

ASIAN ART MUSEUM  
Chong-Moon Lee Center  
For Asian Art & Culture  
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## News



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## ASIAN ART MUSEUM TO EXHIBIT RARE 17<sup>th</sup>-CENTURY MAPS SHOWCASING EARLY ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN CHINA AND THE WEST

***China at the Center* Presents Iconic Ricci and Verbiest Maps Together for the First Time**

**Multi-user touchscreens allow deeper exploration of maps' content**

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan. 25, 2016 – This spring, the Asian Art Museum will bring together for the first time two extremely rare 400-year-old maps that are the product of early interactions between European and Chinese scholars. In the late sixteenth century, Jesuit missionaries traveled to China, where they learned about Chinese culture and shared scientific knowledge with their hosts. *China at the Center* presents two maps that were the result of this cross-cultural exchange: Matteo Ricci's 1602 *A Complete Map of the Ten Thousand Countries of the World* and Ferdinand Verbiest's 1674 *A Complete Map of the World*. These massive woodblock-printed maps are physical representations of the

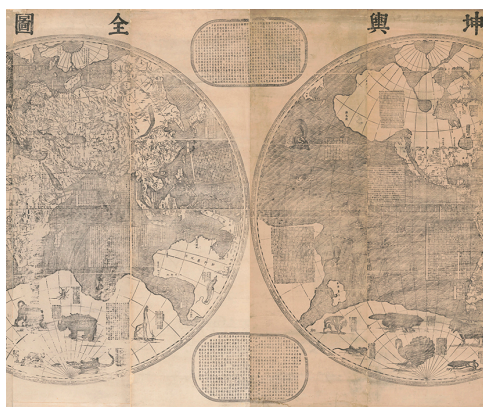
*A Complete Map of the Ten Thousand Countries of the World*, 1602, by Matteo Ricci (Italian, 1552–1610), with Li Zhizao (Chinese, 1565–1630), printed by Zhang Wentao (Chinese, dates unknown). China; Beijing. Six-panel woodblock print; ink on paper. Owned by the James Ford Bell Trust, held at the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota.

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joint scholarship of two very different cultures and show the world as it was perceived roughly four centuries ago. A highlight of the Asian's 50th anniversary exhibition series, *China at the Center* will be on view from March 4 through May 8, 2016, in the museum's Lee Gallery. The exhibition is co-curated Natasha Reichle, associate curator of Southeast Asian art, Asian Art Museum, and M. Antoni J. Ucerler, S.J., director, Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History, University of San Francisco.

To enhance visitors' interpretive experience, the museum is partnering with Ideum, a pioneer in the use of computer-based multi-touch and multi-user interactive experiences, to create two vibrant 55-inch interactive displays that will provide the chance to virtually "touch" the maps and access image details as well as English translations of the Chinese text. From these maps and interpretive displays, visitors can discover the world as it was perceived by Europeans and Chinese in the 17th-century and witness the nascent beginnings of the collaboration between East and West.

"*China at the Center* exemplifies our vision to spark connections across cultures and through time," says Jay Xu, director of the Asian Art Museum. "These intricately crafted maps represent the beginning of a history of collaboration between China and the West that continues to this day."



While their cartography was drawn mostly from European sources, the Ricci and Verbiest maps differ from European maps of the same period in their placement of the Americas to the right and Eurasia and Africa to the left, with China and the Pacific Ocean positioned near the center. The Chinese tradition of densely annotating maps is evident — their surfaces are covered with text, in some places supplying place names and in others providing a remarkable depth of

information about the geography of the world and the customs of the people within the regions. These maps identify the longest river in Africa, the peninsula of Florida, the feathered garb of Amazonian tribes, as well as descriptions and opinions on the products of certain regions such as Madeira, which was noted to make excellent wine. These maps are also a testament to the power of imagination, with fanciful descriptions of some of the world's people, flora and fauna, as well as giants, unicorns, mermaids and other mythical creatures referenced in legends from around the world.

### **Matteo Ricci: *A Complete Map of the Ten Thousand Countries of the World***

Dated 1602, the first of the two maps on display was made by Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) in collaboration with Chinese scholars. Ricci, one of the most influential Jesuit priests in

*A Complete Map of the World* (detail), 1674, by Ferdinand Verbiest (Flemish, 1623–1688). China; Beijing. Eight-panel woodblock print; ink on paper. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., G3200 1674.V4.

China, was the first Westerner allowed entry into the Forbidden City. Roughly 5 feet by 12 feet, the Ricci map was printed on paper using intricately carved wood blocks. It is the first Chinese map to show the Americas, and the oldest extant map to incorporate both Eastern and Western cartography. The map was made at the court of the Wanli emperor of the Ming dynasty and was designed to integrate Jesuit understanding of science and cartography as well as Chinese knowledge of Asia. The resulting conception of the world, while based on a European model, reflects Chinese familiarity with the geography of Asia. It also presents ethnographies gathered (and imagined) from all parts of the globe. The Ricci map is one of only six complete copies in existence and the only copy in the U.S. The map is owned by the James Ford Bell Trust, held at the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota, and has been loaned to the Asian Art Museum.

"It was such a unique opportunity to be able to acquire one of the most significant cartographical documents ever produced," said Dr. Ford Bell, former president of the American Alliance of Museums and Honorary Director of the James Ford Bell Library. "The map brings together the best of western science, mathematics and geography to show China, the western hemisphere and five continents in their relative positions. It represents a momentous first meeting of East and West."

#### **Ferdinand Verbiest: *A Complete Map of the World***

The colossal 1674 map of Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–1688) was made for the Qing emperor Kangxi and included significant information about the Americas, as well as images and descriptions of strange and exotic animals of the world. The text on the map near Peru, for example, details the region's products and natural resources, and also describes a bird (a rhea) that can outrun a horse and whose eggs can serve as a cup. The map also illustrates animals from North America like the turkey, the beaver from Europe, and the chameleon from Africa, which would have been strikingly unusual to many Chinese. The Verbiest map, on loan from the Library of Congress, Washington, DC, has never before been exhibited.

#### **PUBLICATION**

The exhibition will be accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue, published by the Asian Art Museum; softcover, \$19.95, 64 pages with foldout maps. The book brings together new scholarship and ancient images in a contemporary design. Three prominent essayists tell intriguing stories about these maps and the world in which they were conceived. Reproductions of Ricci's 1602 map and Verbiest's 1674 map are included as a foldout. Map details, marginalia printed in gold, and images from contemporary books offer additional context. Available soon at the Asian Art Museum store: [store.asianart.org](http://store.asianart.org) or 415.581.3600 or [shop@asianart.org](mailto:shop@asianart.org).

*A Complete Map of the World* (detail), 1674, by Ferdinand Verbiest (Flemish, 1623–1688). China; Beijing. Eight-panel woodblock print; ink on paper. *Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.*, G3200 1674.V4.

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**EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION**

This exhibition is organized by the Asian Art Museum in partnership with the University of San Francisco. Presentation is made possible with the generous support of The Akiko Yamazaki and Jerry Yang Fund for Excellence in Exhibitions and Presentations, James Ford Bell Trust, Penelope L. Wong and S. Timothy Kochis, and Maura and Robert Morey.

**ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO AND THE RICCI INSTITUTE**

The University of San Francisco is recognized internationally as a premier Jesuit Catholic, urban university with a global perspective. Founded in 1855 by the Italian Jesuit, Antonio Maraschi, S.J., at the height of the Gold Rush, it is one of the oldest institutions of higher learning in the State of California, and the first University established in the City of San Francisco. Founded in 1984, the Ricci Institute, is a global resource center at the University of San Francisco for the study of Chinese-Western Cultural History with a core focus on the social and cultural history of Christianity in China.

**ABOUT THE JAMES FORD BELL LIBRARY**

The James Ford Bell Library documents the history and impact of international trade prior to ca. 1800 C.E. Its premier collection of rare books, maps, and manuscripts illustrates the ways in which cultural influence expanded worldwide, with a special emphasis on European interactions. The James Ford Bell Library, its collection, and its innovative programs support scholarship and education at all levels, and enrich our community by advancing understanding of this global heritage, making the world we live in more meaningful.

Information: <https://www.lib.umn.edu/bell>

The Associates of the James Ford Bell Library: [www.merchantexplorer.org](http://www.merchantexplorer.org)

**ABOUT THE ASIAN ART MUSEUM**

The Asian Art Museum—Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture is one of San Francisco's premier arts institutions and home to a world-renowned collection of more than 18,000 Asian art treasures spanning 6,000 years of history. Through rich art experiences, centered on historic and contemporary artworks, the Asian Art Museum unlocks the past for visitors, bringing it to life while serving as a catalyst for new art, new creativity and new thinking.

Information: 415.581.3500 or [www.asianart.org](http://www.asianart.org)

Location: 200 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

Hours: The museum is open Tuesdays through Sundays from 10 AM to 5 PM, with extended spring and summer evening hours on Thursdays until 9 PM. Closed Mondays, as well as New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

*China at the Center* Admission: FREE for museum members, and children (12 & under). On weekdays, \$20 for adults and \$15 for seniors (65 & over), youth (13–17) and college students (with ID). On weekends, \$25 for adults and \$20 for seniors (65 & over), youth (13–17) and college students (with ID). *China at the Center* admission also includes entry to the special exhibitions *Pearls on a String: Artists, Patrons, and Poets at the Great Islamic Courts* and *Hidden Gold: Mining Its Meaning in Asian Art*.

General Admission: FREE for museum members, \$15 for adults, \$10 for seniors (65+), college students with ID, and youths (13–17). FREE for children under 12 and SFUSD students with ID. General admission on Thursdays after 5 PM is \$5 for all visitors (except those under 12, SFUSD students, and museum members, who are always admitted FREE). General admission is FREE to all on Target First Free Sundays (the first Sunday of every month). A surcharge may apply for admission to special exhibitions.

Access: The Asian Art Museum is wheelchair accessible. For more information regarding access: 415.581.3598; TDD: 415.861.2035.

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