

IIAS outreach

HISTORICAL CONNECTION

Delft – Jingdezhen

THE HISTORICAL CONNECTION between Delft and Jingdezhen can be traced back to the beginning of the VOC trade in Asia, when Chinese blue and white porcelain started to appear in Holland, following an incident in the Strait of Malacca some 400 years ago.

At that time, the city of Jingdezhen in the southern Chinese province Jiangxi had already for more than 200 years been the purveyor of the highest quality of Chinese blue and white porcelain to the imperial court. In Delft, the city's extensive pottery industry was just taking shape, following the immigration of a number of Antwerp potters who were fleeing Spanish rule in their own country at the end of the 16th century.

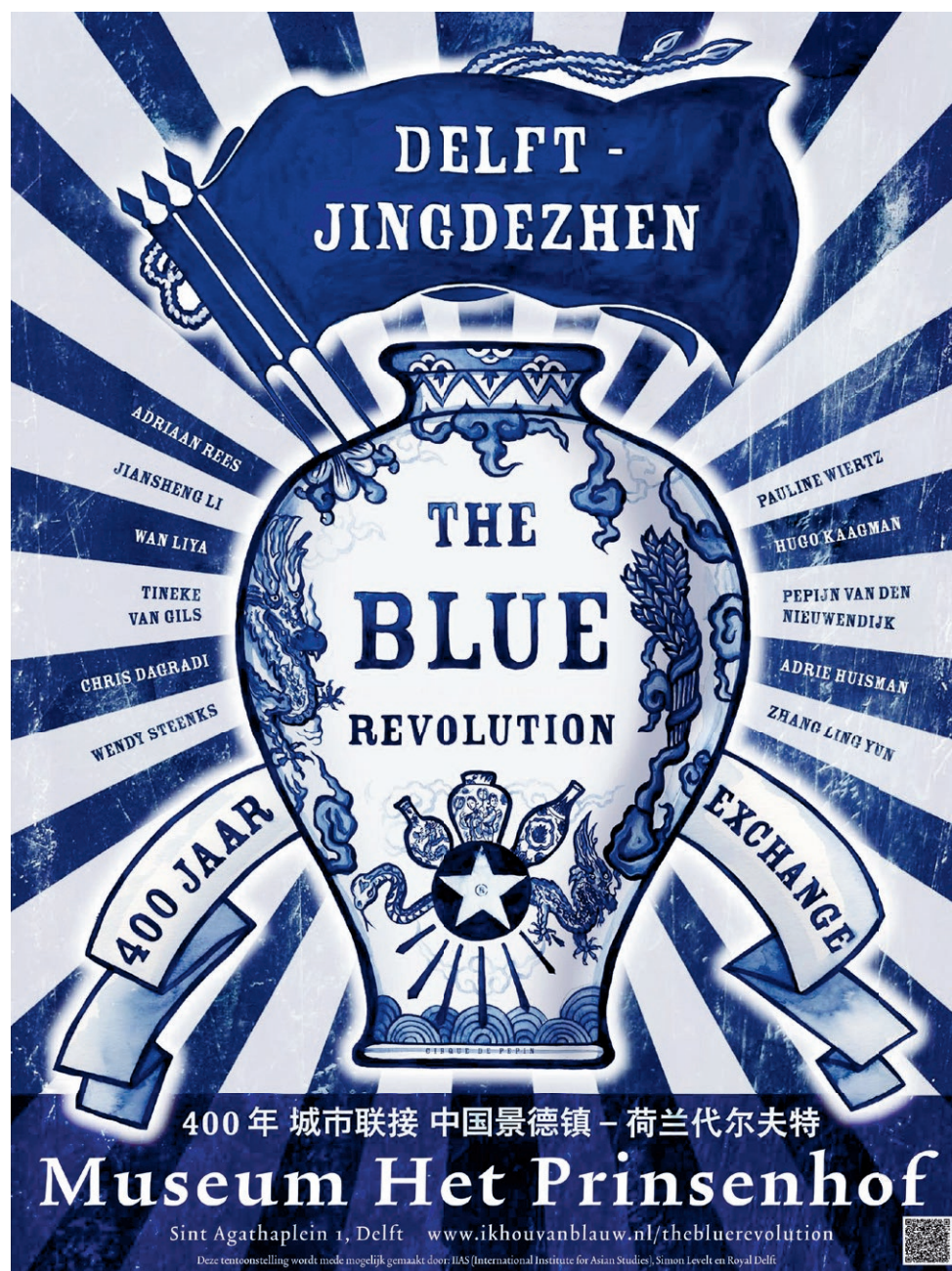
On 25 February 1603 at the entrance to the Strait of Malacca, a Dutch ship conquered the Portuguese carrack (a type of sailing ship), the *Santa Catharina*, and seized its cargo, consisting in part of large quantities of blue and white porcelain from China. These wares were sold at high prices upon their arrival in the Netherlands, and launched the large-scaled Dutch import of porcelain from China.



Ceramics artist Jianshen Li from Jingdezhen works on a portrait on porcelain during the opening of the exhibition in Delft.

The Delft pottery industry was suddenly faced with a formidable competitor. Although the Delft earthenware was a popular product, due to the application of a tin glaze that sealed the otherwise porous earthenware, it was no match for the much lighter and visually more appealing porcelain from China. In order to survive, the Delft potters soon started to copy the blue and white Chinese motifs to make their products more attractive. Visa versa, Dutch demand influenced the Chinese production of porcelain for the Dutch market. On the VOC's request, the Chinese potters copied examples of Dutch earthen- and silverware shipped out to them, resulting in a large array of different types of porcelain tableware, some of them completely in Delft style and decorated with Dutch scenes.

Owing to the dedication and expertise of a number of 17th century Delft masters, 'Delft Blue' soon became very popular and a global brand. It was widely exported in Europe and even reached China and Japan.



On display in the Museum Het Prinsenhof in the Dutch city of Delft is a remarkable exhibition, entitled 'Delft-Jingdezhen: The Blue Revolution, 400 Year Exchange' (20 May - 1 Sept 2013). As a joint project between Delft and the Chinese city of Jingdezhen, it will be on view again in the Imperial Porcelain Museum in Jingdezhen in the fall of this year. IIAS supports this exhibition in the framework of the Institute's Outreach Programme, which aims to bring a wider public into contact with Asian cultures and societies.

Sandra DeHue

IN 2006, THE TWO CITIES ENGAGED in the joint programme: 'Delft Jingdezhen 400-year cultural exchange'. Since then, there has been frequent contact between both cities, including the *Artists in Residence* programme, and visits by city officials. The cities have signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' aimed at further cultural, educational and economic exchanges. *The Blue Revolution* exhibition shows an overview of the results of the *Artists in Residence* programme. Featuring blue and white ceramic art works by contemporary Dutch and Chinese artists, the exhibition gives the visitor a view into the historical background linking the porcelain arts and crafts, and the 'past and present', of the two cities.

For more information go to www.prinsenhof-delft.nl and ikhouvanblauw.nl

RENEWED CONTACT

The 'Delft Jingdezhen 400-year cultural exchange' programme

THE RECENT RENEWAL of contact and cooperation between Delft and Jingdezhen is largely due to the efforts of the Dutch artist Adriaan Rees. This independent artist and sculptor, trained at the renowned Gerrit Rietveld Academie (Rietveld School of Art & Design), currently lives in Jingdezhen.

Adriaan Rees: "For the past fourteen years I have been visiting Jingdezhen in China. During that time the dynamics of the city and its people took hold of me. Nowadays I even live in Jingdezhen and for the past seven years I have run my own studio there. At the request of the Government of Jingdezhen, in 2006 I made my first attempt to initiate contact with the city of Delft in the Netherlands. In the years that followed I made connections between mayors, City Council Members, civil servants and artists and designers in Jingdezhen and Delft. In 2010 both cities signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' (MoU) for future cooperation and after that they officially became Sister Cities. I now work for the city of Delft as the project leader for the *Artists in Residence* project and the Museum Exchange.

In my own art the relationship between man and his surroundings are of primary importance. It is a necessity for me to travel and to work in new places all over the world. In these circumstances it is essential to work with other visual artists and artists working in other disciplines. The *Artists in Residence* project between Delft and Jingdezhen fits perfectly into this picture. Through the exchange of artists, designers and knowledge, a renewal and innovation could take place in the ceramics in both cities. Approximately 400 years ago the first contact took place between Jingdezhen and Delft. Because of the exchange programme the contact has been renewed. Artists and designers like Jiansheng Li, Pepijn van den Nieuwendijk, Wan Li Ya, Pauline Wiertz, Tineke van Gils, Chris Dagradi, Hugo Kaagman, Adrie Huisman, Wendy Steenks en Zhang Ling Yun made wonderful works and proposals during their work period in Jingdezhen and Delft, with great result and impact.

And it is just a beginning. More artists will follow and more collaboration will be made between the museums and the educational institutes in both cities. It is now up to everyone to develop these contacts and also reap its benefits!"

For more information go to www.adriaanrees.nl



'The Road Home' by Adriaan Rees (painted porcelain, made in his own studio in Jingdezhen). Photo taken by Ron Zijlstra at the exhibition 'The Blue Revolution'.

UPCOMING LECTURES

'Shipments and Sherds' and 'Carrack Porcelain from Jingdezhen'

IN THE CONTEXT of the exhibition, two lectures are scheduled for Saturday 6 July 2013. In her lecture 'Shipments and Sherds', Christine van der Pijl-Ketel will give an overview of the types of porcelain that

were produced for the Dutch market and how these were transported by the VOC to the Netherlands at the beginning of the 17th century. The second lecture on carrack porcelain from Jingdezhen will be delivered by Professor Jiang Jian Xin (Associate Director and Researcher of Jingdezhen Municipal Ceramics and the Jingdezhen Ceramic Archaeological Research Institute).

Christine van der Pijl-Ketel conducted research on the Chinese porcelains salvaged from a Dutch VOC shipwreck, and was editor of *The Ceramic Load of the 'Witte Leeuw', sunk in 1613 at St. Helena*, published by the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam. She is currently researching the Chinese export porcelain known as 'kraak ware', exported at the beginning of the 17th century, and is presently working on her PhD at the Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University.