perspective, the other communities that are coming into contact with the WIC.

Questioner #3: Hi there. Wonderful, wonderful talk, by the way. What was inspiring Dutch artists to create American subjects? I mean, obviously, you can imagine that it's a new subject, but I would imagine with something like the West Indian Company, there would be maybe a desire for propaganda, or for ways to promote Dutch kind of settlement, and that kind of thing in North America. So, was there evidence of that happening?

Dr Stephanie Porras: Certainly. So, a colleague, Hiel van Groesen, has written about basically the propaganda around Dutch Brazil, basically, that starts in the early -- pretty much as soon as the Dutch West India Company is formed, their eyes are laser focussed on Brazil. And the kind of publication, the continued publication of Brasiliana is related to that and the desire for that colony that's lost and it's kind of understood as like the potential of that is always there. It's different to think of, you know, we started this project, we were thinking -- we're trying to find images of New Netherlands and other, you know, Dutch produced in the Netherlands, images of. And that's harder, right? It's more difficult to get a sense of that in terms of it being marketed. And we know that the patronship system was difficult, people had difficult, like, rounding people up to bring them to New Netherlands and convincing them to settle. It took a while for that to kind of get going. But yeah, no, it is definitely -- some of the Brazil material is certainly a propaganda and Suriname as well, I would say. Although there is -- I would say there is an awareness of the fact that the coffee and sugar plantations in Suriname are so reliant on the slave trade and on enslaved labour, that that becomes -- John Stedman writes a diary of his time in service in Suriname which becomes an abolitionist tract, like really early in the 19th century. And so, there's a kind of pressure, I would say, on those images to not show what life in Suriname actually looks like. So yes, it's all complicated, it's like sort of my answer. But yes, I think propaganda, yes in some places, in other spaces not so much.

Questioner #3: Thank you very much. How do you put boundaries on what is art, like can shoes be art, or architecture, or gutters?

Dr Stephanie Porras: Yeah.

Questioner #3: Like what's -- what point does product design become art --

Dr Stephanie Porras: I mean, that's a bigger question than I can answer right now, but I think it's interesting, right? So, in doing this work, I'm moving around, I'm taking photographs of lots of things. I'm taking lots of pictures of pipe stems or of these flat thin white bricks that were used in the -- as a hold, ballast in the cargo ships, that are used to make forts in Brazil, in Curaçao, in the Netherlands, sorry, New Netherlands. And so, you see these markers of what I would say material culture, not necessarily art. So, we tend to say like artistic built and material cultures of this world, right? So, I think without getting into a very long discussion of what constitutes art, I think in what we're thinking about are objects that are understood and treated as art by the communities, either made them or used them. So not shoes, but maybe drums, right? And also calabashes. But they're -- what's difficult about this work is those objects are not held in art museums. Because in the 19th century, those were not seen as art. So, it comes back to this question of historiography. So, those objects are all in ethnographic museums. They're in the Tropenmuseum. They're in the Weltmuseum, right? They're in other kinds of collections. They were still collected which is interesting, but not necessarily as art. One of the -- I don't know if I -- sorry, I put in some like little extra slides. Let me see if I actually put this in. Oh no, I didn't, dang it. There is a ivory object that was taken from the west coast of Africa and on display in the WIC boardroom. It's one of the earliest securely dated ivory sculptures and it's in the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam. But it is an ivory sculpture that again by some metrics in the period, they wouldn't have understood it as art, but it was collected and displayed as an object for its aesthetic and material value. So, I would say that it was understood as art in the 17th century. So, there was some points where we see this awareness, period awareness, of those objects as made, as where there's value attached to their material and their manufacturer. So, it's complicated, but hopefully that gives you some contours of what I'm dealing with. But it's, yeah, I think part of what's convinced me that this is a project is there's both the material culture, right? There's bricks, there's pipes, there's beads, there's -- you know, that these -- that also constitute part of what this territory is.

Questioner #3: But the bricks became buildings, of course.

Dr Stephanie Porras: Yes, they did.

Questioner #3: And New York as we know it was built from those bricks, so that became architecture, that becomes art, I suppose.
Dr Stephanie Porras: Although it's one of those things where how many art historians work on fort art, you know, these like forts. It's like it's -- I was explaining to people when I was driving around Northeast Brazil. I'm, like looking at -- I'm an art historian, I'm here to look at the fort.
[Laughter]

It was, you know, people were like, "OK." But yes, it's part of -- they are connected, certainly. And it is very striking and exciting I think when you visit places and you see the same material being used across these vast geographic spaces. And it really brings home, you know, exactly how much was brought over.
Questioner #4: But the irony in New York, of course, is that it's built on, you know, built on granite.
Dr Stephanie Porras: Yeah.
Questioner #4: They could have used local stone, but it was easier, cheaper, whatever, to use bricks coming over in the hulls of ships.
Dr Stephanie Porras: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Questioner #4: Hello. So, since Manhattan was New Amsterdam, is there anywhere in Canada that has a similar historical connection to the Netherlands?

Dr Stephanie Porras: Oh, I feel like I should give Suzanne this question. I don't know if there is. I'm trying to think how far up.

Dr Suzanne van de Meerendonk: Yeah. I don't think there's a place in Canada that had a previous Dutch name, I think. But if you go just on the other side of Ontario Lake, then there, yeah, there were places there that I think -- like Esopus and what's now Kingston, New York.

Dr Stephanie Porras: Yeah, there's a lot of -- and the thing is what's difficult about New Netherland, too, is that there's these -- it's along water waves and there's a lot of -- because it's beaver trade, right? It's often individual houses associated with trading -- traders that would have maybe been of Dutch descent and built those houses and they don't -- they're not cities this far north. And Beverwijk is the biggest city which is Albany.

So, the Dutch were -- they came here, but they never truly built stuff. Yeah.

Questioner #4: But they were here.

Dr Stephanie Porras: They were around.

Next question.

Questioner #5: Do I have to keep this very close? Oh yeah, that's how it works. I would like to ask a bit of a -- perhaps a bit of a personal question. I thought your lecture was wonderful. As you can hear, I am Dutch. And I was wondering whether you are also going to incorporate in further lectures or in your work that we now have a time of acknowledgement, also in Canada, that we have not treated the original peoples well and in the case of the Dutch with the slave trade. When I went to school, I always learnt that the Dutch were only the transporters of the slaves, I now know better. But I know that in Holland and also here, there is this great acknowledgement and also a regret of our forefathers having treated the indigenous people so badly. And in Holland, there are a lot of patrician families that have been rich since the 1600s, and of whom now the successors, the modern families, I'm thinking of the Museum van Loon, for instance, in Amsterdam, the Van Loon family, and many others, they are now really trying to express their regrets in exhibitions in the museums and so on. I'm wondering whether you will eventually bring this into your lectures.

Dr Stephanie Porras: The slavery exhibition I think is a really key antecedent for this work and I showed the UN installation of that show that's up at the minute. Yes I think was the short answer. I think my collaborator and I would love to mount an exhibition or work on an exhibition related to these geographies. I think there's I think interest in -- but again, it comes to this question of institutions, right? The objects are held not necessarily in art museums but in ethnographic museums. And thinking through what kinds of institutions would be interested in that work. And but yeah, I think it's a good moment.
Questioner #5: It's the same in the sense here, for instance, here in Isabel, that before every symphony concert and before every lecture, we do indeed, say indeed –

Dr Stephanie Porras: Yeah, you know, a land acknowledgement, right?

Questioner #5: Acknowledged again, yes, that we are, not that we can do very much about it anymore, but that we are indeed playing, and living, and loving on the land that did not belong to us. That's it.
Questioner #5: Thank you.

Questioner #6: Hello. I was really -- I thought it was really fascinating you were talking about using later objects to kind of understand, you know, these past interactions. And I was just wondering how you kind of came upon that method given it is like so uncommon in our history?

Dr Stephanie Porras: It's not an anthropology, so I think part of it is thinking about one of the earliest questions we had from students and from museum colleagues was like, "OK, well, if you want to recover indigenous and African objects, where are those objects?" And

it's like, well they weren't collected, right? Or there's very few that were collected in the period that have secure provenance. What we do have are objects that exist in ethnographic collections that were collected in the 19th and 20th century that we can find references to in period sources as well as object -- images like the Valkenburg I showed you, right? So, it's -- I think we have to if we want to actually not just use it as an excuse, "Oh, there's no objects." Well, that's not really -- people write beautiful essays about early modern firework spectacles, performance, things that are ephemeral. We're able to write about those things because we use archives and other materials. And I think this this kind of backtrack, if done -- you have to do it responsibly, but it's like finding objects that have a particular provenance relating to those communities and then you can tie it to archival sources and I think that's a method. And we were talking about methodology today with graduate students. That is a method that I think is indebted to the kind of interest in recovering histories that are either deliberately or not deliberately been not written.

Questioner #6: Thank you.

Dr Suzanne van de Meerendonk: I can jump in with one more question if there's -- I think we still have a bit of time. I know you spoke a bit about --

Dr Stephanie Porras: There's one right there.
Dr Suzanne van de Meerendonk: Oh, there's a question?

Questioner #7: Sorry. You talk about how the Dutch settled differently from, like, the French and the English and such. How does that also come across in the material culture that you're studying as well?

Dr Stephanie Porras: Now, I should say there's a caveat to that because I think, you know, there -- I'm thinking. I'm forgetting the -- Danny Noorlander's written a beautiful book about Dutch Calvinism and evangelism in the Americas. So, I don't want to say that there's no evangelism but it's limited and it's explicitly, you know, Maurits gets in trouble because the Calvinists or the ministers are saying like, "You should be doing more evangelism." He's like, "Mm-mm." But the big difference is around this project of conversion, honestly, and the material cultures of conversion which are building churches, right? Building and introducing devotional objects. We don't have that in these spaces and certainly not to a massive degree. There's the exception being New Netherlands, there is Dutch ecclesiastical silver, Calvinist silver. The Dutch first reaffirmed Church of Albany has an amazing imported pulpit that was imported from the Netherlands in 1650. It's beautiful and in situ. And they have -- there's also stained-glass windows that survive from that church. So, there are some things that are, you could say, are parallels to the Spanish and French colonial period, but they're very different in terms of their project of settler colonialism, right? With the exception of New Netherlands, there isn't the practice of, right, trying to establish and redefine the geographies in the way that you have with the encomienda system in New

Spain or the idea of creating a tribute system where you bring people over and you own land. And that's not how it's done. So, it's just -- I think it's a case where you can see the difference in the material built and art historical record in the historical way that settler colonialism was brought over. And it was more about this mercantile extraction of materials, sugar, wood, coffee, or movement of people, movement of goods. But less to do with trying to establish an entire -- and import and convert an entire indigenous population.

Questioner #8: I'm not sure exactly how to ask this, but you had a picture of ports that they controlled and there seemed to be many. Were they very good mariners or what was it that they control port --

Dr Stephanie Porras: Yes. Short answer is yes, they were very good mariners. I mean, the West India Company is really, the first couple years of its existence is really good pirates, basically. So, their whole purpose is disrupting Spanish and Portuguese trade, harassing ships, capturing ships. And then once they've done that, and I mentioned the 1628 capture of the Silver Fleet, that is the entirety of all the silver mined in South America that's captured outside of -- it's something I can't remember now how much silver it is, it's a huge amount of silver. They pay out a 50% dividend to all WIC investors that year, like it's insane. So that piracy action is really that initial wave because of already Dutch maritime skill, it's already been proven, but it's also -- it's not just Dutch sailors, it's English, French that are being employed. It becomes trickier to hold territory and they learn that lesson repeatedly in the 17th century. But the high seas are things are a little more equal. You know, you just need one -- a couple ships and a brave captain to kind of make a play for something. But the Silver Fleet victory is not repeated for a hundred years. They take it again -- they take the Silver Fleet again in the 18th century, but it's really a flash in the pan. But yes, their maritime prowess is significant, but this is what I love about Donna Merwick's term of along shore, right? It's this along-shore empire. It always has to be within touching distance of the sea or river. And that's very characteristic.

Questioner #8: Thank you.

Questioner #9: Thank you very much for a wonderful talk. So, the privateering, because that was done by commercial enterprises, private goods, did that reduce the friction between monarchies or between actual rulers? Or did it -- because I know there's lots of wars all around the whole European continent. But because it wasn't -- I'm sure it was state-sanctioned, but it was commercial enterprise.

Dr Stephanie Porras: Yeah. I mean this is Grotius's Freedom of the Seas, right? This is the idea of the sea doesn't belong to anybody, finders keepers, right? What happens to the ocean, international waters, right? That's the Dutch, you know, that's invented as a legal framework around the creation of the Dutch East India Company. And the Spanish, they're like, "No, that's not how any of this works." But that is the legal formula that is developed

and then kind of enacted by the VOC and the WIC's success on the sea, that we will take, you know, what we can get at sea and it's, you know, if you get it at sea, then it's yours. And I think there's something really fascinating about the Silver Fleet because it is this, it has this very long durée history, that it is always brought back as this touch point of national identity, because in some ways it's a victory that can't be brought back, right? You can have Brazil and then you lose it, but that silver is always yours, you know. You don't have to return the silver. So that there is a funny way in which these piracies is kind of a perfect metaphor for this kind of imperial project because it's not about territory, it's things like one at sea.
Questioner #9: It's wealth.

Dr Stephanie Porras: Yeah, it's wealth, frictionless wealth, close to frictionless. I mean, the other thing that's great about the Silver Fleet victory is it's almost essentially bloodless. They run the Spanish ships aground and all the Spanish soldiers swim to the shore basically, so almost nobody dies. And the Spanish, when the captains are brought, all the captains are brought to trial and they're executed for letting the Dutch get the better of them. It's a great book called Six Galleons for the Spanish King which is about this. It's wonderful.

Dr Suzanne van de Meerendonk: I think we could do one more question, if anyone still has one.

All right. Well then -- oh, there's the final call.

Questioner #10: OK. I'm going to try not to fumble through this question, but I love the like question or not. So, the silver beaker that you said was exhibiting Dutchness through its form and the motifs, I think it was by Vandenberg or something. So, was Vandenberg trying to make it look Dutch on purpose or is it something that –

Dr Stephanie Porras: He was just trained in that tradition, that's how he made cups. So, I mean, I think that's what becomes difficult, right, that this line, there's not a moment where the territory is seated and all of a sudden everyone's English. That's not how anything works, right? This man was formed in a Dutch silversmith tradition and a Dutch silversmith community that for generations had been these Dutch silversmiths in Albany and in New York. And this is how you made a beaker and these were the forms that you used. So, this is what -- I mean, I think it's an interesting example because historiographically, this has been described as the, you know, this crucial moment of American silver because he's born in the United States, what becomes the United States I should say, right? We're talking about America versus -- but that tradition is impossible to think of without acknowledging that he's coming from a very Dutch tradition of silversmith work. And the same thing is true of cabinet makers in the early colonial furniture is very much indebted to Dutch forms. And that's acknowledged more readily I think than the silver is, interestingly, historiographically. But yeah, to me and Aaron, it's a paradigmatic object because it reveals how arbitrary these

national categories sort of are. Because that thing you put that in front of somebody who works on Dutch silver, they're like, "Yeah, it's a Dutch beaker. But as somebody who works on early American silver, it's like, "Oh, it's American silver."

Questioner #10: Thank you.

Dr Suzanne van de Meerendonk: All right. Well, thanks everyone for your attention and for the questions. And I would welcome everyone to give another round of applause to our wonderful speaker tonight.