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LE BLEU DES MERS

DIALOGUES ENTRE LA CHINE, LA PERSE ET L'EUROPE

TEXTS BY MONIQUE CRICK, YOLANDE CROWE AND ALICE FRECH

This book reflects and was inspired by the growing interest throughout the world in the development of commercial, cultural and artistic relations between East-Asia and Europe. This contact began with the Pax Mongolica and became more firmly established with the burgeoning exploration of the world by Europeans at the end of the 15th century. The book traces the enthralling adventures of the Portuguese and Dutch explorers who ranged the seas in their search for spices and returned with a corner of their holds kept aside for a novelty, Chinese blue and white porcelain produced during the Ming dynasty (1368—1644). This porcelain created a sensation and was immediately collected by Europe's royal families before it became more widely available thanks to the large cargoes of the merchantmen of the Dutch East India company, VOC. Its introduction into western lands, was to have a profound influence on the local decorative arts, whether Safavid Persian pottery or European painting, to which the book devotes two chapters. Chinese porcelain appears in Muslim miniatures and in still lifes, even those of a religious nature, revealing how these precious objects were used and their impact on daily life. Thanks to this interweaving of historical and artistic perspectives, the text and pictures lead the reader on a voyage of discovery of how Chinese ceramics became a constant presence in daily life.

Monique Crick is an art historian specializing in East Asian art. After a long period as an independent researcher working on special assignments at the Musée national des Arts asiatiques-Guimet and the Musée Cernuschi, where she founded the Société Française d'études de la Céramique Orientale, in 2003 she was appointed director of the Fondation Baur, musée des Arts d'Extrême-Orient in Geneva. She has taken part in several underwater archaeological excavations in South-East Asia. Monique Crick has written several articles and catalogues and has appeared on the scientific committee of numerous exhibitions.

Yolande Crowe is an independent researcher and art historian specializing in Islamic art, teaching ceramics and architecture in England and in the United States. She has also worked on archaeological material from sites in Iran and Afghanistan. She has written several articles on the decorative arts and architecture of Islam. Yolande Crowe's research is mainly concerned with transcultural relations across Eurasia. She is the author of *Persia and China: Safavid Blue and White Ceramics in the Victoria and Albert Museum 1501-1738*, published in 2002.

Alice Frech joined De Jonckheere, a gallery specializing in 16th- and 17th-century Flemish painting, after obtaining her "licence" in the History of Art at the University of Strasbourg, followed by an MBA in Art Market Administration. At the same time, she presented a Master's dissertation on still life connoisseurs in 18th-century salons under the supervision of Professor Alain Mérot and Véronique Gérard-Powell at Université de Paris IV- Sorbonne. Alice Frech has been the director of the De Jonckheere gallery in Geneva since 2011 and is in charge of document research.