

The *Old Indies* at the French Court: Johan Maurits's Gift to Louis XIV

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Abstract

In 1679 Prince Johan Maurits (1604-1679), the former governor-general of Dutch Brazil, presented French King Louis XIV (r. 1643-1715) with an extravagant gift comprised of Brazilian-themed images and objects, including a set of eight cartoons by the Dutch artist Albert Eckhout (1610-1665), which would be transformed into a set of tapestries known as the *Old Indies* (*Anciennes Indes*). This article will focus on the points of convergence between the *Old Indies* and the *Escalier des Ambassadeurs*, or Ambassador's Staircase, at Versailles – the decoration of which was being completed at the same time Johan Maurits presented his gift. Aimed at making tangible the possibility of colonial conquest, the immersive environments created by the tapestries and the staircase's convincingly painted spectacle blurred the boundaries between reality and representation, mediating an ideological space that existed between the static, centralised authority of the French court and the far-flung colonial possessions it sought to acquire.

Keywords: Johan Maurits, Louis XIV, Dutch Brazil, diplomacy, gift exchange, Old Indies, Ambassador's Staircase

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In July 1679 – just a few months before his death – Prince Johan Maurits (1604-1679), the former governor-general of Dutch Brazil, sent Louis xiv (r. 1643-1715) an extraordinary gift of paintings by two Dutch artists who had accompanied him to Brazil during his governorship (1637-1644): twenty-seven paintings of the Brazilian landscape by Frans Post (1612-1680) and fifteen paintings of the people, flora, and fauna of Brazil by Albert Eckhout (1610-1665).¹ Of the fifteen paintings by Eckhout, eight were cartoons that would eventually be transformed into the tapestry series known as the *Old Indies* (*Anciennes Indes*), which would circulate widely in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, finding its way into collections in Paris, Rome, St. Petersburg, and Valletta (figs. 1-4).² Despite the popularity of the *Old Indies*, the political and artistic discourse that spurred Johan Maurits's gift has not been fully explored, perhaps because he died shortly after the gift was made. One of the primary concerns of this essay, then, is to better situate Johan Maurits's gift to Louis xiv within the context of late seventeenth-century inter-European politics, a period when heightened tensions between France and the Dutch Republic necessitated cautious diplomacy. During this volatile time, Johan Maurits's gift had to be carefully crafted in order to appeal to the French

1 For more on the contents of the gift, see Whitehead and Boeseman, *A Portrait of Dutch 17th century Brazil*, 109-116; Joppien, 'The Dutch Vision of Brazil', 297-376. Johan Maurits's list of the contents of the gift is reproduced in Thomsen, *Albert Eckhout*, 178-183, and Larsen, *Frans Post*, 255-259. The original list is in The Hague, Koninklijk Huisarchief, iv, dossier 1478. I would like to thank the *EMLC* editorial board and the anonymous reviewers for their insightful criticisms. I am also grateful for the feedback I received when I presented earlier versions of this research at the 2016 symposium, *Versailles in the World, 1660-1789*, at New York University, and a 2018 Amsterdam Centre for the Study of the Golden Age colloquium. I would also like to thank Claire Bonavia, Principal Conservator/Restorer of Textiles and Paper at Heritage Malta, and Keith Muscat, Administrative Executive Office of the President, for granting me access to the tapestries in Malta and for generously sharing their time and expertise. Finally, I would like to thank the Historians of Netherlandish Art for providing the financial support that enabled me to travel to Malta.

2 The paintings sent to the Gobelins Manufactory were given the inventory number 442, the rest of the paintings were given the inventory number 443: Corrêa do Lago, *Frans Post*, 52. The cartoons for the tapestries survive today in the Mobilier National in Paris, although they are in poor condition from having been cut into strips for use in low warp looms.

king's artistic tastes, which were closely bound to his political ambitions in Europe and by his desire to expand his empire beyond the borders of the continent. These ambitions were made manifest in the no-longer-extant *Escalier des Ambassadeurs*, or Ambassador's Staircase, at Versailles, the decoration for which was executed between 1676 and 1680 – precisely the period when Johan Maurits offered his lavish gift to the French king.

This article will focus on the points of convergence between the *Old Indies* tapestry series and the Ambassador's Staircase by drawing attention to the unique sensorial experiences the works elicited. The immersive environments created by the tapestries – which made tangible the possibility of colonial conquest – and the staircase – which pictured a worldly procession glorifying the French king – blurred the boundaries between reality and representation, mediating an ideological space that existed between the static, centralised authority of the French court and the far-flung colonial possessions it sought to acquire. By highlighting these artistic intersections, this article builds upon the growing body of scholarship of the 'new diplomatic history', which has drawn critical attention to the importance of art objects in early modern diplomatic negotiations – not just as objects of monetary or symbolic value, but as dynamic mediators capable of communicating across geographical and ideological spaces.³ In the case of Johan Maurits's gift to Louis XIV, prioritising the efficacy of the tapestry cartoons as diplomatic agents in their own right allows for a richer understanding of the discourse engendered by the gift, which was contingent upon the colonialist ideologies shared by the former governor-general and the French king and complicated by the growing tensions after the Franco-Dutch War (1672-1678).

The first part of this essay summarises the correspondence between Johan Maurits, his agents, and the agents of the French king, leading up to and following the presentation of the gift to Louis XIV in 1679. I will draw attention to Johan Maurits's persistent efforts to have Eckhout's cartoons transformed into tapestries. In the second part, I suggest that Johan Maurits sought to provide a multi-sensory experience for those who visited his Brazilian collection at his home in The Hague and that this kind of experience was also implicit when viewing the *Old Indies*. At the French court, tapestries were likewise used to create spaces that signalled a departure from the everyday world, and it is in this context that I frame the incorporation of the *Old Indies* into the royal collection. In the third part of my essay, I address how Louis XIV's political and colonial ambitions were articulated in the illusionistic decorations of the Ambassador's Staircase and how the fixity of the staircase was complemented by the mobility of the *Old Indies*. In the final section, I suggest an alternate motivation for Johan Maurits's gift to Louis XIV, one that situates Johan Maurits as a diplomatic agent for Frederick Wilhelm, Elector of Brandenburg, rather than for the Dutch Republic, as has been traditionally asserted.

³ See, most recently, Bierdermann, Gerritsen, and Riello, *Global Gifts*; Um and Clark, 'The Art of Embassy'; Martin, 'Mirror Reflections'. See also Colantuono, 'The Mute Diplomat'.

The Gift: Preparations, Correspondence, and Reception

In December of 1678, Johan Maurits began writing letters to members of Louis xiv's inner circle, testing the waters to see if the gift would be well received.⁴ In his written correspondence, he repeatedly emphasises the authenticity and originality of the works, but also suggests that they would be appropriate models for a series of tapestries. In a letter of 21 December 1678 to the French Secretary of State, Marquis de Pomponne, for example, Johan Maurits wrote:

These rarities represent the whole of Brazil in painting, [...] all in realistic scale, as well as the places in that country, the cities and forts in perspective; with these portraits it is possible to design a tapestry for a large room or gallery.⁵

It is worth noting that this is not the only time Johan Maurits suggested that Eckhout's painted works be made into tapestries. He did the same with his 1652 gift to Frederick Wilhelm, the Elector of Brandenburg, who eventually had a set made for himself in 1667, commissioned from the weaver Maximillian van der Gucht in The Hague. Johan Maurits himself also had a set of tapestries made from Eckhout's cartoons, perhaps the same cartoons that were supplied to the elector and later to Louis xiv.⁶ Unfortunately, both of these sets have long since disappeared. Nevertheless, it seems that for Johan Maurits the transformation of Eckhout's cartoons into finely woven hangings represented an essential part of his motivation for presenting the gifts in the first place, as it would place him within a prestigious group of patrons for whom the presentation of tapestries was an elite form of social capital.⁷

After some back-and-forth, it was eventually agreed that Johan Maurits's gift would be well-received by the king and, indeed, Maurits received a favourable response when he proposed the idea himself. Arrangements were made and the paintings were sent in July 1678 from The Hague to Paris via Cleves, where Johan Maurits himself could inspect the contents.⁸ The artist Paul de Milly, who had been employed by Johan Maurits

⁴ The following account of the correspondence is a summary derived from the work and documents published by Thompsen, *Albert Eckhout*; Larsen, *Frans Post*; Vittet, 'Jean-Maurice de Nassau-Siegen et Louis xiv'; Whitehead and Boeseman, *A Portrait of Dutch 17th century Brazil*.

⁵ Johan Maurits to Pomponne, Cleves, 21 December 1678, translated in Corrêa do Lago, *Frans Post*, 51. For the original letter, see Larsen, *Frans Post*, 254 (doc. 52) and Thomsen, *Albert Eckhout*, 177.

⁶ Joppien, 'The Dutch Vision of Brazil', 324-325. As Whitehead and Boeseman point out, Johan Maurits already had two tapestry series made from Eckhout's paintings: one for the Mauritshuis, and one for the elector. Whitehead and Boeseman, *A Portrait of Dutch 17th century Brazil*, 107-115.

⁷ For more information on how Johan Maurits's textile gifts embodied the socio-political bonds he was trying to broker in Europe and beyond, see Anderson, 'Material Mediators'. Johan Maurits made two other major gifts. The first was in 1652 to the Elector of Brandenburg, Frederick Wilhelm I, and included a number of Brazilian artefacts, a series of now lost paintings by Albert Eckhout, and hundreds of oil sketches after life, also mostly by Eckhout. The second, to King Frederik III of Denmark in 1654, included Eckhout's famous series of paintings of the people, flora, and fauna of Brazil, currently housed in the National Museum in Copenhagen.

⁸ The paintings were sent to Paris in mid-July 1679. They were exhibited in mid-August, although they were not seen by the king until 21 September: Whitehead and Boeseman, *A Portrait of Dutch 17th century Brazil*, 110-111.

to restore some of the paintings before their delivery, accompanied the gift to France and it is from his correspondence with Johan Maurits that we know a little about the gift's reception.⁹ The gift arrived at the theatre of the royal château of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, near Paris, prompting visits from the king, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, nobles, and members of the royal family. According to De Milly, after seeing the cartoons, the king conveyed 'extraordinary satisfaction and spoke cheerfully, indicating that he wanted to see them again at his leisure'.¹⁰ De Milly later wrote to Johan Maurits: 'I said to the King that in these presents there was enough to make a Gobelin or any other thing quite out of the ordinary.' He added that 'the King and the royal family returned in fact, while distinguished visitors crushed each other daily in the gallery'.¹¹ One of these visitors was Charles Le Brun (1619-1690), First Painter to the King, who – again according to De Milly – 'praised' the cartoons, saying that beautiful tapestries could be made from them.¹²

Despite the urging of Johan Maurits and De Milly and the initial enthusiasm of the king and Le Brun, it was not until 1687, eight years after the initial gift, that, with the Gobelins's low-warp weavers apparently lacking work, the cartoons were made into tapestries.¹³ These tapestries served as the models for the set known today as the *Old Indies*, which was woven at least eight times between 1687 and 1730: of the eight woven sets, three entered the Royal Furniture Repository, two went into storage at the Gobelins, one was an official commission from Ramon Perellos, Grandmaster of the Knights of Malta, and was hung in the Supreme Council Chamber in the Grandmaster's Palace, one was a gift to Czar Peter the Great, and one set was displayed in the French Academy in Rome. In addition, there were a number of single tapestries made on private commission.¹⁴ The second series, which was commissioned in 1689, went to Versailles and stayed there until the French Revolution of 1789. Today, all the tapestries from the set that originally hung in the Château are in the Mobilier National in Paris.

9 Michael Benisovich, 'The History of the Tenture des Indes', 219-220. See also Jean Vittet, 'Jean-Maurice de Nassau-Siegen et Louis XIV', 59-66.

10 Cited in Bremer-David, *Woven Gold*, 30. See also Benisovich, 'The History of the Tenture des Indes', 220. Although it is difficult to tell what personal interest Louis XIV had in collecting, his reign was characterised by a renewed interest in the arts, which had been of secondary interest to his predecessors Louis XIII and Henri IV: Antoine Schnapper, 'The King of France as Collector', 194.

11 Benisovich, 'The History of the Tenture des Indes', 220.

12 Vittet, 'Jean-Maurice de Nassau-Siegen et Louis XIV', 63.

13 Fenaille, *État general de la Manufacture des Gobelins*, II, 282-283, 371. According to Henri Bessé's memoir, cited in Fenaille, on 19 June 1687 'the low-warp workers having no further work, I proposed making the first of the *Indians* series. I had the paintings brought from the furniture warehouse and shown to Monseigneur Louvois, who spoke of them to the king, and His Majesty approved this proposal.' (Translation in Bremer-David, *Woven Gold*, 30.) It is also possible that the abundance of images of the natural world were appealing to the court at this time: Bertrand, *La Peinture Tissée*, 109-110.

14 See the chart in Whitehead and Boeseman, *A Portrait of 17th century Dutch Brazil*, 120-121, and Klatte, Prüssmann-Zemper, and Schmidt-Loske, *Exotismus und Golbalisierung*.

'To See Brazil Without Crossing the Ocean': Experiencing Johan Maurits's Brazilian Collection

More than thirty-five years before Johan Maurits offered the remains of his Brazilian collection to Louis xiv, the former governor-general received Constantijn Huygens (1596-1687) and Professor Adolph Vorstius (1597-1663) into his home in The Hague to view – or more properly *experience* – the images and objects he had brought back from his Brazilian sojourn.¹⁵ After the visit, Vorstius was exuberant about the marvels he had seen there. He wrote that 'there I saw with eager eyes, and heard with rapt ears – endlessly enthralled by that incomparable war hero – things that rendered us both speechless with astonishment'. He went on to describe the 'magnificent and monstrous things that the skies and seas and the land there produce', the 'many skilfully painted fish, four footed creatures, birds, insects and plants from America', and 'the buildings, fortifications and fortresses, the Brazilian landscape spread out there in all its charm'. He continued:

And it was not only with painted or beautifully conceived scenes that the great hero amazed us, but also with the objects depicted in them. What a treasure of unwrought and carved ivory, of highly precious timber, of extremely rare hides, and colourful feathers, was to be seen there. With what skill were those coverlets and decorations of his noble sofa harmoniously made from the feathers of varicoloured Indian birds. I recall in particular that admirable bird which has a feather for its tongue, and the other one with those horns [...]. Everything we saw, handled, and tasted at the hero's home was delightful and pleasurable. I would make an exception for that Brazilian drink seasoned with pepper, which was neither to your taste nor mine [...]. In this letter I have enumerated everything I was able to recall from that overwhelming abundance of things.¹⁶

This passage is incredibly valuable for the insight it gives us into Johan Maurits's collection prior to its dispersal, but it also reveals the ways in which the experience of art objects and ethnographic material was not limited to sight alone, but engaged also with the senses of touch, taste, and hearing.

When Johan Maurits wrote to the Marquis de Pomponne almost four decades later, he promised a similar experience, assuring him that the gift would enable the French king to 'see Brazil without crossing the ocean'.¹⁷ In this statement and with his gift, Johan Maurits again seemed concerned with supplementing a purely optical knowledge of his Brazilian collection with objects that could provide a more immersive experience, for his gift was not limited to Post and Eckhout's paintings, but also included objects from Brazil – such as a hammock that the young Dauphin reportedly swung on – and additional pictures with Brazilian subjects, which were likely used as supplementary visual sources to enrich the tapestries.¹⁸ Johan Maurits also included in the gift a copy of Willem Piso's 1658 edition of *Historiae Naturalis Brasiliae*, which would aid the French

¹⁵ For more on Johan Maurits's collection, see Françaço, *De Olinda a Holanda*.

¹⁶ Vorstius to Huygens, Leiden, 20 December 1644, cited in Buvelot, *Albert Eckhout*, 141.

¹⁷ Maurits to Pomponne, Cleves, 21 December 1678, cited in Larsen, *Frans Post*, 254-255.

¹⁸ On the hammock, see Madeleine Jarry, 'The "Tenture des Indes"', 313. There has been some debate concerning the eighty-five items included on the Description des Tableaux que le Prince Maurice de Nassai a offerts au Roi Louis xiv (The Hague, Koninklijk Huisarchief, iv, dossier 1478). While Benisovich, Larsen, and Jarry have interpreted the list as actual objects, Joppien, Whitehead, and Boeseman believe they are images – although some



Fig. 1 Manufacture Royale des Gobelins, atelier Etienne Le Blond, after cartoons by Albert Eckhout, Old Indies (Anciennes Indes), 1708-1710, wool and silk, Valletta, Malta, Tapestry Chamber, Grandmaster's Palace. Courtesy of Heritage Malta/Daniel Cilia.

court in deciphering the imagery, some of which may have been unfamiliar.¹⁹ Johan Maurits also hoped that he would be able to send along someone who had been to Brazil and could explain the significance of the images and objects. Unfortunately, this would not come to pass, as his financial agent, Jacob Cohen, would explain to him in a letter dated 9 January 1678:

I have not yet found a Brazilian that would be able to explain the paintings, since most of them have died – the Brazilian sojourn having been more than twenty-five years ago. If old Post himself, who is still alive, were able to do it, that would be excellent. But he has become a trembling drunk. His friends do not think he is in any position to present himself before a king or to go on such a long trip.²⁰

We of course do not know to what extent these pictures, objects, and texts would have aided in communicating the immersive effect that Johan Maurits was after, for there are few remaining records and the supplemental items are no longer extant. The tapestries,

objects do seem to have been included in the gift. On this debate, see Whitehead and Boeseman, *A Portrait of Dutch 17th Century Brazil*, 112-113. The original list is produced in Larsen, *Frans Post*, 255-259.

¹⁹ According to letter dated 25 August 1679, De Milly read from this book to an excited group of courtly visitors, including the queen and the dauphin: Vittet, 'Jean-Maurice de Nassau Siegen et Louis XIV', 62.

²⁰ Cohen to Maurits, Amsterdam, 9 January 1679, cited in Corêa do Lago, *Frans Post*, 52, and Sousa-Leão, *Frans Post*, 164.

however, do remain and we can imagine the impact they would have had on the viewer. Since the tapestries no longer hang in Versailles, to get a sense of their grandeur it is necessary to turn to the set that hangs still to this day in the Supreme Council Chamber in the Grandmaster's Palace in Valletta, Malta, which provides the only opportunity to experience the whole set in a space for which they were custom-made (fig. 1).

Approximately 450 centimetres tall and between 300 and 500 centimetres wide, each tapestry in this group of ten hangs about 30 centimetres off the floor; together they largely cover the lower portion of the walls. The series, which features a lush and overgrown Brazilian landscape populated with Amerindian and African inhabitants, has no obvious narrative, although the abundance of the land is emphasised through the naturalistic



Fig. 2 *Manufacture Royale des Gobelins, atelier Etienne Le Blond, after cartoons by Albert Eckhout, The Striped Horse (Le cheval rayé), from the Old Indies, 1708-1710, wool and silk, 470×504 cm, Valletta, Malta, Tapestry Chamber, Grandmaster's Palace. Courtesy of Heritage Malta.*



Fig. 3 *Manufacture Royale des Gobelins, atelier Etienne Le Blond, after cartoons by Albert Eckhout, The Two Bulls (Les deux taureaux) (detail), from the Old Indies, 1708-1710, wool and silk, Valletta, Malta, Tapestry Chamber, Grandmaster's Palace. Courtesy of Heritage Malta.*

representation of the flora and fauna that occupy it.²¹ Although Eckhout spent approximately seven years in Dutch Brazil, and produced copious drawings and oil sketches after life, the tapestry designs are a combination of directly-observed Brazilian life and conventionalised exotic motifs. The *Striped Horse* tapestry, for example, features accurately rendered Brazilian animals, such as guinea pigs and armadillos, cohabitating with a Great Indian Rhinoceros, made famous by Dürer's 1515 woodcut, which displays the imagined horn also present in the tapestry (fig. 2). The wild nature of the subjects suggests the untamed nature of the Brazilian landscape, although such unhindered violence is tempered through the introduction of recognizable European conventions and motifs.

To be surrounded by this impressive series of tapestries is to be in a space that is alive with activity, a space that seems to respond to the presence of a viewer in a way that animates the chamber. In the *Two Bulls*, for example, the bulls turn their heads slightly so their gaze

²¹ For an important and beautifully illustrated reconsideration of the flora, fauna, people, and objects represented in the tapestries, see Klatt, Prüssmann-Zemper, and Schmidt-Loske, *Exotismus und Globalisierung*.

meets the viewer's directly, and abundant vegetation is presented in a basket as if available for consumption (fig. 3). The juxtaposition of the bountiful harvest in the foreground with the sugar mill and the houses of wealthy settlers in the background might remind the viewer of the role of European colonisation in exploiting wealth from the region, largely through



Fig. 4 *Manufacture Royale des Gobelins*, after cartoons by Albert Eckhout, *The Fishermen (Les pêcheurs)*, from the *Old Indies*, c. 1692-c. 1723, wool and silk, 358 × 305 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

the enslavement of Africans, who laboured at the sugar mills. In *The Fisherman*, the figure's twisting form is seen from the back, acting as the viewer's Amerindian surrogate and encouraging the spectator to imagine himself in the scene (fig. 4). Such motifs bring to mind Marina Belozerskaya's study of Renaissance luxury objects, in which she suggests that tapestries were experienced as 'interactive tableaux, rather than passive artefacts'.²²

Seen by the flickering light of candles, it is not hard to imagine how the tapestries would come to life, animating the occupants of this exotic world. The brilliance of the woven threads that make up the birds in the upper portion of the *Striped Horse* tapestry, for example, would evoke the radiant plumage of living avian specimens, an effect that would be enhanced as the viewer moved about the room, changing the way in which the light was reflected by the textiles; similarly, the fur of the South American jaguar is adeptly imitated in the luminous density of its threaded counterpart, magnifying the ferocity of its attack. The river, populated with different species of South American fish, would appear to shimmer in the tropical sunlight as it flowed tantalisingly close to the space of the viewer. In their capacity to absorb and reflect light, the interwoven threads that comprise the three-dimensional space of the textile approximate the experience of viewing the specimens first-hand, surrounding the viewer with a convincing vision of Dutch Brazil – a contained spectacle, orchestrated for the pleasure of the viewer. For Johan Maurits – and for subsequent owners of the *Old Indies* series – these tapestries simulated an immersive experience, a liminal space whereby one could truly 'see Brazil without crossing the ocean'.

For Louis XIV, the subjects of Johan Maurits's Brazilian tapestries were unique within the king's already large collection. During the reign of Louis XIV, the royal tapestry collection consisted of both inherited works dating back to the Renaissance and works commissioned from the Gobelins, the famous French manufactory established by Colbert between 1662 and 1664 and operated under the expertise of First Painter to the King, Charles Le Brun.²³ The tapestries from the collection – both old and new – were frequently used to line the streets during sacred and secular ceremonies, and to decorate the interior of royal edifices, demarcating alternative spaces that signalled a departure from the everyday. Jean le Pautre's (1618-1682) print of the Reims cathedral during the king's 1654 coronation provides a compelling example of this tradition: tapestries hang on four levels and include many of the crown's most famous sets, such as the *Acts of the Apostles* after Raphael and the *Triumphs of Scipio* after Giulio Romano (fig. 5).²⁴ These tapestries – many of which were spun with gold- or silver-wrapped threads – would block the light coming in from the exterior only to be illuminated by candelabras, the light from which would

²² Belozerskaya, *Luxury Arts of the Renaissance*, 95.

²³ On the royal tapestry collection under the reign of Louis XIV, see especially Vittet and Brejon de Lavergnée, *La Collection de tapisseries de Louis XIV*; Bremer-David, *Woven Gold*. See also Bertrand, 'Tapestry Production at the Gobelins'. According to a 1716 inventory of the Crown's furniture, Louis XIV possessed 304 tapestry sets consisting of 2566 individual pieces and 85 single hangings: Brejon de Lavergnée, 'Louis XIV, Patron and Collector of Painting and Tapestry', 2.

²⁴ For more on the uses of tapestries in the coronations of Louis XIV and Louis XV, see Bertrand, 'Louis XIV and Louis XV', 39-50; Knothe, 'Tapestry as a Medium of Propaganda'. See also Vittet, 'Les tapisseries de la Couronne à Versailles', 177-197.



Fig. 5 Jean le Pautre after Henry d'Avise, The Anointing and Coronation of the King from The Solemn and Magnificent Coronation Ceremony of King Louis xiv, 1655, etching, 65 × 48 cm, Versailles, Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon.

flicker off the metal threads, fundamentally altering the interior fabric of the church by creating an otherworldly space appropriate for such an illustrious ceremony.²⁵

Corpus Christi celebrations (known in France as Fête-Dieu) also provided the crown with an excuse to put the royal collection of tapestries on display. Corpus Christi was the Catholic celebration of the Eucharist, a feast and procession day that was often visualised as the Christian triumph over heresy.²⁶ Of the 1677 Fête-Dieu, the royal newspaper *Mercurie galant* describes an astonishingly long list of tapestries that lined the courtyards of Versailles for the procession:

All the courtyards through which the procession passed were decorated with some of the most beautiful tapestries of the king. Mr. du Metz, superintendent of the royal wardrobe, ordered Mr. Coquino, keeper of the wardrobe, to transport them to Versailles. Here are those that were set out: the Acts of the Apostles by Raphael, Psyche by Raphael, the Grotesques by Raphael, the Triumphs of Scipio by Giulio Romano, the Fruits of War, which belong to the king of Spanish, the Story of Constantine by Rubens, & the Months of the Year that once belonged to Monsieur de Guise. All these sets are woven with gold. They are accompanied by the Hunt by Holbein, the famous German painter. The modern tapestries that were shown that same day & that were made after the designs by Mr. Le Brun & woven at the Gobelins, representing the entire ensemble of the History of the King, were: the Coronation of His Majesty; the Conference, or the Interview of the King with the King of Spain the Marriage of the King; the Audience that His Majesty Gave at Fontainebleau to the Cardinal Legate; the Alliance Made with the Swiss. All the Conquests of the King in different pieces in which His Majesty is represented naturally, with all that is found in the ceremonies, sieges, and combats that one admires in these weavings. They are all woven with gold as nicely as the following: the Story of Alexander, the Royal Residences, the Muses, the Seasons, and the Five Senses. The last are still made after the designs by Mr. Le Brun, First Painter to the King, & they are worked with such art and delicacy that they are as lively as painting.²⁷

This description not only hints at the size and quality of the holdings housed in the royal wardrobe in Paris and transported to Versailles, but it also helps us to imagine what it might have been like to be surrounded by a seemingly endless procession of tapestries during a royally-sanctioned sacred festival. To walk amongst these larger-than-life textiles, hanging side-by-side, woven in gold, and glittering in the sun must have left quite an impression, indeed. For members of and visitors to the French court, these displays of tapestries – which would ripple, stretch, move, muffle, and sometimes, surely, emit musty odours – signalled an alternate space marked by imperial presence, a space that one experienced differently from the everyday world.

But whereas Louis XIV's collection of tapestries pictured countless scenes from antiquity, historical typologies, contemporary allegories, and French court culture, the *Old Indies* series offered something that no other set of tapestries in his collection could: convincingly naturalistic images of a colonial possession. And although it was well-known in the court that the tapestries represented Dutch Brazil, not a French colony, this seeming conflict of interest was

25 For a description of how such a hanging affected Reims in Louis XV's coronation, see Bertrand, 'Louis XIV and Louis XV', 41-42.

26 In the Spanish Americas, the Cusco celebration of Corpus Christ included Amerindian confraternity leaders, who would dress as their royal Incan ancestors, which – in the eyes of the Spanish – embodied their own heretical past. On this celebration, see Carolyn Dean's canonical study *Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ*.

27 Translated in Knothe, 'Tapestry as a Medium of Propaganda', 345-346. See also Vittet, 'Les tapisseries de la Couronne à Versailles', 187-198.

remedied, in part, when the French coat of arms was added to the tapestries' borders, which – in effect, if not in reality – transferred authority from the Dutch to the French. As moveable decoration, the *Old Indies*, like the other tapestries in the collection, circulated between royal residences, serving a number of functions according to the thematic needs of the court. This was most certainly the case with some of the other well-known sets, as Jean Vittet has shown. For example, by 1673 Louis xiv had the series the *Hunts of Maximillian* moved to his apartment at Versailles, whereas the Queen and Dauphin had their apartments decorated with the sets *Psyche* and *Children's Games* respectively.²⁸ It is certain that the *Old Indies* sets retained in the royal wardrobe moved around, too, especially given Louis's fondness for it. On this matter, Vittet has recently uncovered two compelling references in the National Archives of France.²⁹ One of these references indicates that in 1698 one of the tapestries was enlarged, likely to fit a space in the royal residence. Though we can only speculate precisely where the tapestries may have been displayed, this note offers convincing evidence that they were included in the king's decorative program by the end of the seventeenth century. The other reference records a 1697 repair to the tapestries after they appeared in a Fête-Dieu. This latter reference is particularly compelling because it shows how the tapestries could easily become incorporated into sacred court ceremony: as an 'interactive tableaux', to borrow Belozerskaya's phrase, the Brazilian figures in the *Old Indies* series became participants in the ritualised performance of their perceived heresy. As these examples demonstrate, although the *Old Indies* tapestries may have represented the triumphs of Johan Maurits' Brazilian colony, they could easily be adapted to suit the ideological program of the French court.

Global Aspirations: Johan Maurits, Louis xiv, and the Visual Language of Colonialism

It is not hard to imagine how Johan Maurits's gift might have resonated with Louis xiv, who was actively pursuing colonial holdings in the Americas and Asia in the latter part of the seventeenth century.³⁰ Although France had struggled to maintain colonial possessions in the first half of the century, the policies that Colbert implemented after 1665, when he became minister of finance, lead to some measure of success.³¹ For Colbert colonial expansion was a means of increasing French revenue and, most importantly, undermining the success of Dutch maritime trade. His policies had a significant impact on the French holdings in the Lesser Antilles, including Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Dominica, among other smaller islands. In the past, these colonies had provided raw materials, such as tobacco,

²⁸ Vittet, 'The French Royal Collection of Tapestries at its Zenith', 13-14; Vittet, 'Les tapisseries de la Couronne à Versailles', 184-187.

²⁹ Vittet, 'Jean-Maurice de Nassau-Siegen et Louis xiv', 64-65.

³⁰ For an account of French colonial expansion prior to Louis xiv, see Eccles, *The French in North America*, esp. chapters 1 and 2. See also Wood and Catriona, *Locating Guyane*.

³¹ Eccles, *The French in North America*; Mims, *Colbert's West India Policy*. Compare to Pritchard, *In Search of Empire*, 18, who argues that Colbert's policies were 'confused, short-sighted, and frequently contradictory' and that they 'contributed little to establishing French colonies in the Americas'. See also Jacquin, 'The Colonial Policy of the Sun King'; Crouse, *The French Struggle for the West Indies*.

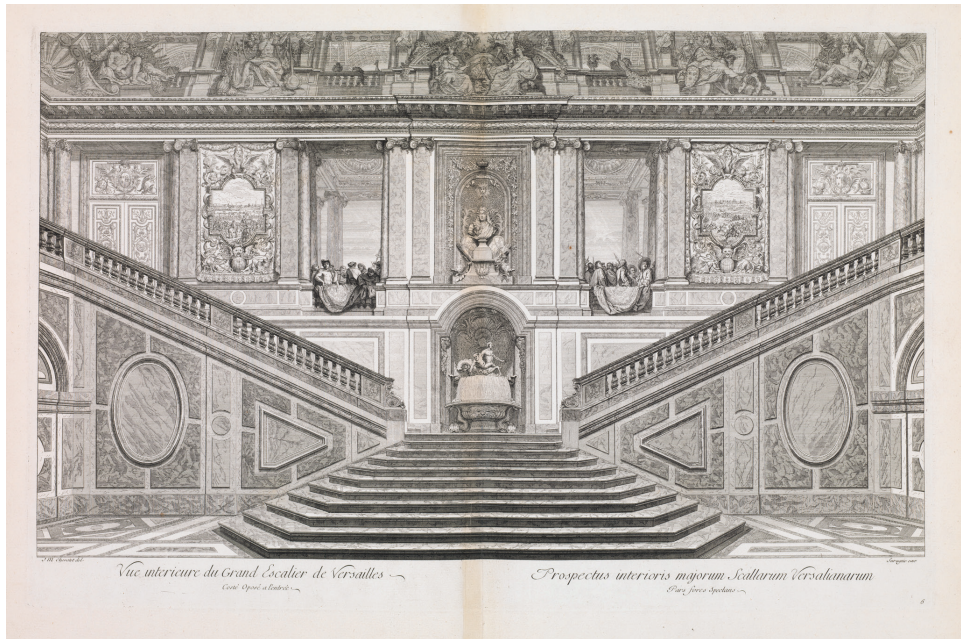


Fig. 6 Louis Surugue after Jean-Michel Chevotet, North wall of the Escalier des Ambassadeurs, engraving 53.5 × 40.7, in: L.C. Le Fèvre, *Grand escalier du château de Versailles, Paris, 1725*, New York City, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

cotton, and especially sugar, to the Dutch, who would refine it and sell it back to the French for a profit. By 1674 Colbert's policies had successfully created a closed mercantile system, more-or-less eliminating official trade between the Dutch West India Company merchants and the French Antilles, although private Dutch merchants proved more difficult to neutralise.³² Seen in this context, the tapestries, which presented images of plentiful raw materials like sugar cane as well as the technology for its preliminary refinement, would have been appealing to the French king, for they pictured those commodities essential for the economic success of the Caribbean colonies. It is also possible that part of the appeal of Johan Maurits's gift stemmed from the fact that the Dutch were no longer in possession of the Brazilian colony pictured in the cartoons, having lost it to the Portuguese in 1654. For the King and Colbert, then, the vibrant depiction of the commodities of the former Dutch colony may have offered a happy reminder of the revenue that was now lost to the Dutch, after it had been strategically cut off from Caribbean trade by Colbert's anti-Dutch policies.

For Louis XIV, Colbert, and Le Brun, of course, visualisations of French victories over the Dutch constituted an important part of the decorative program at Versailles in the second part of the 1670s – when the Ambassador's Staircase was completed – and the early 1680s when work on the Hall of Mirrors was underway (fig. 6). Johan Maurits's gift to Louis XIV, which was in negotiation between December of 1678 and July of 1679 coincided with the

32 Marzagalli, 'The French Atlantic and the Dutch'.

final phase of decoration of the Ambassador's staircase. This grand staircase, which was demolished by Louis xv in 1752, was at once the main entrance to the palace, the primary means of accessing the State Apartments on the second floor, and a spectacular hall meant to entertain and impress visiting dignitaries.³³ A 1672 plan of the staircase reveals that it was originally to be decorated with herms, trophies, and medallions, but the program shifted considerably after the onset of the French War with the Dutch in 1672. Instead of generic symbols of victory, the hall would feature a glorious festival-like atmosphere, attended by inhabitants of the four parts of the world in illusionistic loggias, as if they were Louis xiv's loyal subjects celebrating the triumphs of the king in a spectacle that must have impressed any visitor to Versailles (figs. 6-8).³⁴

Charles Le Brun's biographer subsequently wrote of these figures:

These double galleries seem to be filled with figures that represent all sorts of nations from the two Indies, East and West, Persians, Greeks, Armenians, Muscovites, Germans, Italians, Dutchmen, Africans; in short all those who are known [...]. One can claim that when this great king comes down this staircase and is followed by all the princes and princesses, it makes a spectacle so grand and superb that one could think that all these people gather as a crowd in this space to honour his passing through and to witness the most beautiful court in the world: in such a way that all these subjects are artistically linked together, the real with the fictive.³⁵

These perpetual witnesses were joined by four painted trompe l'oeil tapestries picturing French military victories during the Dutch war: the illusionistic tapestries, along with the painted textiles hanging over the balustrades of the loggias, imitate the decorations often used in temporary triumphal celebrations. The paintings on the ceiling, on the other hand, use quadrature to exhibit an architectural structure housing muses of the sciences and the arts, personifications of the Four Continents, and semi-allegorical images of French triumphs, including the king's 1672 Ordering the Sieges of Dutch Towns (fig. 9).

But the Ambassador's Staircase was not only about showing France's dominance over the Dutch Republic; more to the point, Le Brun's decorations immersed visiting dignitaries within a fictive world that was designed to demonstrate France's dominance on a global scale. As Caroline Yerkes has recently argued, the novelty of the staircase had little to do, in fact, with its architectural framework – which, unlike Renaissance staircases, was not an independent entity. Instead, its innovation stemmed from the integration of the staircase within the decorative program: the illusionistically rendered figures and the trump l'oeil tapestries seemed to transgress representational space, creating the illusion that viewers are a part of the painted spectacle, even as they participate in the actual spectacle taking place in the grand hall.³⁶ It must have struck visiting diplomats and envoys as

³³ On the Ambassador's Staircase, see – among others – Berger, *Versailles*, 29-39; Burchard, *The Sovereign Artist*; Yerkes, 'The Grand Escalier at the Château de Versailles', 51-83; Nivelon, *Vie de Charles Le Brun*, 466-472; Charles Le Brun, *Le décor de l'escalier des Ambassadeurs*; Sabatier, *Versailles ou la figure du roi*, 146-191; Kirchner, *Der Epische Held*; Milovanovic, *Du Louvre à Versailles*, esp. 297-299; *Mercurie Galant*, September 1680, 2e partie, 277-320.

³⁴ Berger, *Versailles*, 33.

³⁵ Cited in Burchard, *The Sovereign Artist*, 207, 222; Nivelon, *Vie de Charles Le Brun*, 471-472.

³⁶ Yerkes, 'The Grand Escalier at the Château de Versailles', 51-83.



Fig. 7 Louis Surugue after Jean-Michel Chevotet, Different Nations of America, engraving 32×25,8, in: L.C. Le Fèvre, Grand escalier du château de Versailles, Paris, 1725, Cambridge, MA, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of Belinda L. Randall from the Collection of John Witt Randall. © President and Fellows of Harvard College.



Fig. 8 Louis Surugue after Jean-Michel Chevotet, Different Nations of Europe, 31,6 × 25,9, in: L.C. Le Fèvre, Grand escalier du château de Versailles, Paris, 1725, Cambridge, MA, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of Belinda L. Randall from the Collection of John Witt Randall. © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

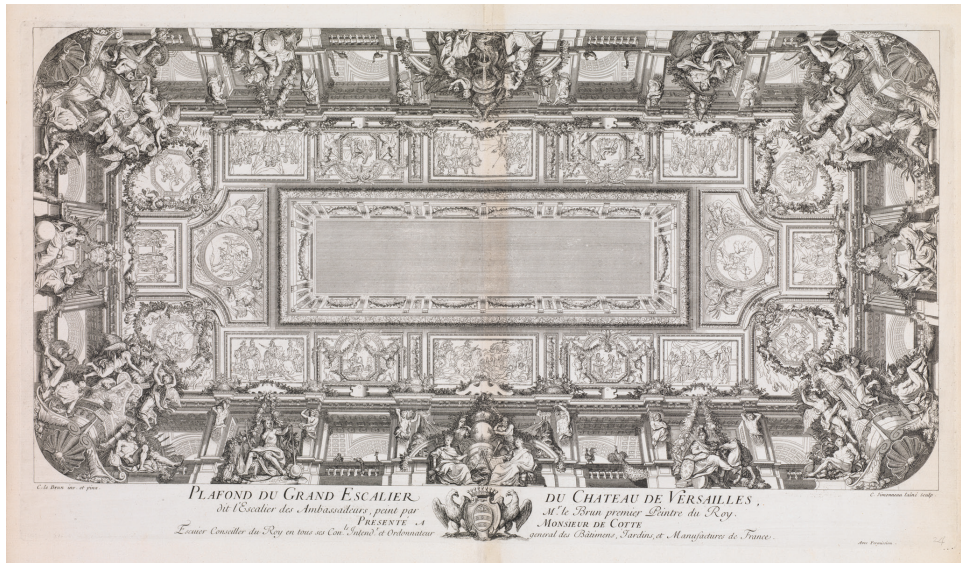


Fig. 9 Louis Surugue after Jean-Michel Chevotet, Vault of the Escalier des Ambassadeurs, engraving 53,5 × 40,7, in: L.C. Le Fèvre, *Grand escalier du château de Versailles*, Paris, 1725, New York City, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

rather entertaining – amongst other things – to stand among these painted figures, who had likewise crossed the globe to witness the glorious arrival of French king.

There is, of course, a fascinating correspondence between the visual vocabulary of the staircase and the tapestries – not in the figures themselves, which are decidedly dissimilar, or even in the subject matters, which stem from different, albeit related, iconographical traditions, but in their capacity for suggesting the continuity of representational and actual space. The represented textiles that hang over the balustrades spilling into the space of the viewer, for example, and the barely contained fish that seem to risk abandoning their woven sanctuary (figs. 2 and 7), or the variously posed figures in both the tapestries and the staircase decorations, whose seemingly random idiosyncrasies suggest their actual presence (figs. 4 and 8). I am not trying to suggest that Le Brun used Eckhout's cartoons as models for his paintings, even though, as De Milly reported, he did see them when they were put on display and was quite impressed by them. I do think, however, that both the tapestries and the wall paintings rely on a visual tactic intended to bridge the geographic and temporal dislocations that characterised the colonial agenda for European powers in the early modern period. This visual language, which challenges the relationship between real and represented space, is designed to bring distant worlds closer – to be possessed, controlled, and exchanged between agents of authority.

But while Le Brun's paintings participated in a design program inseparable from the space for which they were made, Eckhout's cartoons, once transformed into tapestries, could negotiate spaces beyond Versailles. In that sense, the cartoons themselves embody a potential for mobility that could act as a complement to the fixity of larger symbols of the King's

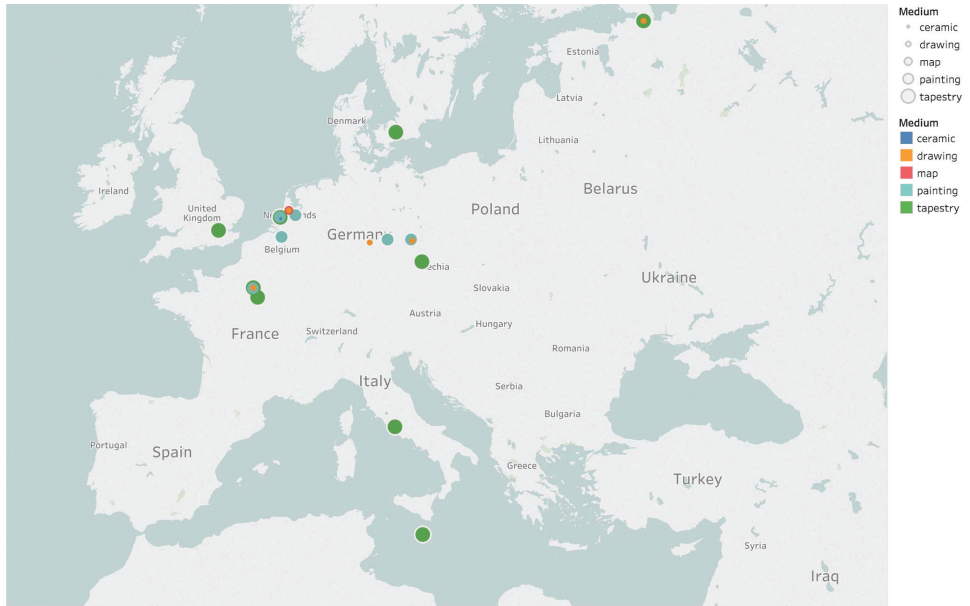


Fig. 10 Locations of the copies made after Johan Maurits's gifts. Map created by Carrie Anderson using Tableau, 2018.

authority – building projects like Versailles, for example.³⁷ Refined and expensive though they were, tapestries, by virtue of their material, can be rolled up and transported, a trait that served the rulers of peripatetic royal courts, such as the Habsburg's famous 'Moving Wardrobe' from the sixteenth century, which consisted of an astounding ninety-six tapestries. During Louis XIV's reign, despite the move of the court to Versailles, the king and his household still moved between royal residences, which likewise necessitated the transfer of moveable furnishings like tapestries. In addition, copies made after the works in the royal tapestry collection travelled extensively, something that was likely a desired outcome for both Johan Maurits and Louis XIV.³⁸ As shown in fig. 10, a map that plots the locations of the copies made after Johan Maurits's initial gift presentations to Frederick Wilhelm, Frederik III, and Louis XIV, it is the tapestries made after Eckhout's cartoons (indicated in green) that travelled the *furthest*, representing the geographical outermost ring of the copies.³⁹

This is a conspicuous pattern because although transportable, it would be an overstatement to say to that a series of eight to ten 450 by 300-centimetre tapestries was easy to

³⁷ See also Bailey, *Architecture and Urbanism in the French Atlantic Empire*.

³⁸ Anderson, 'Material Mediators'.

³⁹ The data on this map has been compiled from the findings presented in Whitehead and Boeseman's extensive iconographical study of Johan Maurits's Brazilian collection and its artistic legacy, *A Portrait of 17th century Brazil*. This map also includes data reflecting the dispersal of the series referred to as the *Nouvelles Indes* (*New Indies*), which were based on new cartoons made by François Desportes (1661-1743), although many motifs from Eckhout's original designs are still evident: Whitehead and Boeseman, *A Portrait of Dutch 17th century Brazil*, 138-150; Klatte, Prüssmann-Zemper, and Schmidt-Loske, *Exotismus und Globalisierung*.

transport. Moving the tapestries from Paris to Malta, for example, involved a number of mules, frequent stops, and a journey through pirated seas before arriving in Malta twelve weeks later.⁴⁰ What I think this map does suggest, however, is a shared mentality about the peripatetic potential of tapestries, in spite of – or maybe even because of – the challenges inherent to their transportation. For Johan Maurits the reproduction and distribution of the series offered him an opportunity to showcase the fruits of his labour in the Dutch colony in the most spectacular way and, as I have argued, it is precisely the geographic distance from the place they purport to represent that amplifies the viewer's visceral response to the new spaces they create. To use the set in Malta again as an example: to be surrounded by these dramatic images of Brazil on a remote Mediterranean Island is as dazzling today as it must have been then – an experience that is further intensified by the way that tapestries can dampen the acoustics, alter the lighting, and even change the smell of a room, creating an experience that truly seems to transcend space, no matter how fanciful the woven images of Brazilian wildlife might be.

On Whose Behalf? Johan Maurits, Louis XIV, and Frederick Wilhelm

In the above discussion, I have described the ways in which Eckhout's tapestry cartoons mediated a discourse between the French King and the former governor-general, a discourse that hinged upon the cartoons' commensurability with existing visual programs of Eurocentric rhetoric in the so-called Age of Exploration. But while this discussion speaks to the shared visual language of these elite European rulers, it does little to identify Johan Maurits's motivation in presenting the cartoons to Louis XIV in the first place. Was he eager to receive financial compensation, as is often suggested?⁴¹ Monetary return seems to have been – at least in part – a matter of concern, as Johan Maurits frankly expressed his preference for cash rather than jewels or precious stones as a return on his gift in a 1679 letter. This letter, however, was written six months after the gift had been presented and may not reflect his original intentions, nor does it preclude the possibility of alternative motivations.⁴² Was he trying to propagate a visual legacy of his former successes in Dutch Brazil? It certainly seems likely that his gifts to the Elector of Brandenburg in 1652, to King Frederik III of Denmark in 1654, and to Louis XIV in 1679 – all major players on the European political stage – as well as his repeated requests to have Eckhout's paintings made into tapestries (requests he made to both the elector and the French king) signal his desire to spread a visual record of his achievements. But these two explanations tend to overshadow an alternate scenario that had to do not with his personal financial circumstances or his legacy, but may instead reflect his efforts at navigating the growing tensions between the Dutch Republic, France, and Brandenburg in the 1670s. In this regard, Rebecca Brienen

⁴⁰ Grazzini, 'The Striped Horse,' 394.

⁴¹ See for example Joppien, 'The Dutch Vision of Brazil', 325; Corrêa do Lago, *Frans Post*, 51; Buvelot, *Albert Eckhout*, 133.

⁴² According to Benisovich, the letter was written on the eve of his death, which may have also played a role in his request for cash: Benisovich, 'The History of the Tenture des Indes', 220.

has previously suggested that Johan Maurits's gift to Louis XIV may have been motivated by a desire to ease strained relations after the conclusion of the Franco-Dutch war (1672-1678).⁴³ This is certainly possible, as tensions remained high even after the war had ended with the signing of the Treaty of Nijmegen in August 1678. Nevertheless, while the conclusion of the peace may have provided the general context for diplomatic engagement, the ongoing domestic conflicts between the States-General and Stadtholder William III, and the increasingly icy relations between the Elector of Brandenburg and the Dutch Republic, must have also played a significant role in motivating Johan Maurits's gift, as I will presently discuss.

The tensions between the States-General and the House of Orange re-emerged not long after William III's reinstatement following the French invasion of the Dutch Republic in 1672.⁴⁴ After devastating military and financial losses, the States-General advocated the conclusion of a peace treaty with Louis XIV and his powerful army, ending the war. William III, on the other hand, worked tirelessly to negotiate an anti-French alliance between the Dutch Republic, Brandenburg, Spain, and the Austrian empire, effectively prolonging the war. The stadtholder prevailed and a treaty was signed on 1 July 1674 with the stipulation – requested by Frederick Wilhelm – that any member of the alliance could choose to conclude a peace with France, as long as it was not injurious to the other members of the alliance.⁴⁵ Although Frederick Wilhelm added this clause to protect his own interests, the amendment was in the end to his own detriment. On 10 August 1678 the States-General – independent of the alliance – signed the Treaty of Nijmegen, which concluded a peace with Louis XIV, ending the war and enabling France to once again support their ally, Sweden. For the elector, this turn of events was disastrous, for he desperately sought to retain control of Stettin, a commercially strategic region on the Baltic that had been in Sweden's control until the elector had conquered it in 1677. The elector offered the French king money and troops in the hopes that he could keep Stettin, but Louis would not acquiesce. In June of 1679, the elector had no other choice but to sign the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, which effectively restored Stettin, along with some other territories, to Sweden.⁴⁶ William III was furious with the States-General for abandoning the alliance, warning that the Dutch Republic would gain a reputation for being untrustworthy, but the damage had already been done.⁴⁷

Johan Maurits, who was both a member of the House of Orange as well as a former States-appointed field marshal, must have had to tread carefully during this politically volatile period. With this in mind, should we interpret his gift to Louis XIV as an assurance of loyalty on behalf of the States-General, a means of easing unresolved tensions between France and the Dutch Republic? If so, it seems odd that the States-General did not contribute any gifts on their own behalf, as they did with the famous 'Dutch gift' to Charles II in 1660, who received a number of Italian and Dutch paintings, amongst other desirable

43 Brienens, *Visions of Savage Paradise*, 207.

44 On the tensions between the Dutch Republic, France, and Brandenburg in the 1670s, see especially Troost, 'William III, Brandenburg, and the anti-French coalition', 299-311, and Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 796-841.

45 Troost, 'William III, Brandenburg, and the anti-French coalition', 305-306.

46 On French-Brandenburg relations, see especially Cartsen, 'The Rise of Brandenburg', 543-555.

47 Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 825.

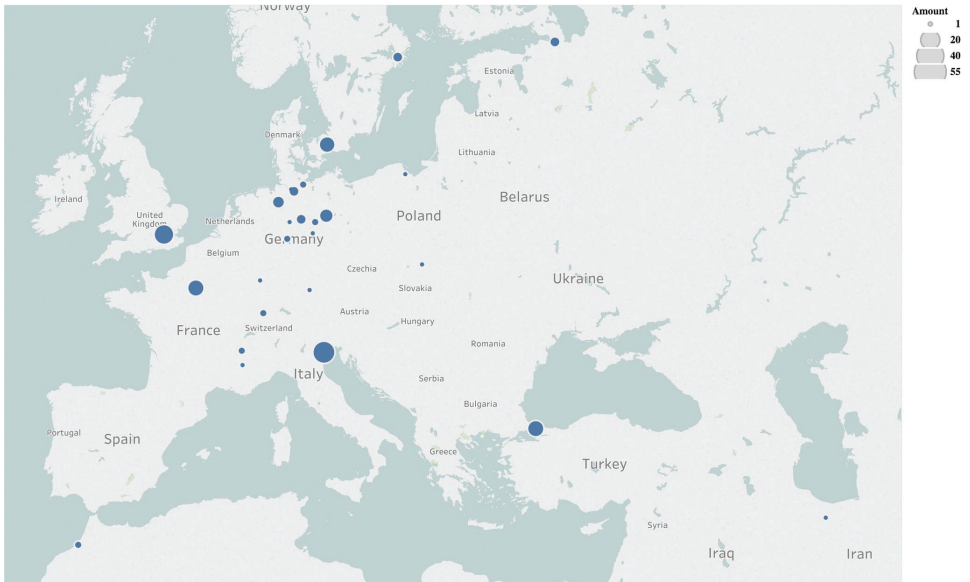


Fig. 11 Locations of the recipients of the diplomatic gifts offered by the States-General, 1610-1630. Map created by Carrie Anderson using Tableau, 2018.

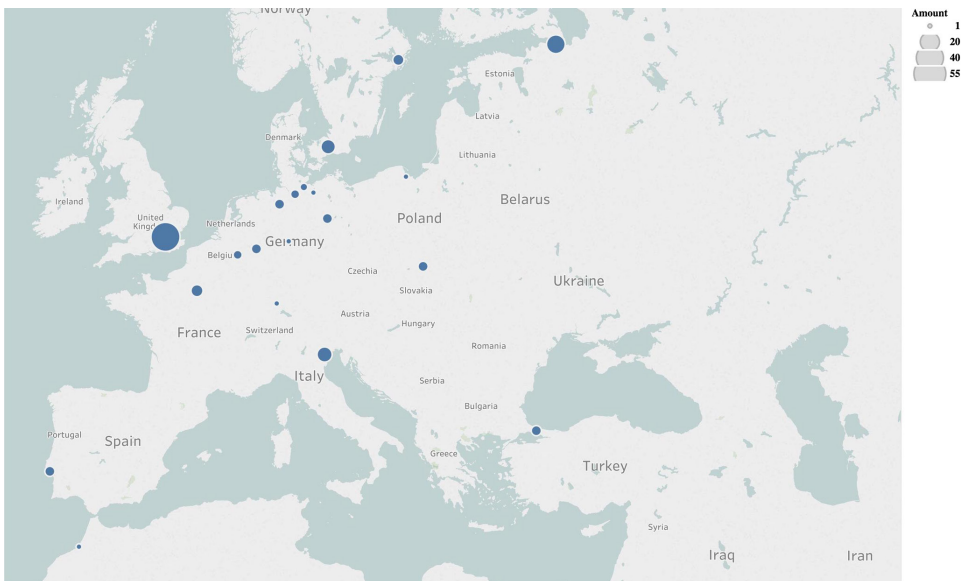


Fig. 12 Locations of the recipients of the diplomatic gifts offered by the States-General, 1631-1650. Map created by Carrie Anderson using Tableau, 2018.



Fig. 13 Locations of the recipients of the diplomatic gifts offered by the States-General, 1651-1670. Created by Carrie Anderson using Tableau, 2018.

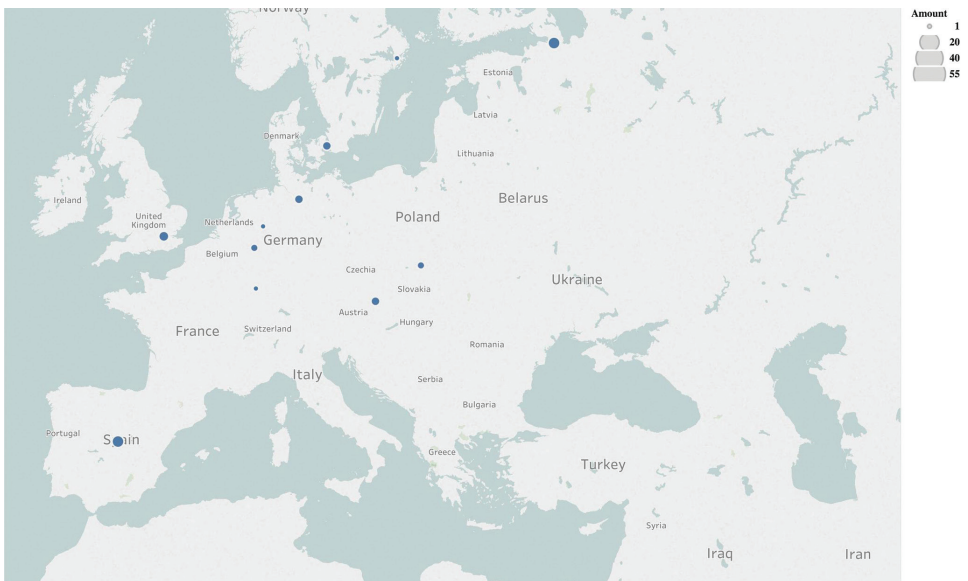


Fig. 14 Locations of the recipients of the diplomatic gifts offered by the States-General, 1671-1680. Map created by Carrie Anderson using Tableau, 2018.

objects. Indeed, a closer look at the gifting patterns of the States-General over the course of the seventeenth century suggests that Johan Maurits was not, in fact, working in unison with the States (figs. 11-14).⁴⁸ As these maps demonstrate, between 1610 and 1680 diplomatic gifts from the States-General to the French Crown slowed in number before ceasing entirely – at the precisely the moment when Johan Maurits presented his gifts to Louis XIV. This pattern suggests that the States-General and Johan Maurits were not working together to bring stability to Franco-Dutch relations and that the governor-general's gifts were not presented on behalf of the States-General.

It seems equally unlikely that Johan Maurits would have presented his gift to Louis XIV on behalf of the stadtholder, given William III's adamant anti-French position. Instead, the timing of Johan Maurits's gift was tactically much better suited to supporting the political agenda of Frederick Wilhelm, the Elector of Brandenburg. Johan Maurits, after all, had been in the service of the elector since 1647, acting as the stadtholder of Cleves. The two had a close personal relationship, as well as a professional one, and Johan Maurits had supported him in other instances, including the uprising of the Estates of Cleves.⁴⁹ For his part, Frederick Wilhelm, who was married to Stadtholder Frederick Henry's eldest daughter Louise Henriette until her death in 1667, and who had spent much of his youth in Holland, generally supported the Dutch, fighting alongside them against the French during the war of 1672-1678 until tensions arose between the elector and the States-General as a result of the broken alliance. Considering that Johan Maurits begins to write letters to the French court after – and not before – the signing of the Treaty of Nijmegen, which is when the trouble began for the elector, it seems entirely possible that his gift to Louis XIV was made in an effort to win a favourable ear on behalf of the elector. Whereas the elector's promises of money and troops had no effect on the seemingly wealthy and militarily strong French king, Johan Maurits was in a unique position to offer him something the elector could not: a body of images that seemed to realise the king's desire for colonial occupation. Unfortunately, we will never know if his gifts ever would have had the desired effect on Louis XIV since Johan Maurits died shortly after, effectively ending the French king's obligation. Nevertheless, it seems likely that Johan Maurits's efforts to gain the favour of the French king were enacted – as least in part – on behalf of the elector, who had been betrayed by the Dutch Republic at the worst possible moment.

Conclusion

Anthony Colantuono has convincingly demonstrated how paintings could play an active role in mediating inter-European political discourse in the early modern period by prompting a shared – and often quite nuanced – consideration of complex iconographic

⁴⁸ The data for these maps were collected from the rigorous appendices of Sanders's *Het Present van Staat*, a study that examines the gifted medals and chains given to diplomats visiting The Hague. To this I added the famous 'Dutch gifts' given to the English crown in 1612, 1636, and 1660, since they are significant acts of diplomacy.

⁴⁹ Opgenoorth, 'Johan Maurits as the Stadholder of Cleves'.

typologies.⁵⁰ In this article I have sought to demonstrate that Johan Maurits's gift of tapestry cartoons to Louis xiv was successful not only because it drew from a common iconography of European expansionism, but also because it mobilised a shared visual language of colonial occupation – a language in which immersive spaces pictured distant lands available for occupation and natural resources ripe for consumption. As diplomatic agents Eckhout's tapestry cartoons negotiated a number of complementary registers of meaning: they were spectacular displays of wealth and opulence; they were surrogates for the colonial ideologies of their owners; and they were virtual worlds that evoked irretrievable pasts and possible futures. For Johan Maurits, Louis xiv, and Frederick Wilhelm, it was not just what the tapestries depicted – although that was of no slight importance – it was how the tapestries could mediate and animate the socio-political worlds that they inhabited.

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⁵⁰ Colantuono, 'The Mute Diplomat'.

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