



Vermeer's Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World

By Timothy Brook

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In this critical darling Vermeer's captivating and enigmatic paintings become windows that reveal how daily life and thought--from Delft to Beijing--were transformed in the 17th century, when the world first became global.

A Vermeer painting shows a military officer in a Dutch sitting room, talking to a laughing girl. In another canvas, fruit spills from a blue-and-white porcelain bowl. Familiar images that captivate us with their beauty--but as Timothy Brook shows us, these intimate pictures actually give us a remarkable view of an expanding world. The officer's dashing hat is made of beaver fur from North America, and it was beaver pelts from America that financed the voyages of explorers seeking routes to China--prized for the porcelains so often shown in Dutch paintings of this time, including Vermeer's. In this dazzling history, Timothy Brook uses Vermeer's works, and other contemporary images from Europe, Asia, and the Americas to trace the rapidly growing web of global trade, and the explosive, transforming, and sometimes destructive changes it wrought in the age when globalization really began.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Thanks to Brook's roving and insatiably curious gaze, Vermeer's small scenes widen onto the broad panorama of world history . . . The result is like one of Vermeer's trademark reflective pearls that magically reveals a world beyond itself. A more entertaining guide to world history - and to Vermeer - is difficult to imagine." - Ross King, author of *THE JUDGEMENT OF PARIS*, *MICHELANGELO*, and *THE POPE'S CEILING AND BRUNELLESCHI'S DOME*

"From the epicenter of Delft, Brook takes his readers on a journey that encompasses Chinese porcelain and beaver pelts, global temperatures and firearms, shipwrecked sailors and their companions, silver mines and Manila galleons. It is a book full of surprising pleasures." - Jonathan Spence, author of *THE DEATH OF WOMAN WANG*

"Elegant and quietly important . . . Brook does more than merely sketch the beginnings of globalization and highlight the forces that brought our modern world into being; rather, he offers a timely reminder of humanity's interdependence." - *Seattle Times*

"[An] elegant and quietly important book" - *San Francisco Chronicle*

"Brook utilizes the props in Vermeer's tableaux as starting points to journey into the cultural and economic world of the time: A teacup pours forth the history of the porcelain trade with China, while a felt hat is traced to beaver trapping in North America. It's a fascinating approach to cultural history, providing new ways of thinking about the origins of commonplace objects." - *Entertainment Weekly*, *A grade*, *EW Pick*

About the Author

Timothy Brook received a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship for the work on which this book is based. He holds the Shaw Chair in Chinese studies at Oxford University and is the author of many books, including the award-winning *Confusions of Pleasure*.

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