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## British Art and the East India Company

By Geoff Quilley. The Boydell Press, 2020. 370pp. 23.4×15.6 cm. 102 colour illus. Hardback, £85.00/\$125.00. ISBN: 978-1-78327-510-6. Ebook, £19.99/\$24.99. ISBN: 9781760464097.

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Geoff Quilley's *British Art and the East India Company* is a major new publication which analyses in thorough, scholarly detail the role of the British East India Company in the production and sponsorship of new, commercial art forms in late-eighteenth and early- to mid-nineteenth century British culture. The focus of the study, however, is certainly not narrow and Quilley's research will be of substantial interest to all those who are interested in the cultural encounter between Britain and Asia in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries much more widely, especially in terms of visual representation. The work contains extensive discussions of the interaction between British artists and their time spent in Asia, particularly and India and China, during this formative period of commerce and colonialism.

Although there have been numerous prior studies of visual art in the period which have tackled the place and role of British artists in a global and colonial perspective, this is the first study to interrogate the ways in which certain more commercial kinds of British art were closely imbricated in the political and financial nexus created by the tangled policies and practices of the Company. Previously such studies have generally argued that the colonial process is contingent, fluid, revisionary and shifting in the face of the encounter with Indian culture and the east. Quilley's study, however, is less focused on the dominant, paradigm of cultural exchange *per se*, stressing more the material instrumentality of the Company's interventions in producing its ideological content and strategy for the production and interpretation of visual art. His study attempts to "bridge the gap" between the disciplines of art history and political, economic and colonial histories, an aim in which it largely succeeds. Quilley demonstrates, following Nicholas B. Dirks's (2006) influential depiction of the Company as a "Scandal of Empire" how the many mismanagements, corruptions and misdemeanors perpetrated by the Company in this period were strategically whitewashed by its deployment of hired artists, architects, scholars, thus justifying its commercial and colonial existence to the public as a monopoly Company State.

Most recently scholars have been turning to study the cultural impacts of the Company's presence in the domestic and home context. As such, this account of the relationship of the Company to the world of fine art in the period is extremely timely and will be the starting point for many future explorations of this fascinating subject. The work contains in-depth studies of both the artists

(many unfamiliar) whose work was associated with the Company, notably William and Thomas Daniels, Johann Zoffany, George Chinnery and Arthur William Devis, and also less notable artists whose work it sponsored. Spridione Roma's painting, *Britannia receiving the Riches of the East* (1778) provides an opening, paradigmatic example of such a Company-sponsored work. Quilley argues that, as well as the very public form of art of the Royal Academy and its members and patrons, there existed a private, commercially driven mode of visual culture in which the Company operated producing highly influential forms of art. These have, to some extent, being occluded by the discipline of art history's stress on the public manifestation of its object of study. He makes the bold claim that "the East India Company, far from being disconnected from the visual arts, can be seen as possibly the single most important influence on their production, formation, and development in Britain during the period from around 1760 to 1840." Central to this claim is the articulation of the Company's paradoxical presence as both state economy and commercial trading corporation, a chimerical existence that entailed the promulgation of a commercial ideology through visual means. In terms of his subject, Quilley casts his net very widely, here as visual art encompasses, paintings, prints, engravings, maps, sculpture, architecture, medals and the collection and arrangement of artefacts. The rebuilding and pictorial decoration of the Company's new Leadenhall Street premises, for example, is as significant as the oils of Hodges.

Art thus functions as a way of detoxifying the Company of the venality and corruption with which it was characteristically associated with in the eighteenth-century mind, most obviously epitomized in famous trial of its first Governor-General in India, Warren Hastings, masterminded by Edmund Burke from 1788 to 1795. The Company is therefore a significant "cultural intermediary" between Britain and Asia and this work, re-inserting its role into a context from which it has largely been absent in both traditional and more recent studies. Quilley argues he is envisaging a new genealogy for British art not derived from the "Royal Academy but ... from competing interests in the City" which he terms a "corporate art ... produced and marketed in association with commercial corporations or institutions." The Company thus fashions an image of itself through these multifarious visual artefacts as the epitome of civil politeness rather than the red in tooth and claw commercial colonial operation it was in reality.

Quilley develops his convincing thesis over six substantial and thoroughly researched chapters which serve as case studies exploring its key ramifications. These begin with an exploration of the iconography of the Company's artistic and architectural. These creations are argued to be in dialogue with the concomitant image fashioning of the commercial City of London, especially in the interplay between commerce and charity which informs much of this propagandizing. The Company's intimate relationship with maritime history reflected in the marginalized genre of maritime painting is extensively explored in an extremely knowledgeable chapter on the depiction of the Company's famous "East Indiamen. The Company is famously a corporation trading by sea and, as a former Curator of Fine Art at the National Maritime Museum, Quilley proves an expert commentator on this under-researched area. In particular, there are insightful and detailed discussion of Thomas Luny's depiction of the East Indiaman, "Hindustan," which participated in the Lord Macartney's royal embassy to China of 1793 and of the profits its canny Captain, William Mackintosh, made in his private trading in clocks, watches and mechanical toys. Shipwreck also features prominently in this discussion as a frequent topic in such paintings, more frequent than actual occurrences would warrant, due, perhaps to the traumatic financial loss such incidents incurred, often occluded by a sentimental focus on the human element. Sadly, Quilley does not also deal with the case of the *Earl of Albergavenny* wreck of 1805, captained by John Wordsworth, the poet's brother, a voyage in which the Wordsworth family had substantially invested. Chapter three of the work discusses the more well-known series of paintings and drawings made by Thomas Hodges in India within the context of his *Travels in India* (1793). Here Quilley expertly situates Hodges representation of landscape beyond the mode of colonial picturesque in specific colonial and commercial concerns of the Company, arguing that Hodges representations purvey a positive view of the much-criticized regime of Warren Hastings. In this discussion, Quilley eschews the "colonial picturesque" for a more naturalistic aesthetic he sees at work in

Hodges' paintings. Hodges represents not simply India's landscape and monuments but the Company's construction of them formed with an eye aware of the techniques of military surveillance.

Chapter four moves the focus of the study away from India itself to take in that other obsessive and urgent concern of the Company, its eastward trade with China. Here the voyages of Henry Wilson and Thomas Forrest provide matter to demonstrate the relationship of visual representation to discourse of exploration. Henry Wilson's voyage and shipwreck on the Palau islands and the case of the islander Lee Boo provides a paradigmatic narrative. Lee Boo returned with Wilson to Britain only to perish from the smallpox, a sentimental narrative beloved by romantic poets including William Lisle Bowles and S. T. Coleridge. A full succeeding chapter is largely devoted to the case of the artist Arthur William Devis, a draughtsman on Wilson's voyage, who then developed a career in India as a portrait painter. Quilley convincingly demonstrates how Devis produced a series of paintings beginning in the 1790s recording the arts, manufactures and customs (especially agricultural) of British Bengal with explanatory descriptions, which further the apparently disinterested scholarly orientalism sponsored by Hastings and exemplified in the translations and scholarly researches of Sir William Jones, Charles Wilkins and the Asiatick Society (established in 1784). Such "imperial georgics" were thus products of the Hastings/Jones orientalist ideology, "pictures fully assimilated within an ideology of Company commerce ... as the means to improvement and legitimization of Company commerce."

Quilley's chapter on China is the most suggestive yet most hesitant in the volume, perhaps reflecting the relative lack of criticism of the cultural encounter in comparison with the voluminous scholarship on the British interaction with India. This chapter takes as its organizing theme the opium trade with China and its representation in visual art. The key text here, is George Chinnery's *On Dent's Veranda* (1842) (which provides the cover illustration for the volume), a privately commissioned and privately owned work. An absent Lancelot Dent, on whose veranda the painting is set, was one of the major traders in opium in China and a key figure in the origins of the First Opium War (1840–1842). Quilley subjects this painting to an extensive and assured analysis, showing the many ways in which the commercial conditions that gave rise to the painting and the presence in China of its subjects informs its composition through the presentation of significant details, the map of the China coast, the barometer hanging on the wall, and the sole red (almost vermilion or bloody) opium poppy (the Bengal opium poppy was actually a white variety of *papaver somniferum*). Quilley reads William Havell's *Sunrise on the Grand Canal of China* (c. 1816) in an analogous way, cross referencing this majestic oil depiction of junks on the grand canal with Turner's picturesque representations of Venice, very much in the style of Lorraine with its implications for former imperial splendour and decadence and decline. Havell was the official artist on the second British royal embassy to China in 1816, led by William Pitt, Lord Amherst. Although a significant amount of scholarship now exists on the art of William Alexander (a draughtsman and de facto artist on the earlier 1793 Macartney embassy), comparatively little criticism of Havell's troubled personal history during the embassy the resulting artwork is known. Quilley mentions Alexander only briefly, although it would have been fascinating to read his explication of the artist's highly extensive and influential representations of China in the theoretical framework of the volume, especially given the disparity between Alexander's more modest watercolours and Havell's elite artwork. Quilley's final chapter discusses the foundation and role played by the Company's India Museum in Leadenhall Street (much of which was subsequently dispersed to the Victoria and Albert). This tells the intriguing story of how this, at first, haphazard collection of items of all kinds was later organized and curated to form a series of narratives supportive of the Company's activities as a largely benevolent and progressive administration. The museum is later deployed in support of the rehabilitation of Warren Hastings in the nineteenth century as one of the heroic founders of the British Raj.

Perhaps for some, a significant omission from the study is any extensive treatment of Indian artists such as Ghulam Ali Khan, Shaikh Muhammad Amir, Shaikh Zain-al-Din, Bhawani Das and Ram Das. In his recent study *Forgotten Masters: Indian Painting for the East India Company* (2019), for example, William Dalrymple, argues "Zain-al-Din's best works reveal a superb synthesis between a coldly

scientific European natural history specimen illustration, warmed with a profoundly Indian sensibility and vital feeling for nature.” This hybridized relationship between British painting and that of Indian and also Chinese artists, such as “Lamqua” (Kwan Kiu Cheong), the first Chinese portrait painter (possibly a student of Chinnery) to work with oils and be exhibited in the west, is an area which demands further research. Overall, this book is an outstanding contribution to our understanding of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century visual art and its relationship with the East India Company and the commercial and financial networks of Britain more widely. Building on existing works on the exotic and colonial in British art it forcefully establishes a discrete new area for research, with a previously marginalized cast of artists to the gaze of our contemporary scholars in fresh and fruitful ways. It will prove to be of immense value to researchers of British art, colonial and maritime history, as well as scholars of the cultural encounter between Britain and Asia. Although it features a wealth of archival research on almost every page, it is written in a lively and engaging style that makes its perusal pleasurable and is full of insights. The book is handsomely produced with a generous 102 colour illustrations, of which many are full page.

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## Indonesians and their Arab world: guided mobility among labor migrants and Mecca pilgrims

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How do Indonesian Muslims see, perceive, and engage with the “imagined” Arab world? What does “Arab” mean for them? Who shapes and “guides” their view, opinion, interpretation, and understandings about the Arab world? What factors have shaped their imagination and portrayals of the Arab world and “Arabness”?

These are among the questions that the author tries to answer in this fine book, which was developed from her doctoral thesis. To answer these intriguing questions, the author departed from her home country (Germany) for Indonesia to gather data among the returnees of Mecca pilgrims and among Gulf (especially Saudi Arabia) female labor migrants in several locations in Central Java (including Yogyakarta) and Madura.

The research method of data collection and analysis used by the author was “an inductive, reflexive, and qualitative methodological approach, inspired by the methods of Grounded Theory,” which emphasizes the “constant shifting between analysis and further data generation, reflection, participant