

**BOXING VENUS:
COWRIE SHELL SNUFF BOXES IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE, 1680-1800**

by

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of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in American Material Culture

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ABSTRACT

Admired for their striking beauty and lustrous surface, cowrie shells were harvested from reefs in the Pacific and sold in markets across the globe. This Master's thesis explores the transpacific context of eighteenth-century tiger cowrie shell snuff box production, circulation, and consumption within the British Empire. Examining the whole history of cowrie shell boxes—from living organism to constructed box to object of social performance—highlights the impact of expanding global markets on the material culture and self-expression of people across the British Empire.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

William Young, a London Silversmith, was alarmingly roused from his bed at about three in the morning on November 9, 1743. Young woke to his apprentice banging at his bedroom door, shouting “For God’s sake come down, for I am afraid your Show-glass is gone and the street door is wide open.” Young rushed downstairs where he discovered that, indeed, his shop had been robbed, and the glass box in which he displayed key objects to market his craftsmanship had been taken. Among the many stolen objects that Young considered representative of his skills was a shell snuff box valued at 5 shillings. Ten days later, when the thieves were apprehended, Young identified his stolen goods stating “these two snuff-boxes, which I am positive are mine, I should have known them from a thousand.”¹ Though Young’s shell box was relatively inexpensive compared to the £6 silver snuff box that was stolen in the same robbery, in the court proceedings he expressed the sentimentality of a maker proud of his skills and fond of his shell snuff box.

Shell snuff boxes, like the one described by Young, were traditionally made from the *Cypraea tigris* or tiger cowrie, a species of cowrie distinctively patterned with purple, blue, black, and red spots on a creamy white base (Figure 1). Given their

¹ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 6.0, 17 April 2011), December 1743, trial of Samuel Moses, Michael Jude, and Solomon Athorn (t17431207-62).

highly lustrous bodies and natural pigmentation in vivid colors and diverse patterns, cowries were one of the most frequently used shells in the material culture of peoples across time, culture, and geography. Cowries were incorporated into jewelry, crafted into fishing tools, used as currency, and formed into boxes. From the mid-seventeenth century through the mid-nineteenth century, cowrie shells were transformed into boxes by cutting the labial teeth off the bottom of the shell and affixing a band of silver around the shell's edge to secure a silver lid. Current scholarship has categorized this form of cowrie shell box as a snuff container based on its diminutive size and tightly sealed lid.

Cowrie shell snuff boxes have been largely overlooked by scholarship as research on snuff boxes and tobacco accessories has favored traditional luxury materials such as gold, silver, porcelain, ivory, and tortoiseshell. Images of cowrie shell boxes are commonly included in books and catalogues to showcase their beauty and uniqueness, but few sources unpack the meaning and function of these objects or explain how they were constructed. The scholarly dismissal of cowrie shell boxes as an exotic fad has resulted in a dearth of knowledge surrounding the skills and craftsmanship involved in transforming an organic shell object into a box. Moreover, the absence of scholarship on these boxes has led to the misconception that shell boxes were solely produced in Scotland and England, when in fact, tiger cowrie boxes were made in the American Colonies and Early Republic as well.²

² Mattoon Curtis, *The Book of Snuff and Snuff Boxes*, (NY: Liveright, 1935); Kenneth Blakemore, *Snuff Boxes*, (London: Frederick Muller, 1976); Clare Le Corbeiller, *European and American Snuff Boxes: 1730 – 1830*, (London: Batsford, 1966).

In order to properly address this gap in scholarship I conducted a survey of cowrie shell boxes held in public collecting institutions such as the Winterthur Museum, Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, Cooper Hewitt Museum, and Historic Deerfield (Appendix A). I also utilized images and tombstone details published in collection catalogues despite their overwhelming lack of supplementary information. In total, the survey includes 50 shell snuff boxes with varying degrees of information relating to maker, provenance, place of origin, and date of construction.³

Most scholars have contextualized the tiger cowrie shell itself within the twin themes of exoticism and the Enlightenment based on the fashionable use of shells in grottos and decorative displays as well as their popularity in natural history collecting. The scholastic focus on these patterns of use promoted the notion that cowrie shells were fashionable because they were new and exotic, and therefore, it was the novelty of the shells that gave them their value, both socially and economically. Following this argument, the consumption of these shells—i.e., the creation of the boxes—became up in what amounts to a conspicuous consumption of curiosities. Meaning the contextual limitation of previous scholarship has rendered the shell void of any previous social attributions, leaving only its generic exoticism as a curiosity to be valued by an eighteenth-century consumer. I intend to complicate this traditional method of solely valuing shells based on their exoticism, whether scientific or aesthetic, and instead propose that that tiger cowrie snuff boxes were also desired because of their association with vice and lust.

³ A few of boxes in this survey were made from other species of shell, but I elected to include them in the survey to assist future research.

Examining the whole history of cowrie shell boxes—from living organism to constructed box to object of social performance—highlights the fundamental importance of the shell itself, its materiality and social connotations, to the functionality and desirability of this form of snuff box. Studying the whole life of these objects also reveals the inherent globalism of the boxes. The tiger cowries were sourced from Asian seas, fashioned into boxes in Britain and America, and then disseminated still further through additional trade networks. Cowrie boxes are not of a single place, but are the product of many places. They are the tangible result of global exploration, trade, and exchange.

Chapter 2

COWRIE SHELL SOURCING AND THE SHELL TRADE

The *Cypraea Tigris* or tiger cowrie is a species of mollusk native to the tropical water of the Indo-Pacific. Overland and Red Sea trading routes have brought tiger cowrie shells into Europe since ancient times, but access to these shells, at the scale required to be commodified into boxes, had to have occurred after the Pacific was opened to European trade. British voyages into the Pacific were the confluence of multiple desires but the two most salient factors were trade and scientific discovery. Naturalist Joseph Banks accompanied Captain Cook on his first voyage to the Pacific in 1768 as the scientific representative of the Royal Society on the *HMS Endeavor*. By the time Banks returned to England in 1771 he had amassed an incredible collection of natural specimens, including shells. Most of Banks's shell collection was the property of the Royal Society, but he also kept a personal collection which he disseminated amongst avid English shell collectors, such as the Duchess of Portland.⁴ But, Banks was not the only man onboard collecting shells. Banks noted in his travel diary that it became necessary for Captain Cook to forbid sailors onboard the *Endeavor* from trading with locals for shells because it was interfering with Banks's ability to compete in the market. Banks was further affronted when the same sailors who

⁴ Beth Fowkes Tobin, *The Duchess's Shells : Natural History Collecting in the Age of Cook's Voyages*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2014), 145-160.

undermined his efforts in the Pacific approached him in England to buy the very shells they impeded him from purchasing.⁵

The shipwreck of the *HMS Pandora* off the coast of Australia in 1791 provides further evidence that sailors were collecting cowrie shells to sell in England.⁶ While excavating the shipwreck in the 1960s Eric Coleman, a marine archeologist, discovered three unusual groupings of tiger cowrie shells. Tiger cowries are indigenous to Australia so their presence was not unexpected; however, these cowries were dead and clustered together in an unnatural way. Coleman concluded that the cowries were gathered through human action and, based on the location of the caches within personal spaces reserved for deckhands, sailors must have been responsible for these deposits of cowries.⁷ Coleman's theory, that sailors were collecting tiger cowries, is supported by the personal diary of Carl Peter Thunberg. A botany student of Linnaeus, Thunberg travelled to the East Indies as a surgeon with the Dutch East India Company in order to fund his global specimen collecting endeavors. In 1775 while at port in Cape Town he noted that a Company slaving ship sent to Madagascar returned with "amongst other articles which some of the crew brought with them, were

⁵ Tobin, *The Duchess's Shells*, 161-166.

⁶ The *HMS Pandora* was ordered to recover the *HMS Bounty* which was famously taken over by mutineers. The mission was partially successful as the *Pandora* captured 14 mutineers in Tahiti, however, the ship sank while continuing the search for the rest of the *Bounty* and her crew.

⁷ Ronald A Coleman, "The Currency of Cultural Change and 18th Century Pacific Exploration," *The Bulletin of the Australian Institute for Maritime Archaeology*, Vol 12, no. 1 (1988): 41-50.

in particular a large quantity of the *Cypraea tigris*, a handsome shell, which is used for making snuff-boxes.’’⁸

Though Thunberg details tiger cowrie sourcing within the Dutch Empire, these shells were undoubtedly bartered and sold by the sailors at any port with a ready market for shells. Furthermore, Amsterdam was a mecca for the shell trade in the eighteenth century. Many English and continental European shell collectors retained a network with shell dealers and traders in the Netherlands to capitalize on the abundance of exotic shells trafficked through Dutch ports.⁹ The European demand for tiger cowrie shells in the eighteenth century never reached the magnitude to induce the systematic organization of their sourcing by a company or entrepreneur. Rather, industrious sailors collected these shells as they journeyed around the world and then sold them in European port cities to curiosity shops and shell traders. Tiger cowries were one of the many natural materials that sailors depended upon for supplementary income. The profits from the tiger cowrie trade were discrete enough to evade formal taxation, yet dependable enough for sailors to acquire large enough quantities as to be remarked upon by Thunberg and to be discovered in a shipwreck hundreds of years later.

In addition to Madagascar, tiger cowries were sourced from islands throughout the Pacific. For scientific posterity, Banks and other scientific specimen collectors were highly concerned with recording the location where specimens were harvested.

⁸ Carl Peter Thunberg, *Travels at the Cape of Good Hope, 1772-1775: Based on the English Edition London, 1793-1795*, edited by Vernon S. Forbes, (Cape Town, South Africa: Van Riebeeck Society, 1986), 324-326.

⁹ Peter Dance, *A History of Shell Collecting*, (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1986), 39-44.

Based on this data and the supposition that sailors obtained at least some of their tiger cowries from the same areas as scientists, a tentative map for cowrie shell exchanges can be plotted (Figure 2). Between 1768 and 1800 tiger cowrie specimens were collected in: Tonga, Tahiti, Hawaii, the northeast coast of Australia and several locations in Indonesia. Pacific Islander ethnographic material collected from these same locations features tiger cowrie shells, indicating that local indigenous communities harvested the shells to some degree making these locations even stronger candidates for local shell exchanges.

This collected ethnographic material includes a carved figurine with a tiger cowrie base from Tahiti, shell ‘scrapers’ from Hawaii, and octopus fishing lures from Tonga (Figure 3).¹⁰ Accounts of Pacific Islanders fishing with lures made from the vibrant spotted bodies of tiger cowries survive in the diaries of early British voyagers. As a lure, the tiger cowrie was particularly attractive to octopuses, a natural cowrie predator, but the shell was also combined with other objects to attract bigger fish. As Sydney Parkinson explained,

When they [Tahitians] throw their hooks, they row their canoes as fast as possible: sometimes they make use of a decoy made of the backs of cowries, and other shells, which are perforated, and tied together in the shape of a fish, making a head to it with a small cowrey [sic]; and the tail is formed of grass ingeniously plaited. At a little distance under this decoy, hangs the hook.¹¹

¹⁰ It has been suggested that the Tahitian figurine with the tiger cowrie base is a ritual item; however, this has not been substantiated by further research.

¹¹ Sydney Parkinson, *A Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas in His Majesty's Ship the Endeavour*, (London: Stanfield Parkinson, 1773), 271.

Georgius Rumphius stated that “In order to catch these Whelks [cowries], take a piece of *Caju sonit*, or *Perlarius primus* [herb?], put it in sea water, where it is not more than 4 feet deep, and let it rot there, and these Whelks will gather around it.”¹² This reference likely described cowrie hunting in the Maldives where the smaller white money cowries were heavily harvested. Alexander Hamilton detailed a similar account of using coconut leaves to attract cowrie in the Maldives.¹³ An early nineteenth-century shell collecting manual suggested that cowries were dredged from great depths; however, this description is contradictory to the natural shallow habitat of the tiger cowrie.¹⁴ Tiger cowries are a reef dwelling species of mollusk which can be found at shallow depths of six to ten meters, meaning they can be collected by anyone who can swim.¹⁵

In spite of the accounts discussed above, there is a general lack of information on how indigenous Pacific Islanders obtained cowrie shells. Perhaps, they also baited the cowries or maybe the sheer abundance of the tiger cowrie as a species made them conducive to simple reef gathering. Yet, it stands to reason, if Pacific Islanders gathered tiger cowries for use as tools prior to European arrival, then Islanders would

¹²Georg Rumpf and E. M. Beekman, *The Ambonese Curiosity Cabinet*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1999), 167.

¹³ Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies: Giving an Exact and Copious Description of the Situation, Product, Manufactures, Laws, Customs, Religion, Trade, &C.*, (London: Printed for C. Hitch, 1744), 349.

¹⁴ William Wood, *General Conchology; or a description of shells*, (London: B. Howlett, 1815), 35.

¹⁵ C. M. Burgess, *The Living Cowries*, (South Brunswick, Australia: A.S. Barnes, 1970), 9-16.

have expanded their collecting habits to include additional shells to trade with Europeans. General accounts of trade in the Pacific suggest that the cowries may have been exchanged for beads, ready-made wares, or given as gifts.¹⁶ Though supporting documentation is limited, tiger cowries undoubtedly played an economic role in Pacific island bartering economies.

¹⁶ Vanessa Smith, *Intimate Strangers: Friendship, Exchange and Pacific Encounters*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Chapter 3

CRAFTSMANSHIP

Sailors sold their shell collections to shell and curiosity dealers such as George Humphreys who owned a large shell warehouse on St. Martins Lane in London. These dealers determined the individual value of a shell based on its rarity and color. Tiger cowries, while beautiful, were neither rare nor exotic in terms of shell collecting. In fact, it was the general availability and affordability of the tiger cowrie compared to truly rare Pacific species like the golden cowrie that made it advantageous for use as a snuff box.

The earliest known cowrie shell snuff box was crafted in the 1680s by an unidentified maker for a member of the aristocratic Butler family of Chester and Lancashire. The number of surviving shell boxes gradually increased over the succeeding decades until the 1760s, when an explosion of production started, reaching a peak in the 1790s. The process of crafting a cowrie shell snuff box began with preparing the shell for the silver mount.¹⁷ First, the base of the shell was carefully cut away, removing the teeth, canal, and spires to reveal the hollow that formed the body

¹⁷ This description on craftsmanship and explanation for dating the cowrie shell boxes was extrapolated from a core group of surveyed boxes with a sponsor mark, date mark, engraved date or a combination of the three. Less than half of the boxes surveyed met these requirements, meaning that most of the boxes were seemingly undatable. However, a close examination of the dated boxes revealed an evolution in style and craftsmanship that provided a foundation to date the other shell boxes.

of the box (Figure 4). Then, a thin and moderately shallow groove was cut around the outside of the shell just below the edge. This groove, called a piqué, served as the primary support for the silver mount (Figure 5). The draw-molded silver band that wraps around the cut edge of the shell featured an added strip of metal applied perpendicularly to the backside of the band, forming a T- shaped joint. This added ridge of silver was fitted into the piqué groove and then the silver band was skillfully molded around the natural interstices of the shell to create a firm hold. The hinge and lid were then attached to the silver mount completing the box.¹⁸

Early eighteenth-century cowrie shell boxes had a notably wide draw-molded band of silver giving the appearance that these boxes were equal parts silver and cowrie. The shell bodies of these early boxes were predictably small and relatively shallow due to the large amount of shell removed in the cutting process. Around mid-century shell-cutting techniques improved and more of the shell was gradually utilized in the box. Initially, a larger portion of the sides of the shell were saved, allowing for a deeper box. Then with additional refinement to the technique, the spires of the shell were also preserved and fitted into the silver band. Late eighteenth-century shell box construction featured a reduction in the amount of silver displayed as the silver band narrowed in width. The piqué technique continued to be used along the exterior edge of the shell, but for some of these later boxes the silver rim was molded along the interior of the box in a cut wedged pattern intended to conserve silver. At the turn of the nineteenth century makers also inset the lips of the shell back into the lid of the box creating the semblance of a complete shell. These later boxes can be characterized

¹⁸ It was not necessary to further secure the silver mount with any adhesive glue.

by a whole shell of natural appearance because of the incorporation of shell fragments and a continued reduction in the use of silver.

In addition to variations in band width and shell exposure, cowrie shell boxes also exhibited a change over time in the type of hinge used to secure the lid. Stand-away hinges or visible hinges were measured against the exterior profile of the shell which allowed leeway in the length of the hinge as it could exceed the width of the shell. The craftsman saved time and labor by attaching a prefabricated stand-away hinge to the silver mount, enabling them to focus the bulk of their energy on customizing a lid to fit the natural shape of the shell. Integral hinges, a hinge recessed into the lid of a box and hidden from view, became increasingly popular in Britain as the eighteenth century progressed.¹⁹ Integral hinges were measured according to the less flexible dimensions of the inner width of the shell. To compensate for the rigidity in width, craftsmen often extended a silver platform across the upper quarter of the shell allowing them to set the hinge across the widest section of the shell. Moving the hinge back from the edge of the shell was also necessary for the pivoting function of the integral hinge. The knuckles of the integral hinge were then decoratively engraved to further hide the hinge and create the semblance of a seamless flat surface (Figure 6).²⁰

¹⁹ Eric Delieb, *Silver Boxes*, (New York: C.N. Potter, 1968), 16.

²⁰ The lids for either style of hinge show evidence of filing along the lip, indicating that both styles required adjustments to ensure the lids closed with the infamous snap of a proper snuff box. The boxes with a platform and integral hinge are often in better condition than boxes with stand-away hinges. Tabs were not universally used for these boxes.

The majority of the boxes were inscribed or decoratively engraved on the lid. Historian Kenneth Blakemore argues that craftsmen “instinctively provided these shells with simple lids, decorated with restrained engraved or chased decoration. And how much more effective is this simplicity.”²¹ Indeed, compared to the ostentatious courtly gold and silver boxes popular in France and Russia, the tiger cowrie boxes do have a restrained elegance. Furthermore, many of the shell boxes in my survey were engraved with what could be described as ‘restrained’ diapering, geometric designs, or floral motifs that flow around the edges of the lids or form around central cartouches. Yet, an important find of my survey was the diversity of lid designs, particularly for early shell boxes which were often heavily chased with coats-of-arms. The simplicity or extravagance of the lid decoration was not determined by the materiality of the shell but by the preference of the owner. As with any other type of snuff box, the owner personalized the object to reflect their taste and identity. While the cowrie shell was the primary feature of these boxes, they were ultimately designed around the persona of the owner.

The large quantity of snuff boxes imported into the British American colonies and the early United States during the eighteenth century led many scholars to believe that cowrie shell boxes were only produced by English and Scottish makers.²² Indeed, American merchant and silversmith account books record large and frequent purchases for japanned, enameled, tortoiseshell, and silver snuff boxes from Britain. Shell boxes, however, did not appear in the lists of imported items, nor were they

²¹ Kenneth Blakemore, *Snuff Boxes*, (London: Muller, 1976), 107.

²² Clare Le Corbeiller, *European and American Snuff Boxes: 1730 – 1830*, (London: Batsford, 1966), 51.

listed in advertisements of imported goods. Blakemore argued that shell boxes were “competently carried out” by American makers in the 1750s and 1760s at the level of work of those being imported, but “American snuff boxes are like all provincial work, for the most part inferior copies of the products of the leading makers of the day.”²³ In spite of Blakemore’s opinions on the inferiority of American craftsmanship, he identifies Philadelphia silversmiths, John Leacock and Daniel Dupury, as makers of fine shell snuff boxes in America. I have also identified Charles Dutens and Joseph Richardson Jr. as additional Philadelphia craftsmen working with shell snuff boxes.

Joseph Richardson Jr. was perhaps the most famous silversmith working in eighteenth-century Philadelphia due, in part, to the reputation and skill of his father. Joseph Richardson Jr. and his brother Nathaniel Richardson both apprenticed to their father and then inherited the family business upon his death in 1784. Their existing accounts and letter books indicate that most of the profits of the business came from repair work and selling imported goods, even though Joseph Richardson was a skilled craftsman capable of producing fine silver objects such as sugar bowls, teapots, tankards, and snuff boxes. Richardson’s accounts indicate that he imported large quantities of snuff boxes, particularly silver boxes of various fashions and priced at different economic levels.²⁴ In 1763 Richardson placed a notice in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* for goods “To Be Sold Very Cheaply,” which included “sundry snuff boxes,

²³ Blakemore, *Snuff Boxes*, 127.

²⁴ Richardson Family, Papers, Col 602, The Winterthur Library, The Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera.

shell with silver top, and china with pinchbeck rims, plated boxes of sundry sizes.”²⁵ The advertisement is unclear as to who made the shell boxes with silver tops or where they came from. However, this point is clarified in Richardson’s 1790 business inventory which lists “26 shells for snuff boxes.”²⁶ The phrasing of this line is particularly important. Richardson writes that the shells were *for* boxes, meaning that the shells had not yet been made into boxes. The use of *for* to denote the future use of an object was applied to other examples within this document such as “7 blue glasses for salts.”²⁷ Furthermore, this basic inventory list was then copied into a bound account book with values added to the listed items. The same phrase “26 shells for snuff boxes” was recorded in this second edition of the document and the shells were valued at a total cost of £1.10.²⁸ Richardson’s inventory clarifies that he was purchasing shells and converting them into snuff boxes for the American market. Richardson’s work also provides insight into the longevity of the popularity for shell snuff boxes in America. He advertised selling shell boxes in 1763 and according to the inventory continued to stock shells for boxes over the next three decades. By 1790 Richardson had 26 shells in his possession which could be interpreted as representative of a continuing high demand or, conversely, the large inventory of shells, almost equal to that of Richardson’s coral inventory, could reflect a depression in the market and an inability to sell.

²⁵ Joseph Richardson, “To Be Sold Very Cheaply,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 24, 1763.

²⁶ Richardson Family, Papers, Col 602.

²⁷ Richardson Family, Papers, Col 602.

²⁸ Richardson Family, Papers, Col 602.

The majority of the identified English and Scottish shell box makers were listed as silversmiths or jewelers, skilled craftsmen who had experience working with small specialty objects as well as the knowledge of how to silver mount natural materials, such as stone, gems, crystal, and coral. Charles Dutens, similarly, self-identified as a jeweler. In 1751 Dutens immigrated from London to New York City, where he worked for a few months before relocating to Philadelphia and establishing a shop near the Indian King on Market Street at the sign of the ring and the dove.²⁹ Dutens's early advertisements focused on "fancy diamond rings, fancy motto rings, mourning rings, ear-rings...lockets, stone buttons set in gold, after the neatest and newest London fashions" and detailed the variety of different gems, minerals, and stones he currently had available.³⁰ Dutens stated he imported the precious stones directly from London indicating he retained access to his connections and networks in England even after immigrating.

In 1755 Dutens entered into partnership with David Harper, a local silversmith, which provided the joint capital necessary to have "procured a lapidary at a considerable expense."³¹ A lapidary is a type of tool required for the cutting and polishing of gemstones. The lapidary gave Dutens and Harpers a commercial advantage because they no longer needed to import finished gems, and instead could

²⁹ Charles Dutens, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 23, 1752.

³⁰ Charles Duten, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, September 5, 1751.

³¹ Charles Duten, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, September 18, 1755.

cut the stones themselves. Rees's 1803 *Cyclopaedia* suggests that lapidary tools were also used to work shells,

done by means of a horizontal wheel of lead or tin impregnated with rough emery; the shell is wrought down in the same manner in which stones were wrought by the lapidary...very often shells are cut down too far by it and wholly spoiled; and to avoid this a coarse vein must be left standing in some place and then taken down afterwards with a file, when the cutting it down at the wheel would have spoiled the adjacent parts.³²

This same publication also mentioned using a goldsmith's polishing stone to brighten shells; however, for cowries the author specifies the shells "need only be rubbed in the hand or with a piece of chamoy leather" because cowries were naturally lustrous shells.³³

Though the partnership with Harper was terminated within less than a year, Dutens was noticeably changed after the experience. He expanded his workshop to include additional specialized workers and he began catering to specific markets.³⁴ Dutens retained the lapidary equipment from the partnership and continued advertising for jeweler's work but he also "procured workmen of different branches, such as snuff-box-makers; watch-cases, all sorts of trinkets, chasing and lapidary work; and having likewise purchased various kinds of Florida Shells, Tortoise, and Panama, fit for snuff-boxes; and Gentlemen desiring it, may be supplied with curious and

³² Abraham Rees, *The Cyclopaedia; or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature*, vol 9 (Philadelphia, 1803).

³³ Rees, *The Cyclopaedia*. vol 9.

³⁴ Edmond Milne worked for Dutens and subsequently took over the shop after Dutens left for the West Indies.

humorous emblems, with mottos engraved on the said shell-boxes.”³⁵ Dutens’s shift in focus from rings and necklaces to snuff boxes and trinkets, indicates his awareness of changes in the market and how his skills as a jeweler could be adapted to capitalize on those shifts. Hiring specialized workers further connotes Dutens’s intention of capturing a specific corner of the market. In particular, he hired snuff box makers who were capable of crafting several different kinds of shells into boxes to satisfy rising demand. Additionally, his statement reveals gentlemen purchased shell boxes because they could be both curious and humorous. In this short advertisement Dutens argued that patrons purchased shell snuff boxes because of the superior and specialized craftsmanship as well as their ability to be customized. Similar to Richardson, Dutens specifies that he had shells *for* snuff boxes indicating that consumers likely picked the shell for their boxes. Unfortunately, neither Dutens nor Richardson leaves a record indicating where their shells were sourced.

³⁵ Charles Dutens, *Maryland Gazette*, Annapolis, Maryland, January 27, 1757.

Chapter 4

SCIENTIFIC CLASSIFICATION AND CONNOTATIONS

Previous scholarship on shell collecting, shell work, and the shell trade focused on the elegant pursuit of natural object collecting as an elite leisure activity and a precursor to the field of Natural History.³⁶ The connection between elite collecting and Natural History dates to the Renaissance when the two systems were tied together through a single entity: the cabinet of curiosities. Cabinets of curiosities, also known as *Wunderkammern*, were collections of worldly objects, both manmade and natural, that were displayed into sorted categories.³⁷ Shells were often included in these displays because of their inherent beauty, exoticism, and their ability to be classified. Peter Dance, the foremost scholar on the history of shell collecting, argued that the initial categorical classification of shells began with cabinets of curiosities and the basic need for collectors to effectively communicate about the types of shells they owned.³⁸ A formal scientific classification of shells was not established until the mid-

³⁶ Bettina Dietz, "Mobile Objects: the Space of Shells in Eighteenth-Century France," *The British Journal for the History of Science* 39, no. 03 (Sept 2006): 363-386.; Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.; Ingrid Thomas, *The Shell: A World of Decoration and Ornament*, New York: Thames & Hudson, 2007.; 2007.; Robert J. G. Savage, "Natural History of the Goldney Garden Grotto, Clifton, Bristol," *Garden History*. 17, no. 1(1989): 1-40.

³⁷ Patrick Mauriès, *Cabinets of Curiosities*, (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2002).

³⁸ Dance, *A History of Shell Collecting*, 55-60.

eighteenth century when Carl Linnaeus standardized binomial nomenclature or the rules by which all natural things are properly named. The tiger cowrie or *Cypraea tigris* belongs to the Phylum Mollusca, Class Gastropoda, Family Cypraeidae, Genus *Cypraea*, Species *Tigris*.³⁹ However, prior to Linnaeus the tiger cowrie was known by several names.

Perhaps the most well-known and benign name for the cowrie was the popular Italian term *Procellana*. The word porcelain was later derived from *Procellana* because the Chinese export ceramic visually resembled the luminous body of a cowrie shell. One of the first western scientific accounts of the tiger cowrie was recorded by the ancient Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder who referred to the shell by its vernacular name *Concha Veneris*. Following Pliny, early modern scholars such as Conrad Gessner, Filippo Bounanni, and Nehemiah Grew also elected to utilize the name *Concha Veneris* due to the scope of the term's genitive attributes including: veneration, venereal, venery, and of course Venus.⁴⁰ Venus, the Roman goddess of love and beauty, whom Botticelli reminds us was born from a shell, serves as an ideal patron for the cowrie given the duality and sexualization of her mythical persona. *Veneris*, then, was both a descriptor for the shell's inherent beauty and an explicit reference to female sexuality.

³⁹ Felix Lorenz and Ale Hubert, *A Guide to Worldwide Cowries*, (Wiesbaden, Germany: Verlag Christa Hemmen, 1993), 7.

⁴⁰ Nehemiah Grew, *Musaeum Regalis Societatis. Or A Catalogue & Description of the Natural and Artificial Rarities Belonging to the Royal Society and Preserved at Gresham College*, (London: Printed by W. Rawlins, 1681). This source also states that "Goldsmiths cut them [cowries] in two and make spoons out of them."

The cowries association with female sexuality stemmed from the shell's physical resemblance to female genitalia. This visual similarity was widely commented upon in literature and art, but also by common sailors whose slang term for the shell was too explicit to be recorded verbatim in the encyclopedic *Ambonese Curiosity Cabinet*, yet typical and important enough to be cited for readers.⁴¹ Direct references to the vagina also carry over into the scientific anatomy of the shell as the smooth white slopes at the base of the shell are termed labial lips. In his system, Linnaeus renamed the *Concha Veneris* to the genus *Cypraea*, a reference to the Greek word for the Roman goddess Venus. The name was altered due to Linnaeus's identification of the *Venus dione* shell as the 'True Venus shell' based, on his estimation, that this shell bared an even starker resemblance to female genitalia.⁴² Linnaeus changed the scientific name for cowries but did not eliminate the references to Venus or female sexuality.

In his 1776 publication *Elements of Conchology*, the British conchologist Emanuel Mendes da Costa argued that "to explode the Linnæan obscenity in his characters," it is necessary "to avoid the affected conciseness and quaint terms so much in fashion, and only to use the proper language and established terms. Linnæus, otherwise the great ornament of natural historians, is very blameable in this respect."⁴³ In 1803, a group of British conchologists again expressed concern that terms in the

⁴¹ Rumpf, *The Ambonese Curiosity Cabinet*, 167.

⁴² James Grout, "Da Costa and the Venus dione: The Obscenity of Shell Description." *Encyclopaedia Romana*.

⁴³ Grout, "Da Costa and the Venus dione."

Linnaean system “however strongly they may be warranted by the similitudes and analogies with which they express, and which when so pointed out are of great advantage to the language of science, are not altogether reconcilable with the delicacy proper to be observed in ordinary discourse.”⁴⁴ This complaint was lodged over a half a century after Linnaeus published his *Systema Naturae*, yet this continued distress over nomenclature and anatomical terminology illustrates how deeply structural the sexual connotations were to the field and the history of the shell.

The tiger cowrie’s association with femininity and sexuality extends beyond the scientific. Tiger cowries were discovered in Egyptian graves at Karnak, in a pre-historic pit dwelling at St. Mary Bourne, England, in the Gallo-Roman necropolis of Trion in France, and at Pompeii. Archeologist Wilfrid Jackson argued that the tiger cowries were worn by women as fertility amulets based on the holes drilled into the shells and their positioning near female bodies in the graves. In Weisoppenheim, near Worms, Germany, unidentified species of cowrie “were found alongside the bodies of several women, either hanging from a girdle, or sewn to their dresses.”⁴⁵ Similarly, an “entirely petrified *Concha Veneris*” was found near bodies dressed in Roman style clothing in a “Celtic Druidical altar” in Britain.⁴⁶ Jackson claimed that the presence of *Cypraea tigris* in graves “may be explained by the part cowries played in early times

⁴⁴ Dance, *A History of Shell Collecting*, 47-48.

⁴⁵ Wilfrid J. Jackson, *Shells As Evidence of the Migration of Early Culture*, (London: Manchester University Press, 1917), 133.

⁴⁶ *The Philosophical Magazine and Journal*, vol 53, (London: published by R. Taylor, 1819), 236.

as symbolic of the generative forces of nature. The shell itself was not worshipped, but rather regarded as an attribute of some goddess.”⁴⁷

The British Museum holds a collection of ancient Roman bronze cowrie amulets which were cast with a loop at one end to hang the amulet and have a molded design on the base which accentuates the look of the labial lips and aperture (Figure 7). Text from the Witt Manuscript Catalogue which accompanied Dr. George Witt’s donation of the bronze cowrie collection indicated that the cowries were used as “*votives vide*,” meaning the amulets were worn as a powerful prayer or wish that was intended to be seen publicly.⁴⁸ These bronze amulets and the natural tiger cowrie shells were utilized by ancient women as charms for fertility, a function which ultimately evokes femininity and sexuality.

These historical associations and mythologies were still known in the eighteenth century, and in some areas the tiger cowrie continued to be used as an amulet. In 1794, a man traveling in Rome recorded the “continuance of heathen practices” for the *Anthologia Hibernica*. He stated that “the vestal virgins received, again in the presence of nuns—processions of the host but mimicked an ancient pattern—canonized saints succeeded to tutelary gods, and licentious ceremonies, in honor of indecent emblems, are still remembered.”⁴⁹ In a footnote the author further

⁴⁷ Jackson, *Shells As Evidence of the Migration of Early Culture*, 128-139.

⁴⁸ Curator’s Comment, “Amulet, WITT.15,” The British Museum Online Collection, Text from Witt Manuscript Catalogue. 'Roman', no. 158.

⁴⁹ R.E. Mercier, *Anthologia Hibernica: Or, Monthly Collections of Science, Belles-Lettres, and History: Illustrated with Beautiful Engravings*, Vol 4, (Dublin: Printed for R.E. Mercier, 1794), 199.

elaborates that the indecent emblems referred to were the *Concha Veneris* worn in the processions. In the *Museum Britannicum* catalogue published in 1778, Jan van Rymsdyk indicated that cowrie amulets were “*Ithyphalliques*, By the French called *Pucillage*, and is worn by Young Men, &c. [etc.] on their watches as a Trinket.”⁵⁰ In this case the cowrie amulet collected for the British Museum was not a tiger cowrie, but van Rymsdyk’s reference speaks to cowries in general being used as *Ithyphalliques* or *Pucillage*, which refer to symbols of sexual power—perhaps virginal—reinforcing the historical tradition of linking cowries to women, sexuality, and lust (Figure 8).

Artists actively engaged with the feminine and sexual connotations of the tiger cowrie to advance their work. As discussed previously, the long ranging exploits of the Dutch East India Company facilitated the establishment of early shell trading and collecting networks within the Netherlands. Some scholars have applied the term *conchomaina* to describe the fervent adoration with which members of the Dutch elite collected shells for their curiosity cabinets. Many Dutch still life artists possessed collections of shells which they lent and bartered within their artistic communities.⁵¹ Balthasar van der Ast, a member of the Delft school of artists, was renowned for his flower and shell still lifes. Van der Ast owned a small collection of shells which he featured prominently and frequently in his paintings, including at least two different

⁵⁰ Jan van Rymsdyk, Andreas van Rymsdyk, and Peter Boyle, *Museum Britannicum, or, A Display in Thirty Two Plates, in Antiquities and Natural Curiosities*, (London: I. Moore, 1791), 45. *Ithyphalliques* refers to sexual power, often specific to an erect phallus, though *pucillage* refers to virginity in Old French.

⁵¹ Walter Liedtke, Michiel Plomp, and Axel Rüger, *Vermeer and the Delft School*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), 91-92.

tiger cowrie specimens. Van der Ast's shell still lifes have been grouped into two categories: scientific displays and natural beauty assemblages. Van der Ast's natural beauty assemblages featured dense compositions with stacked and layered shells emphasizing abundance and naturalism. Art Historian Walter Liedtke argued that these clusters of shells were designed to convey the natural elegance of the shells. In these instances, Van der Ast attempted to capture the inherent beauty and fragility of the shells, rather than just their exotic otherness.⁵²

In contrast, Van der Ast's scientific displays dispersed shells across the foreground with little overlap, which allowed him to capture precise details and forms. Painted in 1635, *Still-life of Shells, Flowers, and Insects* exemplified Van der Ast scientific display style and includes a striking and prominent tiger cowrie in the foreground of the painting (Figure 9). The cowrie features a slightly projecting spire and a bisecting red line that demarks where the two halves of the cowrie's mantle touch on the dorsal surface. In both his scientific and natural depictions of shells, Van der Ast varied the perspective and angles in which he painted his shells to detail all of their natural interstices. However, in the case of the tiger cowrie, only the main spotted body of the shell was depicted in his paintings, never the base of the shell. Van der Ast's reluctance to show the aperture of the tiger cowrie may indicate his preference for its iconic spotted body, or a conscious choice to emphasize the physical beauty of the shell and its associations to Venus's beauty instead of her sexuality.

The Haarlem School painter Pieter Claesz was best known for his late breakfast still lifes, but the artist also produced a few works often categorized as

⁵² Liedtke, *Vermeer and the Delft School*, 218-219.

vanitas. A vanitas is a still life painting composed of symbols or an assemblage of icons that reference the “brevity of life, frailty of man, or the vanity of worldly things.”⁵³ There is a continuing debate within art history about meaning and use of iconography in still lifes and whether scholarship has read too much into these categories; however, Claesz’s *Still Life with a Stoneware Jug, Berkemeyer and Smoking Utensils* fits firmly into an established canon of vanitas on vice (Figure 10). The stoneware jug and Berkemeyer glass reference drinking; the pipe, cigarette papers, tobacco box and brazier imply tobacco consumption; and the dice allude to gaming. Taken as an assemblage the painting explicitly illustrates the much abused vices of drinking, smoking, and gambling.

If read within the same themes of Venusian beauty and exotic naturalism as Van der Ast’s cowries, the tiger cowrie included in the lower right corner of the painting could be an illusion to physical vanity.⁵⁴ Yet, this straightforward equating of the shell to beauty does not fully encompass the scene Claesz created. Claesz elected to turn the shell on its side to detail its curved aperture and labial lips, the portion of the shell most evocative of the vagina. By visualizing the base Claesz was explicitly invoking references to the sexualization of the shell and alludes to Venus’s sexuality and the sexuality of women in general. By reading the tiger cowrie as a symbol of sexuality and an icon of lust Claesz’s assemblage of vices becomes complete. Comparing Claesz’s and Van der Ast’s understanding display of the tiger cowries

⁵³ Ingvar Bergström, *Dutch Still-Life Painting in the Seventeenth Century*, (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1956), 154-156.

⁵⁴ The term Venus also referred to the highest throw of dice.

illuminates the artistic and social awareness of the dual connotations of the shell as an emblem of both beauty and vice.

Chapter 5

SNUFF BOXES AND THE RITUALS OF TOBACCO CONSUMPTION

British reformers fervently denounced the same vices Claesz depicted. Described as a “filthie novelty, a great vanitie and uncleannesse, a sinful and shameful lust,” tobacco consumption in particular received the reformers’ indignation.⁵⁵ First introduced to the British aristocracy in the form of smoking, tobacco gained popularity and notoriety in the seventeenth century as the herb itself became more affordable due to expanding global trade networks and increased cultivation on Britain’s American plantations. As tobacco prices continued to fall, the habit of smoking gradually distilled into all levels of British society, transforming this once elite habit into an everyday lowbrow convention.

As a result, English courtiers turned to snuff as an opportunity to distance their tobacco consumption from the smoking of the lower classes. Snuff was perceived as a more elegant form of tobacco consumption as snuff takers were spared the egregious indecency of expelling smoke through their mouth or nose, and from the cloud that lingered around a user as evidence of their inelegance.⁵⁶ Even if a courtier smoked in private the smell of tobacco clung to their clothes betraying them and spoiling their fine and costly fabric. Snuff, as an alternative to smoking, was neat and clean. It could

⁵⁵ Catherine Jestin, *Powder Celestial: Snuff Boxes, 1700-1880*, (New Haven, CT: Yale Center for British Art, 1990), 4.

⁵⁶ Blakemore, *Snuff Boxes*, 23.

be indulged in places where smoking was prohibited and did not leave behind the pungent evidence of smoking.⁵⁷

British elites accepted snuff based on the merits of this method of ingestion, which included the ritualized forms of etiquette performed with its consumption. Marcy Norton explains that these rituals are the legacy of the Amerindian consumption practices which first tied tobacco to collective refinement. As tobacco crossed the Atlantic it came imbued with its pre-Hispanic connotations which were then adopted and altered by Europeans into the specific procedures for taking snuff.⁵⁸ An anonymous French pamphlet published in 1750 outlines the twelve stages of taking snuff:

1. Take the snuffbox with your right hand.
2. Pass the snuffbox to your left hand.
3. Rap the snuffbox.
4. Open the snuffbox.
5. Present the snuffbox to company.
6. Receive it after going the round.
7. Gather up the snuff in the box by striking the side with the middle and forefingers.
8. Take a pinch of snuff with the right hand.
9. Keep the snuff a moment or two between the fingers before carrying it to the nose.
10. Put the snuff to your nose.

⁵⁷ In 1726, the Society of Friends in Burlington, New Jersey passed a resolution abolishing snuff use within the meeting house as it was considered disrespectful to the sanctity of the space. Similar restrictions were passed by the Catholic and Anglican Churches.

⁵⁸ Marcy Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane, Pleasures: A History of Tobacco and Chocolate in the Atlantic World*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2008), 4-6.

11. Sniff it by precision with both nostrils and without any grimace.
12. Close the snuffbox with a flourish.⁵⁹

Rapping the box was an essential preliminary step as it settled snuff near the lid down into the box, preventing the embarrassment of spilling snuff upon opening the box. Precision sniffing was similarly crucial as it was considered uncouth to spill snuff or leave snuff lingering around the nose. Unskilled snuff users relied on additional accouterments to assist in the process such as handkerchiefs to wipe their nose and small spoons scoop snuff from the boxes. Snuff was repeatedly ground until it reached a fine powdered consistency ideal for sniffing but difficult to handle. The motif of an inelegant snuff user with bits of tobacco smudged across his or her nose became a stereotype aimed at underscoring the differences that would evolve to define class-based snuff consumption. Rapping the lid was also an auditory cue that announced to a crowd the impending consumption of snuff. Like the conditioning of Pavlov's dogs, a strong rap encouraged individuals to come forward to share in a pinch of tobacco.

As implied by step five, snuff was inherently a social commodity intended to be shared with others. A box would be passed around a crowd or presented to recipients individually for a pinch. In this respect, the snuff box functioned as a source of communal bonding. Users jointly participated in the intoxicating elation and vigorous infusion of energy that accompanied snorting the powdered drug.⁶⁰ Snuff taking became normative in elite social settings such as theaters, clubs, ballrooms, and coffee houses as a tool to enhance a festive atmosphere, alleviate social anxiety, and

⁵⁹ Ursula Bourne, *Snuff*, (London: Shire Publications, 1990), 7.

⁶⁰ In contrast to smoking which had a calming effect with each smooth inhale of smoke, snuff was invigorating and energetic. Some believed that it stimulated the brain.

foster a sense of camaraderie. Snuff was also used to indicate acceptance into a society. For example, at Will's Coffeehouse, a gathering place for London's leading literary minds, a sign of acceptance into this elite space was receiving a pinch of snuff from John Dryden's snuff box.⁶¹

On a basic level, snuff was a catalyst for socialization and induce conversation, providing individuals with the opportunity to build social bonds. Historian Marcy Norton reminds us

tobacco moved not only as material artifact, or even something hankered after by an individual, but as a set of collective practices...In certain settings, such as before or after a formal banquet, tobacco could serve in displays of courtliness, but more often it was quintessentially ribald, a dirty pleasure, more pleasurable because it was dirty. Part of the attraction of tobacco consumption was its outré character. Tobacco consumption was a carnivalesque outlet, more specifically an opportunity to revel in the grotesque and flout normative social order, however unseriously and fleetingly.⁶²

In eighteenth-century Britain, the transgressive qualities of snuff taking were often exposed in relation to snuff's infamous role in the art of flirtation. Written by an anonymous eighteenth-century gentleman, the poem *On Snuff* captures the reliability of offering snuff as a technique to initiate a conversation with a romantic interest which could then progress to flirtation or, as the poet subtly suggest, considerably more.

When Friends and confidants and letters fail
How oft does thy successful Powder prevail?

⁶¹ Edward Robinson, *The Early History of Coffee Houses in England: With Some Account of the First Use of Coffee and a Bibliography of the Subject*, (London: Kegan Paul, 1893), 203.

⁶² Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane, Pleasures*, 188.

A Ball, a Play, or some such Merriment
does first the Lover's wished for scene present:
Madam a Pinch of mine begins the Chat
Which ends in conquests, and the Lord knows what!

The poet goes on to lament the reciprocal truth of snuff, that women were just as adept as men in manipulating snuff boxes to flirt or socially defend themselves.

Ev'r [before] snuff was found their Love had no Disguise
each feature was as treacherous as their Eyes
Meer untaught Nature Passion did impart
and mourned for this Embellishment of Art:
but snuff can stop a sigh, or veil a pain
Or bring a Blush to countenance again
Discreetly thus it arms the fair one's love
and gently blends the Serpent with the Dove.⁶³

Fashionable young ladies practiced and took lessons on the etiquette of snuff taking, including how to expertly dip snuff out of another's box and how to wield a snuff box in conversation. The stylized maneuvers of the snuff box were equated in elegance and symbolic meaning to that of the fan, "snuff or the fan supply each pause of chat, with singing, laughing, ogling and all that."⁶⁴ Thus, a snuff box became an extension of feminine body language. Snuff could be deployed to convey attraction, promote physical closeness, encourage further conversation or end an imprudent conversation.

Reformers persistently rebuked snuff users for improper displays of intimacy that boarded on salacious behavior when presenting a snuff box to the someone of the opposite sex. William Hogarth, a master at capturing and reproducing tongue-in-cheek prints exposing the indiscretions of British society, often included scenes of people

⁶³ Shrewsbury, "On Snuff" In *Poems on several occasions: Never before Printed*, (London: printed by Tho. Durston, for the author, 1721).

⁶⁴ Mattoon Curtis, *The Book of Snuff and Snuff Boxes*, (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1935), 29.

indulging in snuff within his larger works. His etching *The Laughing Audience* features a vignette of a man presenting his snuff box to a woman for a pinch of snuff (Figure 11). It is clear from the man's bent position and the woman's cocked head that the pair are engaged in a conversation, but the closeness of their faces and casual way she dips her fingers into the box suggest the pair are flirting. Hogarth shrouds the couple in an aura of transgression based on the man's rakish smile and his intentional positioning of the snuff box slightly away from the woman which allows him to lean inextricably close.⁶⁵

Women in particular were condemned by social critics because their use of snuff was seen as a symbol of moral decay. The growing extravagance and openness with which women participated in methods of snuff box flirtation was denounced as modern and unfeminine. Women increasingly became the medium through which snuff was attacked as a 'dirty habit' that stained their dainty fingers and spoiled their beautiful faces. Phrases such as "they stick their fingers into any man's snuff box" entangled female snuff use with notions of promiscuity.⁶⁶ Similarly, women were increasingly illustrated indulging snuff in wanton stages of undress and occasionally with exposed breasts. Women snuff users became hyper sexualized and their snuffing defined less by its adherence to ritualized refinement but rather its associations with transgression and vice.

⁶⁵ Literature and magazines such as the *Tatler* and *Spectator* frequently described similar situations where the "Toss o' the Head, the Airs o' the Snuff-box, and the leer at an Actress on the stage" served as part of the general social antics of theater balcony culture that often competed with the play as the primary source of entertainment.

⁶⁶ Deborah Gage and Madeleine Marsh, *Tobacco Containers & Accessories: Their Place in Eighteenth Century European Social History*, (London: Gage Bluett &, 1988), 21.

The extravagant flourishing and brandishing of the snuff box as a means of flirtation was originally co-opted from the ritualized performance of the snuff box in displays of refinement. As previously mentioned, it was the formalized etiquette of snuff taking that elevated this form of tobacco consumption and made it fashionable. One author stated that “for a gentleman fashioning snuff had become a ballet of the hands” because of the intricate maneuvers and gestures performed with the box.⁶⁷ A dismayed reformer remarking on the popularity of snuff said:

I am not to be told, that your men of fashion take snuff only to display a white hand, perhaps, or the brilliancy of a diamond-ring; and I am confident, that members would never have defiled themselves with the use of snuff, had they not been seduced by the charms of a fashionable box. The man of taste takes his *Strasburgh veritable tabac* from a right Paris paper box, and the pretty fellow uses a box of polished metal, that, by often opening it, he may have the opportunity of stealing a glance at his own sweet person, reflected in the lid of it.⁶⁸

While slightly exaggerated to lend an air of humor to the situation, the reformer argued that it was the performative aspects of a taking snuff, the ability to communicate grace and finesse, that drove its consumption. The snuff box functioned as a signifier of social status and refinement. These objects were imbued with a recognized social value that elite users could cultivate or exploit with each use. The reformer also disdainfully acknowledges the material seduction of the snuff box, but not just any box the *right* fashionable box. If snuff consumption was built around individual performance, then the prop used in that performance must be equal to the

⁶⁷ Blakemore, *Snuff Boxes*, 24.

⁶⁸ George Seymour, *The Instructive Letter-Writer: And Entertaining Companion: Containing Letters on the Most Interesting Subjects in an Elegant and Easy Style*, (London: Printed for W. Dornville, 1769), 252.

totality of the display. This means that in addition to the implicit communicative facets of the ritualized snuff performance, the boxes were also read materially.

As objects of conspicuous consumption, snuff boxes, particularly extravagant luxury boxes made from expensive or exotic materials, referenced economic and social power. This social prestige was characteristically expressed by lavish ornamentation often featuring coats of arms or other direct references to the social position and importance of the owner. The poem *On a Gentleman's Coat of Arms engraved upon his Snuff-Box Box* illustrates the social reading of a snuff box.

Well has the 'Graver, finished in his Art,
Impressed the Honors which your Arms impart:
But this tho' well perform'd has only shown
your Father's Glory pictured not your own.
O could some Hand for wondrous deeds design
Engrave the virtues of your Godlike mind!
Upon this polished silver could we see
Thy father's long deceased, revived in thee
Thy Name should Greater than the Greatest shine
and mighty Monarchs draw their Arms from thine.⁶⁹

In this instance, the snuff box owner was criticized because his snuff box was interpreted not as an embodiment of his own success and prestige, but a reliance on the past deeds of his father and his family name. The poet's grievance lies in what he perceived to be a social lie told through the gentleman's snuff box. The poet implied that the owner was quite arrogant with his "Godlike mind" and suggested the gentleman redesign his box to better express his true self. The poet's critique of the

⁶⁹ P. Stafford, "On a Gentleman's Coat of Arms engraved upon his Snuff-Box" In *Poems on several occasions. By Mr. P. Stafford*, (London, 1721), 5.

disconnection between the gentleman's two forms of self-expression, a projected identity based on direct social interaction and a material identity signified by his snuff box, illustrate the social imperative of reading identity through material objects.

Snuff boxes functioned as objects of communication through both non-verbal performance and tangible materiality. In this respect, a snuff box was layered with meaning and significance. On a surface level, the aesthetics of the box and the finesse with which it was maneuvered signified the refinement of its owner, and provided a visual declaration of their elite credentials or aspirational goals. On a deeper level, an assemblage of interwoven connotations related to indulgence and vice, combined with the social environment of excess and flirtation, made snuff boxes objects of transgression. As tokens of individuality and objects of social display, snuff boxes occupied a liminal space between the individual and society at large.

Chapter 6

SELF-EXPRESSION AND THE MATERIALITY OF COWRIE SHELL SNUFF BOXES

Undertaking the ritualized performance of snuff taking with a cowrie shell snuff box complemented the pre-existing transgressive qualities linked with snuff taking. The inherent and symbolic associations of the tiger cowrie to refinement and beauty as well as vice and lust were diffused into the social connotations of the shell as a snuff box. Indeed, the licentiousness of the cowrie served to amplify and complement the immorality of snuff. Similarly, the glossy splendor of the colorfully spotted shell accentuated notions of sophistication and projected class-based ideas of elegance. The full complexity and significance of electing to fashion or purchase a snuff box made from a tiger cowrie shell becomes apparent when analyzed against the physical boxes themselves.

The term snuff box is routinely applied as a general catchall label for boxes of diminutive size despite the possibility that many of these boxes likely carried other items such as tooth picks, beauty patches, or matches. Boxes specifically designed for carrying snuff are often characterized by being palm sized and having a tight fitting lid to keep the snuff inside it fresh. This tight fit was also responsible for the distinctive auditory snap of a snuff box lid. One foreign traveler in London coffee house remarked that “the clashing of their snush-box lids [sic], in opening and shutting,

made more noise than their tongues.”⁷⁰ Though many of the lids on the cowrie shell boxes in this survey have loosened with age or perhaps use, the construction techniques such as the piqué groove, the tightly molded silver band, and the heavy filing marks along the edges of the lids are consistent with creating the tight seal necessary for preserving snuff and making an auditory snap.

Cowries build their shells as they move through the juvenile stages of growth. Their glossy surface and iconic vibrant spots result from deposits of pigment and calcium-carbonate crystals secreted by the cowrie’s mantle (epidermis), which fully extends across the shell when the mollusk is active and can be retracted into the shell when necessary (Figure 12).⁷¹ The natural compounds the mantle imbued into its shell protected its surface in the oceanic environment. Long after the animal’s death, the compounds continued to protect the shell from the harsh environments of the human world. Unlike other shells which gray and fade when exposed to air, and therefore require constant polishing and upkeep, cowries remained naturally lustrous making them an ideal organic material to craft into a box.

The average tiger cowrie shell grows three to five inches wide—except those found in Hawaii which can reach spans of up to six inches—making the species naturally palm sized and, therefore, conducive for transforming into snuff boxes. Furthermore, the prized glossy polish on the exterior of the shell extends to the interior as well. Once the internal spiral of the shell was removed and its imprint filed down, the interior was conveniently smooth, which means cowrie shell boxes did not require

⁷⁰ Curtis, *The Book of Snuff and Snuff Boxes*, 26.

⁷¹ Felix Lorenz, and Alex Hubert, *A Guide to Worldwide Cowries*, (Hackenheim, Germany: ConchBooks, 2000), 7-13.

the fabric lining which most quality silver and gold boxes needed to keep snuff from getting trapped along the edges.

An additional benefit of the cowrie shell was its physical ability to retain warmth. Contemporaneous sources recount keeping their snuff boxes in pockets near the middle of their bodies because the warmth improved the aroma of snuff.⁷² Snuff, like wine, came in flavors that were expertly crafted by shops, mills, and individual patrons. The various herbs blended into snuff, such as sage, cinnamon, cloves, or ginger, created a delicate bouquet which a cowrie shell snuff box easily projected and enhanced based on the inherent warming qualities of the organic material.

As previously mentioned, many of the boxes in this survey lack information relating to provenance; therefore, any explanation regarding the role or functionality of any individual box must be derived from physical inscriptions or decoration, and situated within general parameters of snuff usage and the dual context of the cowrie shell. The following analysis contextualizes individual cowrie shell snuff boxes and posits how these boxes may have been read as an expression of the owner's identity.

In 1740 John Carlyle emigrated from Scotland to Virginia where he quickly established himself as a successful merchant and leader in the community. He served as a Lt. Governor for Virginia and was appointed a trustee for the city of Alexandria. Carlyle was a man of elegance who hosted distinguished individuals such as George Washington, Aaron Burr, Thomas Jefferson, and John Paul Jones in his fashionably furnished Alexandria mansion. Many of Carlyle's possessions have survived including a silver mounted cowrie shell snuff box. The snuff box features an intricately chased

⁷² Jestin, *Powder Celestial*, 5.

lid with a central cartouche around a cross and heart-shaped feather plumes framing the inset hinge. The design is believed to be the crest of the aristocratic Scots family from which Carlyle descended.

A probate inventory taken upon Carlyle's death in 1780 lists five snuff boxes suggesting he was a habitual snuff user. The variety of boxes in the inventory indicates that Carlyle likely matched his snuff box to the social environment to which it was suited. For example, his painted tobacco box or led snuff box were likely used in informal settings whereas his silver box or the cowrie shell box would have been suited to formal social engagements. In choosing to adorn the lid of his cowrie snuff box with the crest of his ancient Scots family, Carlyle was self-identifying with his aristocratic roots and also those of his wife Sarah Fairfax, cousin to Lord Fairfax the Proprietor of Virginia. Though a merchant by trade this snuff box was designed with the purpose of conveying Carlyle's gentry-like position in the colonial social hierarchy. The shell snuff box, just like Carlyle's Arlington plantation, was a message carefully constructed to inform his peers of his elegance and authority. In this situation, a cowrie shell was likely chosen as the body of the box for its references to elegance and beauty.

The Lion Collection of British silver boxes includes two cowrie shell snuff boxes with masonic symbols engraved onto the show surface of the lids. Neither of the boxes bare inscriptions of ownership, but it has been suggested that these type of symbols, if deciphered, would allude to an individual or a lodge connected to the snuff box.⁷³ While knowing the identities of the owners of these boxes would be insightful,

⁷³ John D Hamilton, *Material Culture of the American Freemasons*, (Lexington, Massachusetts: Museum of Our National Heritage, 1994).

reconstructing the context in which the boxes would have been used still elucidates their social value. There are boundless myths and legends surrounding the Masons, but the lauded secrecy of this exclusive fraternity has been, in many respects, overstated. An incredible amount of material culture bearing the symbols of the society survives, incorporated into diverse decorative arts forms including chairs, door knockers, and trivets. Much of this material was produced for use in Masonic Lodges.⁷⁴

The cowrie snuff boxes in the Lion Collection were likely used at any number of social events; however, it is reasonable to assume that they were used at a Lodge. To the uninitiated, seeing the Mason symbols on a snuff box communicated the individual's association with a powerful fraternity. But within the Lodge and among Freemason peers, the engraved symbols would have communicated a whole host of information which is largely lost to history. These boxes signify inclusion and connection. With each engraving the owners have carved out their place within a stratified social hierarchy. Upon the lids of their cowrie shell snuff boxes the owners self-identified their place in the world. The importance of the tiger cowrie to these snuff boxes was likely similar to that of Carlyle's in that the shell represents traditionally recognized connotations to scientific curiosity and globalism.

As layered objects of communication, cowrie shell snuff boxes can function as symbolic references or they can communicate unambiguously with any snuff-taker through inscriptions. Hinged at one end and featuring a well-worn tab at the other end, the exterior lid of William Nesbitt's cowrie shell snuff box is notably plain (Figure 13). Opening the lid reveals the inscription "The gift of the Hon. Jonh Belcher to WM

⁷⁴ Barbara Franco, *Masonic Symbols in American Decorative Arts*, (Lexington, Massachusetts: Scottish Rite Masonic Museum of Our National Heritage, 1976).

Nesbitt Esq. Oct 9th 1771.” The engraving follows the edge of the lid and then spirals inward towards the center. This looping text gives emphasis to the fact that the box was a gift from Jonathan Belcher. Nesbitt was a lawyer and Speaker of the House of Assembly in Nova Scotia, though he repeatedly found himself in debt and was sued for embezzlement while serving as Attorney General. Johnathan Belcher served as Nova Scotia’s first Chief Justice and has been credited for writing Nova Scotia’s first laws. Belcher’s judicial appointment in Nova Scotia was intended to bring Law and Order to the colony and end the rampant favoritism that plagued Nova Scotia’s government. In point of fact, Belcher was responsible for ending the type of self-profiting offenses performed by Nesbitt, however, due to a series of events Belcher found himself working with Nesbitt in opposition to the reform initiatives of Governor Legge.⁷⁵

Given the inherently public nature of snuff boxes as objects intended to be used and seen by others, this cowrie box was more than a token of appreciation, it was a public declaration of collaboration between the two Nova Scotian officials. Any individual who accepted an offering of snuff from William Nesbit was keenly, yet perhaps subtly, made aware of his political ties. Deborah Gage states that, “to offer snuff was, in itself, a gesture of friendship, bringing opposing parties together over a shared box. One gave snuff boxes for political favors, bridal dowries, and great achievements.”⁷⁶ Nesbit’s cowrie shell snuff box was a tangible extension of his

⁷⁵ S. Buggey, “Belcher, Jonathan,” In *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, (Toronto: University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1979). Lois Kernaghan, “Nesbitt, William,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, (Toronto: University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1979).

⁷⁶ Gage, *Tobacco Containers & Accessories*, 22.

political identity, but also an testament to his favorable relationship with Belcher. The tiger cowrie's association to vice and transgression, in this instance, draws further attention to the morally defunct partnership between the two officials and their wider schemes against the authority of the government.

The Duchess of Portland, known for her remarkable collection of shells, owned five shell snuff boxes.⁷⁷ It is impossible to know if one of these boxes was made from a tiger cowrie as the species of shell was left unrecorded in the sale catalogue. As an educated woman, the Duchess would have been fully aware of the symbolism and associations of a cowrie shell snuff box. Her possible use of a tiger cowrie box could simply reflect a deep appreciation for natural history or she could have been indulging in the liminality of snuff taking and toyed with the provocative nature of the shell. This knowledge is lost to history, however, a cowrie shell box in the Winterthur Museum Collection plays directly upon the tiger cowrie's connotations to lust and vice. The shell box features a simple geometric border around the edge of the lid and a bright-cut engraving of two entwined birds kissing in a floral cartouche at its center (Figure 14). The provenance for this box is unknown, but the engraving suggests it may have been a gift or token from one lover to another. The iconography of the two doves embracing is only enhanced by their presence on a shell box named after the goddess of love and recognized for its direct correlation to sexuality and lust. Considering the use of snuff boxes as tools of flirtation, the engraving of the two love birds could be considered highly romantic or explicitly transgressive.

⁷⁷ John Lightfoot, *A catalogue of the Portland Museum, Monday the 24th of April, 1786*, (London: Skinner and Co. 1786).

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

This examination of eighteenth-century cowrie shell box production, circulation, and consumption within the British Empire makes visible the vital yet virtually unknown global trade networks that transported spotted, glossy shells from the coral reefs of the Pacific to the trade shops of American craftsmen. Tracing this journey of the tiger cowries brings into focus how organic materials were exchanged and commodified in world markets. Pacific Islanders sought to define their own economic empowerment within the barter and exchange systems of British sailors by commodifying their natural resources like the naturally abundant and beautifully spotted tiger cowries. Sailors in turn intended to supplement their income by selling the shells to curiosity markets in London. Silversmiths and jewelers then transformed the shells into snuff boxes with the value added of silver mounts, and recirculated the shells among customers across the British Empire.

As accouterments of luxury and elegance, snuff boxes functioned as powerful symbols of refinement and played a decisive role in the visible strategy of individual self-fashioning. An elite and adept user could communicate his or her high social status through the flourishing and exaggerated mannerisms of the ritualized snuff box performance. Undertaking this performance with a tiger cowrie shell snuff box enhanced the enacted implications of sophistication based on connotations to natural elegance and exoticism as conferred by the shell's namesake, Venus. Venus is the Goddess of beauty and grace, but she is also the quintessential symbol of feminine

sexuality and lust. This duality of Venus is also present in the tiger cowrie shell. Used as a fertility amulet and a symbol of female sexuality, the tiger cowrie was inherently linked to notions of vice and sex. These associations were further intensified against the transgressive qualities of communal tobacco consumption and the role of the snuff box in acts of flirtation. Re-aestheticizing the tiger cowrie within these additional association of vice and lust provides for a fuller understanding of the social complexity of these shell boxes. Like the Goddess herself, a cowrie shell snuff box was a liminal object composed of layered meanings that were equally derived from the snuff, the shell, the performance, and the user.

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Appendix A
COWRIE SHELL BOX SURVEY

Owning Institution or Printed Source	Place of Origin	Given Date	Revised Date	Sponsor's Mark	Inscription or Ornamentation	Provenance	Material
Winterthur Museum 19996.0002	Unknown, likely American	1770-1800	--	--	Engraved with the initials "AR"	--	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Paktong
Winterthur Museum 1983.0157	Unknown, likely American	1720	--		Floral and scrolling bright cut engraving, geometric engraving over hinge.	Nathaniel Harrison of Brandon, Virginia	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver
Winterthur Museum 1959.0743	English	1802-1803	--	"IT" in rectangle	Engraved with "WH to TB" in floral cartouche.	--	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver
Winterthur Museum 1958.0512	Unknown	1780-1830	--	--	Die-stamped floral design.	--	<i>Oliva</i> <i>Porphyria</i> , Brass
Winterthur Museum 1958.3077	Unknown	1800-1850	--	--	Shell lips inlaid into lid with an inset ruby.	--	<i>Cypraea</i> <i>Caputserpentis</i> , Silver
Winterthur Museum 1964.1238	Unknown	1800-1820	--	--	Die-stamped floral design.	--	Unidentified Shell, Silver
Winterthur Museum 1958.0678	Unknown, likely American	1780-1830	--	"Imd" in rectangle	Engraved with the initials "GR" and diaper design.	--	<i>Oliva</i> <i>Porphyria</i> , Silver
Winterthur Museum 1958.2351	Unknown, likely American	1775-1800	--	"I.B" in Rectangle	Gilt interior.	--	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver

Owning Institution or Printed Source	Place of Origin	Given Date	Revised Date	Sponsor's Mark	Inscription or Ornamentation	Provenance	Material
Winterthur Museum 1979.0206	Unknown, likely American	1780-1800	--	"BP" in rectangle	Engraved with "1770 Presented to James Winrow 1837"	James Winrow	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver
Winterthur Museum 1957.1428	England	1806	--	T & E Phipps & Robinson	Shell lips inlayed into lid.	--	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver
Winterthur Museum 1970.1227	Unknown, likely American	1770-1800	1750- 1790	--	Two bright cut doves in a floral cartouche.	--	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver
Mount Holyoke College Art Museum 1986.33.53	Unknown, likely American	1800	1750- 1790	"SR" in rectangle	Engraved with the initials "SR"	--	<i>Cypraea Arabica</i> , Silver
Mount Holyoke College Art Museum 1986.33.105	Unknown	--	1800- 1850	--	Shell lips inlayed into lid.	--	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver
Mount Holyoke College Art Museum 1986.33.140	Unknown	1840	--	--	Applied silver ornament of India figure and engraved "Robert Innes Sergt 9 th Ft"	Robert Innes	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver
Mount Holyoke College Art Museum 1986.33.103	Unknown	1770	1770- 1820	--	Engraved with the initials "JF"	--	<i>Oliva Porphyria</i> , Silver
Mount Holyoke College Art Museum 1986.33.104	England	1796	--	T & E Phipps & Robinson	--	--	Unidentified shell, Silver

Owning Institution or Printed Source	Place of Origin	Given Date	Revised Date	Sponsor's Mark	Inscription or Ornamentation	Provenance	Material
The Lion Collection	England or Scotland	1690	--	--	Engraved with the initials "RS"	--	<i>Cypraea</i> , Silver
The Lion Collection	England	1720	--	--	Engraved with a coat of arms.	Ashley of Ashby Ledgers	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver
The Lion Collection	Scotland	1760	--	John Welsh	Engraved with a coat of arms.	Peerson quatering MacNamara	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver
The Lion Collection	Ireland	1785	--	James Keating	Engraved with masonic symbols and ribbon work on hinge.	--	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver
The Lion Collection	Scotland	1780-1790	--	John Leslie	Engraved with masonic symbols.	--	<i>Cypraea arabica</i> , Silver
The Lion Collection	Ireland	1790	--	John Warner	Engraved with the initials "MT"	--	Unidentified shell, Silver
The Lion Collection	England	1796	--	Thomas Shepherd	Bright cut decorative engraving.	--	<i>Cypraea</i> , Silver
The Lion Collection	Scotland	1795-1800	--	William Ritchie	Engraved with the initials "MS" in cartouche.	--	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver
The Lion Collection	England	1814	--	Joseph Ash	--	--	<i>Cypraea</i> , Silver

Owning Institution or Printed Source	Place of Origin	Given Date	Revised Date	Sponsor's Mark	Inscription or Ornamentation	Provenance	Material
Victoria & Albert Museum, M.743-1926	England	--	--	--	Embossed coat of arms and engraved initials "RW"	--	<i>Cypraea</i> , Silver
Victoria & Albert Museum, M.30-1942	England	1720	--	--	Embossed coat of arms and engraved initials "IH"	--	<i>Cypraea</i> , Silver
Victoria & Albert Museum, M.252-1960	England	1680	--	"IH"	Engraved with the crest of Butler, of Chester and Lancashire	Butler Family	<i>Cypraea</i> , Silver
Victoria & Albert Museum, M.1023-1926	England	--	--	--	Embossed coat of arms and monogram.	--	<i>Cypraea</i> , Silver
Victoria & Albert Museum, M.741-1926	England	1700-1800	--	--	Engraved with the crest of Armstrong, of Lincoln and Nottingham	--	<i>Cypraea cervus</i> , Silver
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1973-417	Scotland	1800	1760-1790	--	Motto and arms of Milne impaling Duncan.	--	<i>Cypraea pardalis</i> , Silver
Museum of Fine Arts Boston, 80.507	England	1750-1800	--	John King	Engraved with the initials "CGS"	Gift to Gilbert Stuart from the Bishop of Ossory	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver
Philadelphia Museum of Art,	England	1755-1760	--	--	Hand-painted enamel.	--	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver, gilded, enamel

Owning Institution or Printed Source	Place of Origin	Given Date	Revised Date	Sponsor's Mark	Inscription or Ornamentation	Provenance	Material
Carlyle House Historic Park, L 77.4	Scotland	1750-1780	--	--	Engraved with the Carlyle coat of arms.	John Carlyle	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver
Historic Deerfield, 2114	Unknown, likely American	1771	--	"EC" in rectangle	Engraved on inside lid "The gift of the Hon. Jonh Belcher to WM Nesbitt Esq. Oct 9 th 1771"	William Nesbitt	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver
Cooper Hewitt, 1931-6-60	Unknown	--	1760-1790	--	--	--	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver
Cooper Hewitt, 1931-6-62	Unknown	--	1720-1770	--	Fan shaped silver moldings around shell's spires.	--	<i>Cypraea</i> , Silver
Cooper Hewitt, 1931-6-61	Unknown	--	1790-1830	--	--	--	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver
Yale University Art Gallery, 1930.1322	American	1726-1785	--	Daniel Parker	--	--	<i>Cypraea Tigris</i> , Silver
Kenneth Blakemore, Image 17	--	1750-1800	--	--	Engraved with a coat of arms.	--	<i>Cypraea</i> , Silver
Kenneth Blakemore, Image 35	--	1700-1800	--	--	--	--	<i>Cypraea</i> , Silver
Eric Delieb, Page 14	Unknown	1770	--	--	Engraved with the initials "AB" and s foliate design.	--	<i>Cypraea</i> , Silver

Owning Institution or Printed Source	Place of Origin	Given Date	Revised Date	Sponsor's Mark	Inscription or Ornamentation	Provenance	Material
Eric Delieb, Page 77	Unknown	1730	--	--	Engraved scroll work and shell motifs.	--	<i>Cypraea</i> , Silver
Eric Delieb, Page 95	England	1833	--	G. Reed	Engine-turned bands or wave motifs with crest.	--	<i>Cypraea</i> , Silver
Eric Delieb, Page 97	England	1810	--	Joseph Taylor	Engraved with masonic symbols.	--	<i>Cypraea</i> , Silver
Clare Le Corbeiller, Image 397.	American	1759	--	John Leacock	Engraved with the initials “JM” and a floral design.	--	<i>Cypraea</i> , Silver
Clare Le Corbeiller, Image 402	American	1780	--	Paul Revere	Engraved with the initials “SH”	--	<i>Cypraea</i> , Silver
Clare Le Corbeiller, Image 403, 404.	American	1800	--	--	Engraved with a set of initials and geometric motif.	--	<i>Cypraea</i> , Silver

Appendix B

IMAGES



Figure 1 Cowrie Shell Snuff Box
Courtesy of the Winterthur Museum
Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont
1959.0743



Figure 2 Map of Tiger Cowrie Sourcing Locations
Courtesy of Google Maps



Figure 3 Tonga Octopus Lure
Courtesy of The British Museum
Oc1981



Figure 4 Cowrie Shell Interior
Photo by author.



Figure 5 Piqué groove
Courtesy of the Winterthur Museum
Gift of Marshall P. Blankarn
1979.0206



Figure 6 Detail of Engraving
Courtesy of Winterthur Museum
Gift of Mrs. Burton Harrison Randolph Randell
1983.0157



Figure 7 Bronze Roman Cowrie Amulets
Courtesy of The British Museum
WITT 158



Figure 8 Cowrie Amulet
Courtesy of The British Museum
BM 2003.0331.23



Figure 9 *Still-life of Shells, Flowers, and Insects*
Balthasar van der Ast
1635, Oil on panel
Public Domain



Figure 10 *Still Life with a Stoneware Jug, Berkemeyer and Smoking Utensils*
Pieter Claesz
1640, Oil on pnael.
Courtesy of the Indianapolis Museum of Art
William Ray Adams Memorial Collection
47.2



Figure 11 *The Laughing Audience*
William Hogarth
1733, Etching
Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art
17.3.888-262



Figure 12 Tiger Cowrie Mantel
Public Domain



Figure 13 William Nesbit's Cowrie Shell Snuff Box
Courtesy of Historic Deerfield
HD 2114



Figure 14 Engraving of Two Doves
Courtesy of Winterthur Museum
Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont
1970.1227

Appendix C

IMAGE PERMISSIONS

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Dwight and Lorri Lannon Director of Academic Affairs
Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library





Using Google Maps, Google Earth and Street View

Last Modified: December 17, 2015

Thanks for considering Google Maps, Google Earth and Street View for your project! These guidelines are for non-commercial use except for the limited use cases described below; if you want to use Google Maps, Google Earth, or Street View for other commercial purposes, please contact the [Google Cloud Customer Team](#). "Commercial purposes" means "use for sale or revenue-generating purposes".

We created this page to clarify questions we've received from users over the years regarding uses of our mapping tools in everything from marketing and promotional materials, films, television programs, books, academic journals, and much more.

Generally speaking, as long as you're following our [Terms of Service](#) and you're [attributing properly](#), we're cool with your using our maps and imagery; in fact, we love seeing all of the creative applications of Google Maps, Google Earth and Street View! But we know you're looking for more specifics to ensure you're using our maps and imagery correctly.

As you dive into the information below, we suggest starting with the general guidelines at the top, as these will apply to all projects. Then feel free to click directly to the section that applies to you.

Below, you'll find information on:

- [General guidelines](#)
- [Uses in print](#)
- [Uses in television and film](#)
- [Uses on the web and in applications](#)
- [Uses in advertisements](#)
- [Using Street View imagery](#)
- [Use of trademarks](#)

GENERAL GUIDELINES

The Basics

Google Maps and Google Earth's "Content" (as defined in the [Google Earth/Google Maps Additional Terms of Service](#)) includes everything you'd find in these products: map and terrain data, imagery, business listings, traffic, reviews and other related information provided by Google, its licensors, and users.

These guidelines cover your use of the Content—with one exception. There are some particular guidelines regarding your use of Street View imagery available from both Google Maps and Google Earth. Please read the [section below](#) for instructions on how Street View imagery may or may not be used.

Terms of Service

To help you figure out whether your use of the Content is acceptable, first read the following

documents:

- [Google Terms of Service](#)
- [Google Maps/Google Earth Additional Terms of Service](#)

Your use of the Content is first and foremost governed by the licenses above.

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Apart from any license granted to you by Google, your use of the Content may be acceptable under principles of "fair use." Fair use is a concept under copyright law in the U.S. that, generally speaking, permits you to use a copyrighted work in certain ways without obtaining a license from the copyright holder.

There are similar, although generally more limited, concepts in other countries' copyright laws, including a concept known as "fair dealing" in a number of countries. Google can't tell you if your use of the Content from our products would be fair use or would be considered fair dealing; these are legal analyses that depend on all of the specific facts of your proposed use. We suggest you speak with an attorney if you have questions regarding fair use of copyrighted works.

Written permission

Due to limited resources and high demand, we're unable to sign any letter or contract specifying that your project or use has our explicit permission. As long as you follow the guidance on this page, and attribute the Content correctly, feel free to move forward with your project.

Attribution

All uses of the Content must provide attribution to both Google and our data providers. We require clear, visible attribution when the Content is shown. You may not move the attribution to the end credits or fade it out after a few seconds.

Note that if you [embed a classic map](#), [Street View panorama](#) or [My Map](#), use one of our [APIs](#) on the web or in an application, or export a video or JPEG from [Google Earth Pro](#), the necessary attribution is already baked into the map and no further credit is needed. Learn more about how to properly credit, as well as how to identify providers, on our [attribution guidelines page](#).

If you are unwilling to meet our attribution requirements, contact our data provider(s) directly to inquire about purchasing the rights to use the Content directly. You'll find provider contact information listed on their websites.

Personalizing your map

You may annotate our maps with additional information—like points, lines or labels. In fact, many of our tools have built-in features that make it easy to do just that. For example, [Google My Maps](#) lets you [draw lines and shapes](#) on a Google map. We also offer a [Styled Maps API](#) that allows you to edit the colors of individual map components (for example, changing water to purple), as well as toggle visibility for each component (for example, making roads invisible). If neither of these fit your needs, you may [save an image](#) from Google Earth and use Photoshop to add custom text labels.

While we encourage annotations, you must not significantly alter how Google Maps, Google Earth or Street View would look online. For example, you're not allowed to make any changes to the colors of the product interface or alter how imagery appears (such as adding clouds or other natural elements, blurring, etc.).

USES IN PRINT

[Google Maps](#) and [Google Earth](#) have built-in print functionality. You may print Content for non-

though maps and though users may make their own derivative maps, they may not use them for commercial use and enlarge it (for example, a map with directions). In all uses where you will distribute printed materials that include the Content, first be sure to read the [general guidelines](#) above, especially with regard to fair use and attribution.

Proposed use	OK to use?	Additional information
Books	Yes	It's fine to use a handful of images, as long as you're not distributing more than 5,000 copies or using the Content in guidebooks.
Periodicals	Yes	This includes newspapers, magazines and journals.
Reports and presentations	Yes	This includes research papers, internal reports, presentations, proposals and other related professional documents.
Guidebooks	No	You may not use the Content as a core part of printed navigational material (for example, tour books).
Consumer goods	No	This includes retail products or retail product packaging (for example, t-shirts, beach towels, shower curtains, mugs, posters, stationery, etc.).
Print advertisements	No	See the advertisements section for more guidance on digital and TV uses.

Note that we cannot provide high-resolution or vector screen captures of Google Maps; however, you may use [Google Earth Pro](#) to save and print high-resolution JPEGs of satellite imagery. Images in Google Earth Pro can be exported up to 4,800 pixels wide. Grab a free [Google Earth Pro key](#) today.

USES IN TELEVISION AND FILM

If you'd like to use the Content on television or in a film (for example, a news broadcast or documentary), please first review the [general guidelines](#) at the top of this page, especially with regard to attribution.

If you'd like to use the Content in a substantial way on television or in film, you must accept the terms of our free broadcast license. Please [send us your information](#)—whether you're a first-time applicant or looking to renew an agreement—and we'll send you an e-mail to confirm whether you qualify and provide next steps. The broadcast license agreement is only for television and film uses; it is not required for video projects exclusively distributed online (for example, YouTube).

If your project includes a minor scene in which one of our mapping tools is referenced—for example, if an actor uses Google Maps on her phone or an interview subject demonstrates how they used the Content in their research—you do not need a broadcast license. For these cases, no additional attribution is required on-screen; you may just film the product, or subject using the product, as long as you don't alter the product interface in any way.

USES ON THE WEB OR IN APPLICATION

If you'd like to use our Content in a web-based project or application, please first review the [general guidelines](#) at the top of this page, especially with regard to attribution.

Embeddable maps

We have [multiple APIs](#) available to help you build and embed custom maps, including Street View, within your website or application. When using these APIs, certain restrictions may apply. If you simply need to embed a classic Google map or Street View panorama on your website, learn how to easily do so [here](#).

Google Earth images

For more information on Google Earth, both current and historical, see our [data and content](#) section.

you reuse the imagery in Google Maps, Street View or in [URLs](#), you must provide proper visual attribution to news websites, blogs, and other educational sites. And often these sites want to use the imagery found in Google Earth as still images, both as-is or annotated with additional labels and features. You may use a handful of these images in a news article or on a blog, just please be sure to follow our [attribution rules](#). Note that [Google Earth Pro](#) allows you to export high-resolution JPEGs—particularly handy for these projects.

Online video

If you're using a Google Earth tour in your film and uploading it to YouTube, please do! If you're just planning to distribute your video online, no explicit permission is required for your project. Same [attribution rules](#) apply.

USES IN ADVERTISEMENTS

Digital

If you'd like to use our Content in a digital advertisement, please first review the [general guidelines](#) at the top of this page, especially with regard to attribution.

Any use of Google Maps and Google Earth in digital advertisements must not significantly alter how the products and imagery would look online. Please see the "Personalizing your map" section for specifics.

Street View imagery can only be used in digital advertisements where (1) the imagery comes directly from the [Google Maps APIs](#) or (2) the imagery is embedded or linked to on your website using the HTML and URL provided on [Google Maps](#).

Television commercials

If you'd like to use our Content in a television commercial, please [fill out this form](#). Note that you may not use Street View imagery in television commercials.

Print

You may not use Google Maps, Google Earth, or Street View imagery in print advertisements.

USING STREET VIEW IMAGERY

If you'd like to use Street View imagery in your project, please first review the [general guidelines](#) at the top of this page, especially with regard to attribution.

Street View imagery may be incorporated into your project if:

- the imagery is embedded or linked on your website using the HTML and URL provided on [Google Maps](#)
- the imagery comes directly from the [Google Maps APIs](#), so please ensure that you abide by the [Google Maps/Google Earth APIs Terms of Service](#).

These solutions ensure that if Google edits or removes imagery in response to user requests, these changes will be reflected in your project too.

If you have an academic and non-commercial request for Street View imagery that does not qualify under these guidelines, you may contact us at streetview-academic@google.com with the details of your project to request permission.

USE OF TRADEMARKS

Our trademarks are our valuable assets, and we want to make sure our users and partners use them correctly. These trademarks include the Google Earth word mark, Google Maps word mark, Google Earth logo, Google Maps logo, Google Maps red pin element, Street View word mark, Street View icon, Pegman word mark and the Pegman logo.



How to use

You may use our trademarks to accurately refer to our products or services, as long as such references are appropriate and consistent with our trademark guidelines. You may use only approved versions of our marks. Please follow all of the general trademark [usage guidelines](#), the [Google Maps/Google Earth APIs Terms of Service](#) and the [Street View Trusted badge usage guidelines](#). The trademark usage guidelines apply even to marks that were previously (but are no longer) used in connection with our products.

How not to use

You may not use, incorporate or combine any of our trademarks into a third-party brand name, product name, business name, trade name or slogan.

You may not use any of our marks in a way that suggests you are endorsed by or affiliated with Google or our Geo products. For example, you may not use our marks:

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- as app icons or featured in an app
- as the most prominent elements on your website
- on physical merchandise, promotional materials, business cards or business stationery
- in product reviews

Please do not modify or mimic our marks.

Thanks again for using Google Maps, Google Earth and Street View!


Using digital images of objects in the collection

You are permitted to use images from the British Museum website subject to our **terms of use**.


If you require a higher resolution image (with the longest edge at 2,500 pixels, which will appear at a maximum of 21 cm when printed at 300 dpi), you can request it using the free image service below. You will need to register with your name, address and email address, and the image will be sent to you as an email attachment.

The image will be released to you under a Creative Commons **Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International** (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license. You can read more about the British Museum and Creative Commons **here**.

For uses not covered under the Creative Commons license, or to license high-resolution versions of the images for commercial uses, you can contact the British Museum's image service at **bmimages.com**.

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Please read the whole of these standard terms of use of our Website carefully, because you are only permitted to make use of the content of this Website if you agree to them and, by using any content of this Website, you are deemed to agree to them.

These standard terms of use are uniformly applicable throughout our Website; and in the event of any ambiguity with other terms and conditions found on our Website these standard terms of use shall always govern.

1. Definitions

In these Terms of Use:

- 1.1 "Marks" means the trademarks or service marks, logos or brands for the time being and from time to time properly used or adopted by and belonging to us or a third party. The term "trademark" shall where the context admits be deemed to include all logos and service marks.
- 1.2 "Materials" means, to the extent it is protected copyright work, and is not expressly marked as "Third Party Property", all or any part of any text, image, audio, video or any other type of media in any format contained and comprised in the Website. "Materials" do not include "Works".
- 1.3 "Third Party Property" means all or any part of any Marks, text, image, audio, video or any other type of media in any format contained and comprised in the Website and expressly marked as the copyright property of a third party."
- 1.4 "We" "our" "us" means The Trustees of the British Museum or as the context requires the British Museum Company Limited, the British Museum Friends or the British Museum Great Court Limited;
- 1.5 "Website" means our website at www.britishmuseum.org/ and any sub-domains;

2. Marks

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3. Disclaimer

- 3.1 We have taken every effort and care in preparing Materials, however we disclaim all warranties, express or implied, as to the accuracy thereof, and Materials shall at all times constitute work in progress which we may change without notice. We shall not be liable for any loss or damage arising from your

without notice. We shall not be liable for any loss or damage arising from your use of or reliance on Materials.

- 3.2 Links within our Website may lead to other websites. They are provided for convenience only. We do not sponsor, nor necessarily endorse or otherwise approve of any information or statements appearing in those websites (or websites referred to or linked to those websites).
- 3.3 Every reasonable effort has been made to seek appropriate permission from people identifiable in photographs used throughout the site.

4. Privacy

- 4.1 We are committed to protecting the privacy and the confidentiality of the personal information of visitors to our Website. We undertake to ensure that all personal information in our possession is processed in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998. Our Data Protection policy may be inspected in the governance section.
- 4.2 We collect personal information (such as your name, contact details, credit card information) that you supply to us. Your information is collected when you request information from us, contact us, make a booking with us, purchase items from us, including Membership and e-tickets, or make a donation to us. We will update your information whenever we get the opportunity to keep it current, accurate and complete.
- 4.3 Any information you provide when registering with us, buying Membership, e-tickets and other products will be used for British Museum, British Museum Friends and British Museum Company purposes only. From time to time we may send you information from other organisations which we think may be of interest to you. We may also disclose your information to companies who act as "data processors" on our behalf, some of whom may be outside the UK/EEA.
- 4.4 You may indicate your preference for receiving direct marketing by telephone or email from us or any partner organisations with whom we may work. You will be given the opportunity on every communication we send you to indicate that you no longer wish to receive our direct marketing material. You may, in addition, indicate your preference regarding receiving third party direct marketing material. Once properly notified by you, we will take steps to stop using your information in this way.
- 4.5 The credit card information you give for any online transaction is used solely for the purpose of processing that transaction. Since it is technologically possible for unauthorised third parties to intercept any email or any message posted on an insecure web page, we strongly advise you against sending us any credit card information via email or an insecure web page. Secure web pages begin "https". Moreover it is contrary to the data security rules of the payment card industry for us to accept credit card payments by email and we would decline to accept payment by this means.
- 4.6 You have the right to ask in writing for a copy of the information we hold about you (for which we may charge a fee) and to correct any inaccuracies in your information.

5. Use of 'cookies'

[Cookies and the British Museum website](#)

File:Balthasar van der Ast - Still-Life of Flowers, Shells, and Insects - WGA1039.jpg

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Size of this preview: 800 x 560 pixels.
Original file (1,400 x 906 pixels, file size: 193 KB, MIME type: image/jpeg)

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Summary

Artist	Balthasar van der Ast (1593/1594–1657) DE
Title	<i>Still-Life of Flowers, Shells, and Insects</i>
Date	circa 1635
Medium	oil on panel
Dimensions	Height: 24 cm (9.4 in), Width: 35 cm (13.8 in).
Current location	Private collection
Source/Photographer	Web Gallery of Art: Image (http://www.wga.hu/art/nas/bastholl.jpg) Info about artwork (http://www.wga.hu/art/nas/bastholl.html)

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	current	04:16, 1 June 2011		1,490 × 996 (193 KB)	JensUploudBot (talk contribs)	<div><div><div><div><div></div><div></div></div><div><div></div><div></div></div></div><div><div><div><div><div></div><div><div>{{Artwork title}}<div><div></div><div>File:Balduw van der Aar - Still Life of Flowers, Shells, and Insects</div></div></div><div>Description = Date = {{other date}}1635</div><div>medium = {{OI}} on</div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div>
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Categories: Paintings by Balduw van der Aar | 17th-century still-life paintings of flowers | 1630s still-life paintings | Still-life paintings of shells

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Still Life with a Stoneware Jug, Berkemeyer, and Smoking Utensils

Pieter Claesz. (Dutch, 1593/1598-1660)

caswell-on-visuals.com

Image Licensing(<http://www.metmuseum.org/research/image-resources/>)

Gallery label Provenance

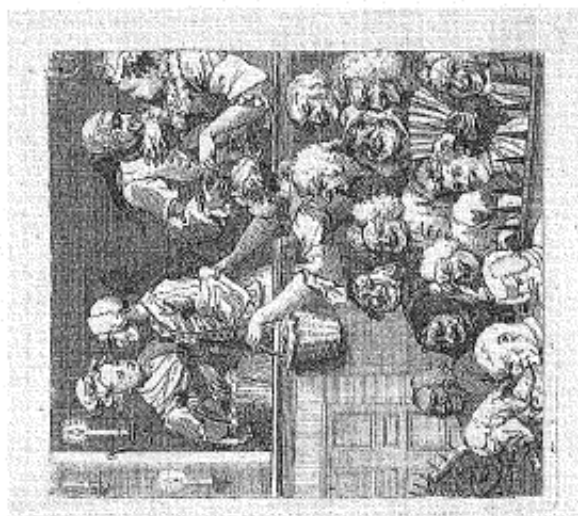
This still life is an example of a *vanitas*—a work that alludes to the transience of earthly life. Several of the objects suggest ephemerality: the short-lived pleasure derived from the roll of the dice, the fading warmth emanating from the glowing coals, and the fleeting sweetness of the white wine in the Berkemeyer glass. However, the presence of the pipe, stoneware jug, and shell also reflects the identity of the Netherlands as a major trading center. Tobacco had been imported from the New World, while the jug originated in the Rhineland and the shell in the Caribbean and the Indo-Pacific.

Object Information

artist	Pieter Claesz. (Dutch, 1593/1598-1660) https://collection.metmuseum.org/visuals/learn/PieterClaesz.-1593
creation date	1640
medium	oil on panel
dimensions	17 1/2 x 23 1/2 in. 26 x 31 in. (framed)
accession number	40.2
credit line	William K. Adams Memorial Collection
copyright	Public Domain
collection	European Paintings and Sculpture Before 1800 https://collection.metmuseum.org/visuals/learn/Department-European-Paintings-and-Sculpture-Before-1800
notes	https://www.metmuseum.org/visuals/learn/Department-European-Paintings-and-Sculpture-Before-1800

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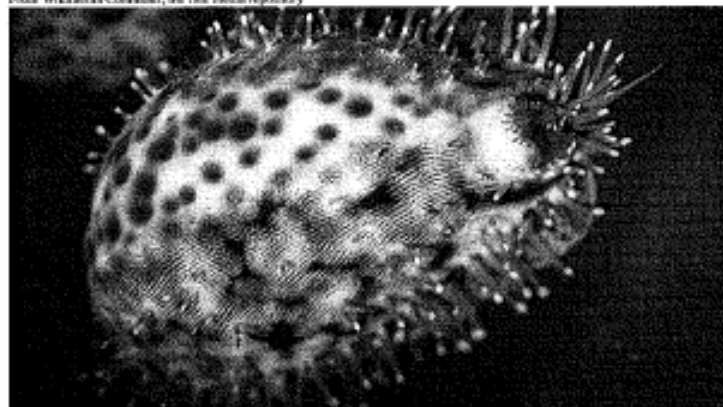
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The Laughing Audience

Artist:	William Hogarth (British, London 1697-1764 London)
Date:	December 1733
Medium:	Etching, fourth state of four
Dimensions:	plate: 7 3/8 x 6 13/16 in. (18.9 x 17.3 cm) sheet: 8 3/4 x 7 3/8 in. (22.2 x 18.8 cm)

File:Cypraea-tigris-004.jpg

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Size of this preview: 600 × 450 pixels.
Original file (1,920 × 1,080 pixels, file size: 605 KB, MIME type: image/jpeg)

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Summary

Description	Lathrae Cypraea tigris photo taken on Nefisa, Togo.
Date	15 May 2012
Source	Own work
Author	Magg357

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 - [Cypraea tigris](#)
- Usage on de.wikipedia.org
 - [Muschel](#)

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Image file	JCNYT 0002
Camera manufacturer	JCNYT
Camera model	D6LR-A1.9b
Exposure time	1/100 sec (0.010000000000000)
Evolution	00.5
ISO speed rating	250
Date and time of data generation	16:22, 15 May 2012
Lens focal length	18 mm

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Category: [Cypraea tigris](#)

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Alexandra Ward <wardal@udel.edu>

snuff box image

1 message

Penny Leveritt <leveritt@historic-deerfield.org>
To: wardal@udel.edu

Tue, Mar 28, 2017 at 1:57 PM

Hello Allie,

thank you for checking about the use of your photograph of the snuff box. It is fine for you to use it in your thesis. If you ever come to a time when you may want to publish the image elsewhere, please let me know and we can discuss getting a publication-ready image for you.

Regards,
Penny

Penny Leveritt
Visual Resources Manager
Historic Deerfield, Inc.
P.O. Box 321
Deerfield, MA 01342

413-775-7204 ph
413-775-7224 fx
leveritt@historic-deerfield.org

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Alexandra Ward** <wardal@udel.edu>
Date: Tue, Mar 28, 2017 at 1:10 PM
Subject: William Nesbitt Cowrie Snuff Box
To: lange@historic-deerfield.org

Dear Amanda,

I am not sure if you remember me visiting over the summer to look at the William Nesbitt Cowrie Snuff Box? I am now in the final stages of completing my thesis and am writing to ask permission to include the photo I took of the inscription in my thesis which will be published online by ProQuest/UMI. I have attached a copy of the image, which sadly is a bit yellow, for your approval. Please, let me know what additional information you need and how I should proceed from here.

All the best,
Allie Ward