The “Dutch” “Atlantic” and the Dubious Case of Frans Post

Benjamin Schmidt

I From Dutch Atlantic to European Exoticism

Did Frans Post paint Dutch Brazil? In 1879 – exactly 200 years after the death of Johan Maurits “the Brazilian” (1604–1679), the famously admired governor of the Dutch colony during its heyday who brought Post to Brazil as part of his princely entourage – the Rijksmuseum wagered its money brashly on the affirmative. In that year it acquired no fewer than three paintings by the artist, among the first to enter the permanent collections of the newly installed national museum, which arose in its current form a few years later in 1885 (another Post painting would be purchased in 1881 and two more before the close of the century).¹ In one of these early acquisitions, the *View of Itamaracá* (Figure 10.1), the director of the museum at that time, Johan Wilhelm Kaiser, perceived in the central figure on horseback none other than Governor Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen garbed in his “Brazilian costume.” Another painting represented “a house of a Dutch colonist in Brazil,” the proud owners strolling toward the portico-shaded entrance of their substantial New World home (Figure 10.2). And so it goes: the paintings told the story through pictures, like the *Itamaracá* canvas and the others, of the Dutch colonial presence in South America and the Netherlands’ prosperous empire in the Atlantic World.²

- 1 The three paintings are *View of Itamaracá* (1637), *Franciscan Convent* (ca. 1675–80), and *Riverside Village* (ca. 1675–1680). The well known *View of Olinda* (1662), to this day a star attraction at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, entered the collection (by purchase) in 1881. See Pedro Corrêa do Lago and Bia Corrêa do Lago, *Frans Post, 1612–1680: Catalogue Raisonné* (Milan: 5 Continents, 2007) [henceforth Corrêa do Lago, *Post*], cat. 1, 153–154; and cf. cat. 52 (the *View of Olinda*). On the place of Post in the Rijksmuseum’s collections, see Rebecca Parker Brienens, “Who Owns Frans Post? Collecting Frans Post’s Brazilian Landscapes,” in *The Legacy of Dutch Brazil: The Long-Term Impact of a Short-Lived Atlantic Colony*, ed. Michiel van Groesen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 229–247. Note that a national (“rijks”) museum existed in the Netherlands in some form from the very late eighteenth century, yet the permanent and grand shape of the current Rijksmuseum came to be when the building that presently houses it opened to much acclaim in 1885.
- 2 Kaiser to the Minister of Binnenlandse Zaken, quoted in Brienens, “Who Owns Frans Post?” The title of the late panel painting (Figure 10.2) has been updated in some recent

FIGURE 10.1 *Frans Post, View of Itamaracá, 1637, oil on canvas (63.5 × 89.5 cm), Rijksmuseum (object no. SK-A-4271), Amsterdam (on long-term loan to the Mauritshuis, The Hague).*

FIGURE 10.2 *Frans Post, Franciscan Convent, circa 1675–80, oil on panel (16.5 × 25 cm), Rijksmuseum (object no. SK-A-4273), Amsterdam.*

Only they did not: neither painting, in fact, highlights a Dutch scene per se, while both – along with the Rijksmuseum's impressive *View of Olinda* (Figure 10.3) and the vast majority of paintings done by Post in the intervening decades of production between these notably early and late compositions – present a tropical world that is hardly Dutch, perhaps Portuguese, and determinately exotic. What Post did paint was a new world of nature – lush, green, resplendent, intriguing, and seemingly indomitable – and the various European attempts to fit themselves into it. In the *View of Itamaracá*, likely the first oil painting by the artist executed in Brazil (he sketched landscapes and seascapes en route to South America and also produced several highly finished drawings, mostly undated, in ink and wash), a slender slice of Dutch life can be

FIGURE 10.3 *Frans Post, View of Olinda, 1662, oil on canvas (107.5 × 172.5 cm), Rijksmuseum (object no. SK-A-742), Amsterdam.*

catalogues (see, e.g., Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 336), yet it entered the collections of the Rijksmuseum as "Landschap met het huis van een Hollandse kolonist in Brazilië [Landscape with the house of a Dutch colonist in Brazil]." While the Rijksmuseum has recently changed this labeling ("Kerkelijk gebouw in Brazilië [Ecclesiastical (lit. churchly) building in Brazil]"), the older title, with its presumption of colonial imagery, lingers in the online (thus relatively recently vetted) description of the painting: <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/explore-the-collection/overview/frans-jansz-post/objects#/SK-A-4273,1> [accessed 15 June 2013]. Note also that, until the Rijksmuseum's reinstatement in 2013, the Post paintings in the collection were hung in the "History Section" of the museum, as they were understood to narrate the national history of the Netherlands.

detected in the background: beneath the meager town of Itamaracá, perched on the hill, rests a still smaller representation of Fort Orange, nestled on the coast. Yet the dominant subject of the painting, as Kaiser himself noted, is the tranquil scene of four figures, two African and two European, one of whom travels on horseback – in “the Portuguese mode of riding,” according to a contemporary label affixed to the painting around the time it entered the French royal collections in 1679.³ This modest, languid progression does not embrace the high-born Dutch governor – the central figure barely registers his attendants’ attention – but offers instead a diverting device to animate the absorbing layers of the landscape: land (verdant), water (calm), and sky (clouded, yet this would change in later compositions).

While these visual elements might fluctuate somewhat over the years – smatterings of people come and go, as do the not terribly impressive and often decrepit man-made structures – they served chiefly to anchor and align Post’s compositions and to guide the viewer’s vision toward the far richer materials of the surrounding landscape. The magnificent *View of Olinda*, completed a quarter of a century later, by which time the painter could claim a productive career as a specialist of such scenes, centers on a dilapidated (but functional) cathedral, in front of which congregate an assembly of Catholic and presumably Portuguese parishioners. Cassocked (Franciscan) friars mill about the entrance, exchange greetings with broad-hatted (Portuguese) men and heavily veiled (Portuguese) women, while brightly dressed (African) slaves wait patiently below. Vying for the viewer’s attention, however, is the splendid *repoussoir*, left and right, which encompasses a sloth, monkey, anteater, armadillo, iguana, and giant toad; not to mention a pineapple, several gourds, and various species of American flora on which alight vividly hued birds. There is more to this substantial canvas – among Post’s largest – but there is barely a sign of the Dutch in Brazil. By the time Post produces his “house of a Dutch colonist in Brazil” – this late-in-life painting is now more properly labeled *Franciscan Convent* – he distills his composition to its essentials.⁴ Palms fill the panel, both in the distant countryside (to the rear) and the dark *repoussoir* (to the right), where one imagines lurking the exotic fauna that the elderly painter can no longer quite delineate. There is, once again, a gathering of figures to train the eye to the heart of the composition; yet this modest muster is, once again, mostly dressed in the Portuguese style (the figure closest to the convent may be a nun; there is also a solitary slave). The structure in the center, furthermore – occupying a space laboriously cleared, one imagines, from the

3 Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 88; and see *ibid.*, 52, where the original label is reproduced.

4 Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, cat. 154.

thick vegetation of the tropics, which veritably threaten to subsume it anew – is surely no colonist's house, as the cross balanced on the rooftop ridge confirms. It is a house of Catholic worship, and imagining otherwise speaks more to nineteenth-century collectors' aspirations than seventeenth-century painterly intentions.

Frans Post's paintings of "Dutch" Brazil have been historically misread, not least since the Dutch moment in colonial Brazil (1630–1654), and the more extensive Dutch presence in the Atlantic that it is said to epitomize, have likewise been misconstrued. To recalibrate this essay's opening question: was there a Dutch Atlantic? The Dutch thrived in the Atlantic world, to be sure, especially in the early to middle decades of the seventeenth century, a period that overlaps with Post's sojourn in Brazil (1636–1644) and with the expansion of the West India Company's imperium: in North America (New Netherland), along the Coast of West Africa (including Loango-Angola), and encompassing the sizable swathe of South America conquered by Johan Maurits (seven captaincies of Brazil). There was not only a Dutch moment of expansion and empire in the Atlantic, but an exemplary constellation of colonies and forts, trade and settlement, which brought together considerable portions of the Atlantic basin – North, South, East, and West. But this impressive, optimistic, land-based empire quickly receded over the middle and later decades of the century – Angola was lost to the Portuguese in 1648, Brazil fell shortly after that (1654), and New Netherland reverted to English forces in 1664 and was rechristened New York. The Dutch West India Company itself was considerably diminished: it declared bankruptcy in 1674, after which it was dissolved.⁵ But the Dutch do not so much disappear from the Atlantic in these years as shift discreetly to the background. Rather than maintaining a full-scale empire, they support smaller trading posts, modest plantations (in the Guianas), and industrious entrepôts working behind the scenes. They pursue inter-Atlantic shipping and other forms of exchange that capitalize on their well-honed skills as commercial intermediaries. The Dutch reconfigure their Atlantic world such that, if the façade of the imperial structure was no longer especially prominent – gone were the ambitious colonies in Brazil and North America; infrequent were any bona fide "houses of Dutch colonists" – there was much that remained nonetheless in the fine details of their Atlantic composition, apparent upon closer inspection (as the chapters in this volume amply demonstrate).

5 Willem Klooster, *The Dutch Moment in Atlantic History* (Ithaca, NY, [forthcoming]), Benjamin Schmidt, "The Dutch Atlantic: From Provincialism to Globalism," in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 163–190 and see also the Introduction to this volume.

These shifts are reflected, as well, in the Dutch cultural artifacts that engage with the Atlantic world, of which Post's paintings are among the most visually remarkable and deservedly well known. Post's oeuvre should be seen in the context of the changing fortunes of the Dutch both in the Atlantic and in Europe. Certainly, the perception of the Atlantic sphere altered over the seventeenth century from the perspective of the Netherlands: from a highly interested and patriotic conception of the Dutch place in America – the early decades of the century witnessed the development of topoi and depictions that closely linked the Netherlands with the New World and imagined a special kinship between the American indigenes and their Dutch allies, who would have shared (so it was proposed) a mutual antipathy toward an expansive Habsburg empire – to one that tended to dilute or even obscure the Dutch presence in the Atlantic.⁶ In the later decades of the seventeenth century, as the Dutch lost most of their American colonies and suffered setbacks, as well, in European wars against France and Britain, they also lost their interest in the sort of provincial geographies of America that had up until that point prevailed. The number of sources addressing the Dutch in Brazil, for example, sharply decline (the colony of New Netherland had never featured particularly prominently in print or painting); and the popular refrain of "Spanish tyranny in America," a rallying cry for so many of the colonial factions, all but disappears.⁷ The Dutch do produce over these years a considerable number of books, prints, maps, atlases, and images otherwise dedicated to the Atlantic world; yet they do not place much emphasis in these sources on the *Dutch* presence in the region or on Dutch aspirations in the West, real or illusory. They address, rather, a more widely European audience, and they speak to generically European (as opposed to Dutch, British, French, Spanish, and so on) interests in the Atlantic sphere. They produce texts and images that illustrate the tropical nature of the New World, describe the wondrous inhabitants of America (and Africa), and incorporate the Atlantic into broader forms of global geography. But they do not linger especially on any *Dutch* achievement or any Dutch angle in the Atlantic. They move, in short, from a form of patriotic geography to a formulation of European exoticism. Indeed, in the later decades of the seventeenth century the Dutch become leading intermediaries of geographic imagery – primary purveyors of descriptions of the

6 A fuller version of this history can be found in Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570–1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) (on Spanish tyranny in America).

7 Klooster, *Dutch Moment in Atlantic History* (on Brazil); Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad*, esp. 315–316.

non-European world, in word and image, pitched to an audience of European consumers – just as they were becoming leading intermediaries of Atlantic trade.⁸

If Post's paintings do not fit these patterns perfectly – while cultural forms tend to track political and economic developments, they rarely trace them that precisely – they do correspond to the rough contours of Dutch activities in the Atlantic. Following an initial moment of direct engagement with the colonial project of Johan Maurits – the early paintings typically contain representations of Dutch forts and settlements, inconspicuous though these may be – Post's compositions turn thereafter to less localized and more broadly "exotic" scenes. After recording the Dutch in Brazil, that is, during their brief period of hegemony, Post deploys his landscapes to convey a more pleasingly generic sense of the exotic world. This in itself is not surprising. There was not much left to paint of *Dutch* Brazil after 1654 beyond the vestiges of a colony quickly squandered; exotic *naturalia* were more compelling. What does cause pause, however, and invite correction is the stubborn consensus among critics that Post's paintings somehow memorialized the Dutch imperial moment in Brazil, catalogued Dutch settlements and successes in the New World, and celebrated the Dutch presence in America – and, by extension, in the Atlantic. "Post's images of Brazil," runs a fairly typical assessment, "were expensive in his day and *undoubtedly* appealed to the Dutchman's patriotic sense of his nation as a world power with a global reach."⁹ This undoubtedly is wrong, and this notion of a patriotic and particularly *Dutch* Atlantic misses the point: of the quality and nature of Posts' paintings, and of the shape and significance of the Dutch Atlantic. This fairly reflexive misreading of Post's oeuvre derives from and feeds into a greater misunderstanding: an incorrect sense of the early modern Dutch conception of and attitude toward the Atlantic world. Post exemplified a certain engagement with Europe's exotic world, yet not necessarily or straightforwardly with a "Dutch" "Atlantic" per se. By exploring Post's paintings and trying to understand how they work, this essay also seeks to analyze the broader cultural engagement of the Dutch with the tropical world and to problematize the conceit of a particularly Dutch Atlantic.

8 On the development of the Netherlands into a sort of entrepôt of exotic geography – of words and images describing the non-European world – see Benjamin Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism: Geography, Globalism, and Europe's Early Modern World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

9 Peter C. Sutton, *Dutch and Flemish Seventeenth-Century Paintings: The Harold Samuel Collection* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 159 (emphasis added).

II Among the Saints and Serpents: Post's "Brilliant" Brazil

Frans Post (1612–1680) ranks among the first European artists to paint America *in* America: he is by most measures the first on-site landscape painter of the New World tropics. In 1636 Post accompanied the incoming Dutch governor, Johan Maurits, to Brazil, where he served the count as court painter for eight years, producing images – paintings, sketches, preparatory drawings – principally of the lay of the land, its natural features, and its built environment. Of his life prior to that voyage nearly nothing is known.¹⁰ Born in Haarlem, he came from a family of artists. His father was a glass painter and may have worked in the miniaturist mode that Post would later assimilate into his own paintings; his older brother, Pieter Post, is considered among the leading architects of the Dutch Golden Age, a master of Baroque classicism, and Pieter may have recommended his younger brother to Nassau. Post's early years in Haarlem also coincided with those of the landscape painters Samuel and Jacob van Ruysdael and of Frans Hals, who painted Post's portrait sometime in the mid-seventeenth century (Figure 10.4); yet there is no indication that he trained with these well-known artists.¹¹ Post, in all events, was a gifted draftsman who produced several superb sketches both en route to and during his Brazilian sojourn, and these later served as models for engraved prints that would appear in the quasi-official history of Nassau's tenure in America, the *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia*, published in 1647.¹² Post made further Brazilian sketches for his own use – none of these remain – and these along with his "official" drawings provided a font of imagery for the artist when he returned to the Netherlands in 1644 and

10 For the most up-to-date biographical data pertaining to Post's life and career, see Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 20–49. Standard biographies and surveys of the painter's oeuvre include Joaquim de Sousa Leão, *Frans Post, 1612–1680* (Amsterdam: A.L. van Gendt, 1973); R. Joppien "The Dutch Vision of Brazil: Johan Maurits and his Artists," in *Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen 1604–1679: A Humanist Prince in Europe and Brazil*, ed. Ernst van den Boogaart (The Hague: The Johan Maurits van Nassau Stichting, 1979), 297–376; and Thomas Kellein and Urs-Beat Frei, *Frans Post, 1612–1680* (Basel: Kunsthalle Basel, 1990).

11 Frans Hals, *Portrait of Frans Jansz. Post*, circa 1655, oil on panel, (27.5 × 23 cm), Worcester Art Museum.

12 Caspar Barlaeus, *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia* (Amsterdam, 1647). Post also prepared images for prints on maps and for the natural history work of Willem Piso et al., *Historia naturalis Brasiliae* (Leiden, 1648). A more full accounting of Post's images and their after-life can be found in P.J.P. Whitehead and M. Boeseman, *A portrait of Dutch 17th century Brazil: Animals, plants and people by the artists of Johan Maurits of Nassau* (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company, 1989).

FIGURE 10.4 *Frans Hals, Portrait of Frans Jansz. Post, circa 1655, oil on panel (27.5 × 23 cm), Worcester Art Museum.*

turned to landscape painting, specializing in the sort of exotic landscape – “exotiscapes” we might call them – with which he has come to be associated.¹³

¹³ Pedro and Bia Corrêa do Lago point out that the extant drawings that do *not* correlate to prints (which they catalogue as D-55 to D-59) would most likely be finished drawings

The second act in Post's career veered in a significantly new direction. Having painted and sketched for the prince, he now produced for the market; he shifted, that is, from making site-specific paintings and prints for a patron to painting for profit. Absent in this transformation was any sense that he needed to paint for *patria* – to create patriotic images for a Dutch clientele that may have harbored nostalgia for Brazil – and Post's landscapes over this period (roughly the late 1640s through the late 1650s) pivot from not particularly, yet still vaguely, Dutch presentations of colonial Brazil to far more indeterminate and generic forms of exotic landscape. Indeed, as the years progressed, Post's compositions showed less and less fidelity to any actual scenes he may have observed and recorded in Brazil, as they began to offer more and more by way of the vividly tropical imagery that would soon secure his reputation. And Post's reputation – to judge from the evidence of his expanding output – blossomed in these years based on his ability to paint verdant images of tropical America, sometimes with scenes extracted from the towns and villages of Northern Brazil (where the Dutch had briefly colonized) but more often with the flourishing flora and fauna of the tropics, which typically spilled out of the paintings' thick *repoussoirs*. If in the so-called second phase there remains some correlation, presumably, to earlier-made sketches, by the 1660s if not earlier (the so-called third phase) Post's settings become altogether more freely composed – they decidedly do *not* accord with known perspectives and *vedute* in Brazil – as the paintings take on a richer, looser, more fantastic aspect.¹⁴ During this period, the most prolific and successful of his career, Post also develops the form – or better, the formula – that would distinguish his most characteristic paintings. Deep blue skies dusted with lazy white clouds occupy the upper half of the paintings and top thinly-painted distant

made from now lost sketches done in situ, a variant of the "clean copy" drawings Post did for printers: see Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 371–392, especially 389–392. On "exotiscapes," compare the discussion in Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Public Culture* 2, no. 2 (1990): 1–24, where Appadurai coins the term "ethnoscapes."

- 14 My discussion of the artist's phases of production borrows from the schema outlined in Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, yet with two mild distinctions: I would propose a slightly earlier transition to the so-called third phase (perhaps beginning in 1659 and the painting that appears as cat. 44 in *ibid.*). I would also suggest that the distinction between the so-called third and fourth phases is less thematic (as is argued by Corrêa do Lago) than a matter of age and declining painterly skill. What is useful, in all events, is to distinguish between the period in Brazil and just after, on the one hand, and the height of production and success from around 1660 to the mid-1670s, on the other hand, when Post produces his most characteristic paintings.

backgrounds; some manner of man-made structure, very often religious in form and animated by briskly painted *staffage*, fills the middle grounds of the compositions; and dense renditions of Brazilian plants and animals, creeping along the very edges of the lower panel, make up the carefully painted foregrounds. Post did some dozen or so landscapes in this mode that are generally dated to the first half of the 1660s – the Rijksmuseum’s generously proportioned *View of Olinda* follows this schema (see Figure 10.3). And he painted another half dozen of such works in the most productive years of his career, spanning the mid-1660s, when Post would have established his distinctive market niche. The 1662 *View of Olinda* is justly ranked among the artist’s most “brilliant” canvases, and it derives from what is generally perceived to be the most outstanding chapter of his career, the “most brilliant period of Post’s output.”¹⁵

This recent assessment partly rehabilitates Post’s reputation – what meager attention the artist attracted from twentieth-century critics mostly pigeon-holed him as a “curious” painter of Dutch Brazil – yet also provokes further questions and interventions.¹⁶ Frans Post has long been considered a unique and even an idiosyncratic painter – one of but two who journeyed to Brazil (the other being Albert Eckhout) or, for that matter, to any far-flung outpost of the exotic world. Yet there were in truth several other Dutch artists, also scattered in distant pockets of the globe, who were able to imagine and to visually represent distant lands: Gillis and Bonaventura Peeters, who painted the West Indies (earlier than Post, yet without actually voyaging there); Dirk Valkenburg, commissioned by Jonas Witsen to reproduce the lay of the land in Suriname (in this case, after Post); Gerard van Edema, who painted that urban jungle presently known as New York (thus chiefly for British patrons); Reinier “Zeeman” Nooms, who executed North African land and seascapes; Andries Beeckman, who composed meticulous East Indian scenes; Ludolf Backhuysen, also a painter of the East Indies; Willem Schellinks, who produced fantastic images of the Mughal court; Cornelis de Bruyn, who sketched and painted his way across the Ottoman, Persian, and Russian empires; and so on. (The complete list would include at least another dozen accomplished painters, including the

15 Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 200, 290.

16 Serious scholarship on Post, up until the work of the Pedro and Bia Corrêa do Lago, is both slight and uneven. The main monographs are by Erik Larsen, *Frans Post: interprète du Brésil* (Amsterdam: Colibris Editora, 1962) and Sousa-Leão (see note 10 above), the former’s work somewhat speculative in its analysis, the latter’s more of a reconnaissance of the then known paintings. Both – which long held sway in the field – have been superseded by Corrêa do Lago, *Post*.

recently identified Pieter de Wit.)¹⁷ Post, however, gets singled out. He is distinguished by critics and historians not only for painting the non-European world – again, one of many contemporary artists to do so – but also for his “nostalgic” reminiscences of colonial Brazil; for his visual homages to the tenure of his patron Johan Maurits; and, above all, for his patriotic evocations of the Dutch Atlantic empire. “Post’s [...] paintings,” remarked Peter Sutton, who has been largely responsible for placing the artist’s oeuvre in the canon of Dutch Golden Age painting (and serves as the go-to scholar for newly catalogued Post works) “can be seen in one sense as compensation for loss and a reassertion of the global reach of the Dutch trading empire.”¹⁸ His pictures offer “nostalgic reminders” of the Dutch settlements in Brazil and, by extension, of the colonial attainments of the Netherlands in the early modern Atlantic.¹⁹ Post’s images are understood to make allusions to Dutch empire – on this the critics are virtually unanimous – which they not only commemorate but also commend. They may be seen “as representations of the lost paradise of the Dutch in Brazil,” according to a recent assessment. “Much of Frans Post’s work...represents an effort to celebrate Brazil,” opines another critic. His paintings are intended “as grand public statements about” Dutch Brazil, visual memorials that appealed to the Dutch “patriotic sense of [their] nation as a world power with a global reach.”²⁰

Yet, again, the paintings do not, and they often do exactly the opposite: where earlier compositions by Post may have subtly introduced or perhaps artfully disguised the Dutch in their colonial world, later works fully abnegated the Dutch presence in Brazil and thereby underscore the remarkably quick retreat of the Dutch from their Atlantic “empire.” Sutton offered the first of these comments in an appraisal of a Brazilian pastiche now in the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid (Figure 10.5). The panel, “one of the most

17 The list is only partial, while studies of these artists are virtually nonexistent. For a tentative survey (looking only East), see Marten Jan Bok, “European Artists in the Service of the Dutch East India Company,” in *Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia*, ed. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Michael North, Amsterdam Studies in the Dutch Golden Age (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014).

18 Peter Sutton, online catalogue entry for Frans Post, *The Church of St. Cosmas and St. Damian and The Franciscan Monastery at Igaraçu, Brazil* (Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid): http://www.museothyssen.org/en/thyssen/ficha_obra/1121 [accessed 6 February 2014].

19 Rebecca Parker Brien, “Albert Eckhout and Frans Post: Two Dutch Artists in Colonial Brazil,” in *Brazil: Body and Soul*, ed. Edward J. Sullivan (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2001), 62–74 (quotation on 71).

20 See Alan Chong, “Ruins of the Cathedral of Olinda, Brazil” (catalogue entry), in Peter C. Sutton, *Masters of 17th-century Dutch Landscape Painting* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts,

FIGURE 10.5 *Frans Post, View of Igarapé, Brazil, circa. 1665, oil on panel (42.8 x 58.8 cm), Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, (inventory no CTB.1994.20), Madrid.*
 © COLECCIÓN CARMEN THYSSEN-BORNEMISZA EN DEPÓSITO EN EL MUSEO THYSSEN-BORNEMISZA.

attractive paintings [Post] produced throughout his third phase” (thus from the mid 1660s), resembles several done by Post during the height of his success, when the artist had hit his compositional stride – and by which time the Dutch, of course, had long departed Brazil.²¹ The paintings of these years depicted much of what made Post’s images ostensibly Dutch, including both the man-made structures of the modest settlements of Brazil and the men and women who would have built them: the odd European figure, along with African slaves and indigenous peoples. Yet these paintings also stocked the natural phenomena of South America, which surely was at the heart of their appeal. The Thyssen-Bornemisza panel, titled simply *View of Igarapé* (namely, the village in Pernambuco), centers on a ramshackle, yet still serviceable,

1987), 415; Sutton, *Dutch and Flemish Seventeenth-Century Paintings*, 159; and Sutton, online catalogue entry for Post, *Church of St. Cosmas and St. Damian* (Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza; see note 18 above).

21 Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 228 (cat. 66).

Due to rights restrictions,
this illustration is not available
in the digital edition of the book.

FIGURE 10.6 *Frans Post, Church with Portico, 1665, oil on canvas (56.2 x 83.5 cm), Detroit Institute of Art (Accession no. 34.188), Detroit.*

Christian church and on another building set further back and loosely-based on the local Franciscan cloister of Saint Anthony; there are a few figures in the foreground, also in front of the church. This duo of indubitably Catholic structures appear in several other compositions of these years, as does the image of the Olinda cathedral, which anchors the Rijksmuseum canvas (dated 1662) and dozens of others painted in a flurry of production that spilled into the early 1670s. Another painting, titled *Church with Portico* and now in the Detroit Institute of Art (signed and dated 1665; Figure 10.6) bears a church fairly reminiscent of the Rijksmuseum's cathedral – both paintings illustrate a distinctly religious structure with an incongruously classicized entrance – while yet another canvas, also signed and dated 1665 (and now in a private collection) has the *form* of the Detroit panel – a house of worship and worshippers center left, with intensive passages of *naturalia* otherwise creeping along the front of the canvas and its sides – with the *structures* of the Madrid painting, which grant the painting its title: *Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian* (see Figure 10.7 and compare Figures 10.5 and 10.6).

Would these houses of unmistakably *Catholic* worship invoke *Dutch* nostalgia? The Detroit canvas (Figure 10.6), which closely replicates the form and style of the Madrid panel (Figure 10.5), offers a good point of comparison and an instructive case study. Both paintings furnish views of churches (a pair in

FIGURE 10.7 Frans Post, Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian, 1665, oil on canvas (65 × 83.3 cm), private collection, São Paulo (sale Christie's, London, 1992).

the Madrid painting, one in Detroit), in both cases framed by *repoussoirs* of tropical flora (note the matching date palms on the right) and curious fauna (nearly identical toads and nine-banded armadillos, also to the right). It was the latter, especially – the exotic *naturalia*, painstakingly painted and quixotically presented – that seemed to have excited viewers and driven the market for Post's work. For while the paintings from this period of his career almost invariably incorporate a pale, typically crumbling church or chapel or cloister with some manner of local *staffage*, they invariably boast more concentrated passages of tropical nature, which fill the peripheries of the compositions and creep inevitably toward the center, lending the pictures a powerful undercurrent of the wondrous South American ecosystem. At the height of his powers, Post could render, in exquisite detail, a fascinating world of tropical wildlife: he excelled at conjuring exotic landscapes. In the Detroit canvas, the aforementioned toad (*Bufo* sp.) and armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*) are shadowed, to the right, by a macabre boa constrictor who swallows a bloodied rabbit (*Sylvilagus brasiliensis*) – nature can be vicious in the tropics. Meanwhile, to the left, an ample iguana lingers in front of a slab of stone, a remnant of a

forsaken classical column, which bears the artist's signature and date of composition: "F. Post 1665." The thick jungle flora, which occupies roughly a third of the canvas, is here and there enlivened by brightly painted timacambirés (*Aechmea* sp., *Bromelioideae* subfam.) and other tropical flowers (the Thyssen panel features a conspicuous pineapple: *Ananas cosmosus*); by various palms and spindly cacti; and by numerous other, gorgeously foliated exotic plants.

The dense greens that saturate the paintings' foregrounds would seem to encroach on the whites and ochers of the middle sections and veritably entwine the sides of the stone and plaster buildings. Several of the latter are readily identifiable Catholic structures. The Madrid panel illustrates a variant of the Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian – the *Igreja dos Santos Cosme e Damião*, the oldest church in Brazil, is more plainly delineated in several other paintings; it was an apparent favorite of the artist – and it also portrays an adaptation of the Franciscan cloister of Saint Anthony of Lisbon and the convent of Igarapu, which, it should be noted, does not in fact neighbor the village church. The convent's structure is transformed in the Detroit painting into the titular "Church with Portico," a wholly imagined, classically proportioned, and more imposing church, into which parade several worshippers: a Portuguese woman, veiled in black; another Portuguese woman, this time draped in a heavy white head covering and offering alms to a Franciscan (or Capuchin) friar; and another, likely Portuguese couple, entering through an arched doorway. A similar procession heads into the Saints Cosmas and Damian church in another 1665 canvas, now in a private collection, where one can just make out the altar painting housed within (Figure 10.7). The church in the Detroit painting also resembles, with its fanciful, overgrown, Renaissance-style portico – an image that suggests the epic struggle of classical architecture and tropical nature in an lushly exotic world – the relatively grander ecclesiastical structure of the Rijksmuseum's *View of Olinda* (Figure 10.3), a "brilliant" composition that dates, like the Detroit and Madrid paintings, from the early-to-mid 1660s.²² Toad, armadillo, and iguana are here joined by an anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*), just below a pineapple; by a slowly slinking two-toed sloth (*Choloepus didactylus*); and by a happily napping monkey – all of whom are shaded by palms, cacti, papaya trees, and so on. (The painting's carved frame, of contemporary vintage, depicts more exotic *naturalia*, including a ubiquitous serpent.) The church itself, set slightly back and extended horizontally to enhance its dramatic effect, plays a more pivotal role in this imposing canvas, attracting a train of figures that draws the eye up and down the sloping hill.

22 Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 200 (cat. 52).

Once again, a crowd of parishioners mill about the church's entrance: veiled women, broad-hatted men, cassocked friars, and, a bit lower down, African slaves wearing loose-fitting trousers whose bright color provides a sharp contrast with their dark skin. Several more Africans slaves, further in the distance, perform their mundane duties by bearing a woman in a palanquin – Portuguese, one suspects, as was local habit.

All of which makes a basic point: The European figures in these paintings – and, for that matter, most of the Europeans that populate Post's sizeable output from these years – are overwhelmingly Portuguese. The religious buildings depicted are universally Catholic, and they are emphatically in active use. In the Rijksmuseum composition, one can just make out the altarpiece – a cleverly-done painting within a painting – and the veiled figure of a female saint (the Virgin Mary?) whose modesty no doubt served as a model for the female worshippers of the humid coastal villages of Brazil who – so the painter would have us imagine – kept their faith.²³ And this suggests a corollary point: if these canvases do evince nostalgia, it would appear to be for the era of *Portuguese* control of the region; if they celebrate Brazil, they offer a narrative of Iberian Catholic persistence in a strangely exotic world, of the poetic struggle of faith against flora and fauna in the tropics. To be sure, Post painted other types of buildings – sugar mills, for example, which allude to the economic foundations of the European settlements, Dutch and Portuguese alike, and also plantation houses and village scenes. And he painted other figures, too. Indigenous Brazilians and African slaves predominate his work, the odd European figure – if present at all – typically off to the side and sequestered in a palanquin or heavy veil. Yet during the most intensive period of his production – from the early 1660s into the 1670s, when his output was slowed by age – Post painted churches, chapels, cloisters, and other obvious indicators of the Catholic faith; palanquins, manor houses, sugar mills, and other conspicuous signifiers of Portuguese life; and, above all, the florid, exuberant, superabundant *naturalia* of the exotic world. His paintings convey a message pertaining to Europe's experience and expansion in the exotic world and to the efforts by Europeans to sustain themselves in that world – but not, in the end, or in any easily discernible way, to the Dutch in the Atlantic.

23 Which prompts the obvious point that the overwhelming majority of European women in Brazil over this period were Portuguese, as very few Dutch-born women migrated to the colony during its brief existence. For population figures circa 1645, see José Antônio Gonsalves de Mello, *Tempo dos flamengos: influência da ocupação holandesa na vida e na cultura do norte do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1947), 73 (note 122).

III Production and Consumption: Exoticism for Europeans

The highly questionable Dutchness of these images and their reluctance to broadcast any parochial lesson about the Dutch in the Atlantic is a matter plain from the perspective of production – the paintings and their messages – as well as from the perspective of consumption. Post designed his products not so much for a patron or patria – after 1645 there is no documented evidence that he painted for Johan Maurits²⁴ – as for the public. He adroitly created his own market niche and, accordingly, met with considerable success. Post produced a lot: his oeuvre encompasses an estimated 300 painted works (about half of which have been identified and catalogued), done over a span of thirty-odd years. Post's paintings sold at higher than average prices: typically, above the average for landscapes and often well above average. And Post's paintings sold consistently throughout his career, the rate of production peaking in the 1660s, which is precisely the period when other forms of Dutch-made exotic geography also took off.²⁵ His work and its success in the market mirrors in many ways the profitable manufacture of other products made in Dutch ateliers – books, prints, maps, exotic collectibles – for the European market.

To whom did the paintings sell? Tracing buyers of art sold on the open market is notoriously difficult; there is rarely a clear paper trail for this sort of mass-produced painting that extends beyond late nineteenth-century purchases (when national museums entered the art market and documentation improves). But there do exist some well-preserved provenances for Post's corpus, and these offer useful clues. Of the slightly more than 25 percent of Post's 155 catalogued paintings for which we can determine some level of ownership going back to the early modern period (at least to the eighteenth century or, in some cases, to the turn of the nineteenth century), just under

24 One exceptional early painting, however, may point to possible princely connections. The now destroyed canvas *Sugar Mill* (Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, cat. 29) may have been done for the Stadtholder Frederik Hendrik, according to Sousa-Leão, as early as 1644 – not an impossible scenario, but one for which there is no actual archival evidence. See Sousa Leão, *Frans Post*, 23–26, 96. Another painting, the 1653 *View of Mauritsstad and Recife* (Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, cat. 22), which focuses on the city founded by Nassau, may also suggest a particular patron and purpose. As this composition is the only one of its kind done by Post – a proper cityscape of the Dutch colony painted the year before it was definitively lost to the Portuguese – it serves more logically as the exception that proves the rule: that Post otherwise did not paint Dutch Brazil.

25 Estimates come from Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 21–49; on Dutch-made exotic geography, see Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism*.

90 percent – an overwhelmingly indicative number – sold to *non*-Dutch buyers.²⁶ Post's paintings scattered across collections throughout Europe, and they also moved among European buyers after their original sale. Moreover, the predominantly French, English, German, Scandinavian, and sometimes Italian owners of these paintings in the early modern period match the French, English, German, and sometimes Italian translations of early modern Dutch-produced volumes of exotic geography (the Scandinavian collectors commonly obtaining German editions of popular works). There is another group of paintings for which there is also a well-defined lineage: 27 works gifted in 1679 by Johan Maurits of Nassau-Siegen to Louis XIV of France. Two-thirds of these paintings were executed by Post in Brazil (seven of this subgroup remain, while the rest are considered lost), yet the final third were purchased on the open market by Nassau's agent; these paintings span the artist's post-Brazil career. All went to the French court, in all events, in the year immediately following the conclusion of the Franco-Dutch War of 1672–1678, a conflict begun with the French invasion of the Netherlands and concluded in a temper that would hardly have suggested a present of putatively "patriotic" paintings from the vanquished – the Dutch, whose military command included, until he retired in the mid-1670s, the former governor of Dutch Brazil himself – to the victors.

One more telling and highly concrete example: a late-career painting bearing the generic title *Village and Chapel with Portico*, a composition that effectively mirrors the church-and-landscape design so popular in the 1660s (Figure 10.8). Done more than a decade after the Detroit *Church with Portico* – thus in the mid-to-late 1670s – Post's later composition reverses the direction of his earlier painted church (it now faces the valley and background hills rather than the viewer) and, at this late stage in the artist's career, lacks the fine detail in the *repoussoir* of his best work. The *Village and Chapel with Portico* sold, however,

26 It is difficult to offer a wholly precise accounting, yet the provenances listed in the latest literature – above all, those meticulously detailed in Corrêa do Lago, *Post* – offer broadly convincing evidence. Of the circa 150 securely attributed paintings by Post, 28 percent can be traced with some confidence back to owners in the eighteenth century or, in some instances, the early nineteenth century (which in some cases is as far back as such lineages may be tracked, although in other cases may point to uninterrupted aristocratic ownership). Of this securely documented group, above 85 percent belonged to *non*-Dutch owners for a measurable period of time (which is to say, the paintings may also have passed through other hands at some point). And while this sample offers nothing approaching definitive data, it does demonstrate fairly clearly that Post's paintings were possessed in large numbers by early modern owners who would have had a meager sense of nostalgia for *Dutch* Brazil.

Due to rights restrictions,
this illustration is not available
in the digital edition of the book.

FIGURE 10.8 *Frans Post, Village and Chapel with Portico, circa. 1675, oil on panel (18.2 × 24 cm), collection of Lord Dysart, Ham House, Surrey, England*
© NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES.

as soon as it hit the market, and it offers as such an exceedingly rare instance of a documented atelier-to-market sale—namely a non-commissioned-painting transaction recorded within a year or so of the panel's completion. Its consumer, moreover, turns out to be a buyer who hailed from the other military and political rival of the Netherlands in these years, Great Britain. The painting has been inventoried in Ham House, Surrey – acquired by an English aristocrat, in other words – since “between 1677 and 1679.”²⁷ The latter date was the year of Post's death, by which time his reputation had successfully crossed the channel to England and spread to the court of the Sun King in France. In both Surrey and Versailles, Frans Post was collected and admired: less for his representation of the Dutch in the Atlantic, one may assume, than for his exceptional ability to paint Europe's exotic world.²⁸

²⁷ Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 326 (cat. 145).

²⁸ This essay has not delved into Post's drawings, which were an integral part of his work; yet it should be briefly pointed out that these, too, sold largely to non-Dutch patrons. The largest known group of sketches – 30 or so, dating from the artist's formative years in

Also selling in London and Paris – and in the courts and more modest homes of consumers across Europe – were other Dutch products of exotic geography, and these lend an important context to Post's success as a purveyor of exotic imagery and, specifically, of images of the tropical West. For books on America, Europeans could turn to the bulky and lavishly illustrated geography of Arnoldus Montanus, *De nieuwe en onbekende wereld* (1671), an Amsterdam-made volume also translated into English and German. On the Caribbean they could read Charles de Rochefort's *Histoire naturelle et morale des Iles Antilles de l'Amerique* (1658), published first in Rotterdam and then in numerous subsequent editions in Dutch, English, German, and French. And on tropical natural history they could consult the authoritative tome of Willem Piso and Georg Marcgraf, published soon after the return of Johan Maurits from Brazil in 1648 – the volume included considerable graphic work based on drawings by Albert Eckhout – and then reissued in an expanded edition (1658) that also comprised a natural history of the tropical East.²⁹ For maps they pored over Nicolaes Visscher's highly influential – and relentlessly copied – *Novissima et Accuratissima Totius Americae Descriptio*, with its iconic allegory of America designed by Nicolaes Berchem. And Europeans also consulted the immense cartographic output of the firm of Blaeu and the many other mapmakers who made Amsterdam the capital of cartography in the seventeenth century.³⁰ And then there were material arts: ceramic wares made in Delft, replicating both the exotic East and West (sometimes on the very same object); marine shells engraved and otherwise decorated with tropical flora and fauna; coconuts carved with images of Indians and palm trees (both Post's and Eckhout's

Brazil – were obtained in the seventeenth century already by the English collector William Courten (alias Charleton) and subsequently purchased by Hans Sloane, the celebrated British imperialist and founder of the British Museum. Again, the case for these images' distinctly Dutch-patriotic resonances would seem rather weak.

29 Arnoldus Montanus, *De nieuwe en onbekende weereld, of, Beschryving van America en 't zuid-land* (Amsterdam, 1671); Charles de Rochefort, *Histoire naturelle et morale des Iles Antilles de l'Amerique* (Rotterdam, 1658); Piso, *Historia naturalis Brasiliae*; and Willem Piso et al., *De Indiae utriusque re naturali et medica libri quatuordecim* (Amsterdam, 1658).

30 On Visscher's famous map and its equally famous iconography, see the discussion in Benjamin Schmidt, "On the Impulse of Mapping, or How a Flat Earth Theory of Dutch Maps Distorts the Thickness and Pictorial Proclivities of Early Modern Cartography (and Misses Its Picturing Impulse)," *Art History* 35 (2012): 1036–1050. For Dutch-made overseas maps more generally – including those in Joan Blaeu's *Atlas Maior* (Amsterdam, 1662–1672) – see Kees Zandvliet, *Mapping for money: Maps, plans and topographic paintings and their role in Dutch overseas expansion during the 16th and 17th centuries* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1998).

work was reproduced in this form); tapestries woven with pastiches of imagined American life (again, incorporating motifs of Post and Eckhout); and so on.³¹ Not all of this material came from the Netherlands, but a high proportion did, and objects that did not often borrowed motifs from Dutch sources – especially from the paintings, prints, and drawings of Post and Eckhout, which inspired a vast amount of American imagery for years to come. In the production of so many of these objects and sources – the books and artifacts that furnished Europeans with a view of the New World and of the exotic world, more generally – the Dutch played the role of middlemen, entrepreneurs of exoticism and traders in imagery of the world. Post fits into this broader history of cultural commerce: he produced images of the tropics for an evidently enthusiastic audience of European consumers.

The Dutch role as mediators of the non-European world – and of the Atlantic world, in particular – has an extensive history, and it may only be in the last century or so that critics have so missed this point that they have erroneously attached the terms “Dutch” and “Atlantic” to these materials. This is almost certainly the case for the work of Frans Post. He reproduced, as early modern sources could frankly indicate, “the Indies,” sometimes “Brazil,” always Europe’s exotic world of circa 1670 – yet never the “Dutch” or the “Atlantic.” A painting dated right around that time makes this point both in its composition and its reception, the latter recorded in a rare contemporary comment affixed to the back of the painting. A large canvas purchased in 1678 or 1679 by Jacob Cohen, who served as Johan Maurits’ financial agent, the painting made a princely enough impression that Cohen acquired it for the collection of works that would eventually go to Louis XIV. Its exceptional size notwithstanding – the canvas measures only slightly smaller than the Rijksmuseum’s grand *View of Olinda* – the painting follows the basic formula that Post had by this time perfected. Beneath a wide, pale blue, and gently clouded sky, in an opening cleared from the jungle greens, a small group of Indians and Africans gather with baskets and tools; to the rear and barely visible are a few more figures, including a heavily veiled European woman. A thick *repoussoir* along the left side of the canvas and spilling into the foreground features a stately palm and an eye-catching pineapple; cacti and gourds of various shapes and sizes inhabit the dense brush. Perched on a hill in the distance is a single chapel; while in the center and on the right lies a more substantial cluster of buildings that

31 For several excellent examples of such materials, see Ellinoor Bergvelt and Renè Kistemaker, *De wereld binnen handbereik: Nederlandse kunst- en rareitenverzamelingen, 1585–1735*, 2 vols. (Zwolle and Amsterdam: Waanders and Amsterdam Historisch Museum, 1992).

holds the composition together: a religious compound, toward which the European woman heads – perhaps a convent or cloister – and a decent-sized house, which gives the painting its title: *House of a Portuguese Nobleman*.³² This title appears in an archival notation, which indicates, without much ambiguity, how the subject of the painting was understood in the late seventeenth century:

At the top of the Mountain stands a chapel of a village, which lies at its foot. A cloister of Capuchin monks of the Franciscan order. The house of a Portuguese nobleman. N.B. The yellow color one sees in the region are the Sugar Cane fields, from where sugar is extracted.

The inclusion of the word “nobleman” makes the painting worthy of its royal collector; the fact that the subject is Portuguese is beyond doubt. Likewise, the notation makes clear the Catholic bent of the composition; and there is notice, as well, of the economic relevance of the landscape (which may have increased the painting’s appeal to the king, as France expanded its own sugar plantations, albeit in the Caribbean). In all events, the image conveys nary a sense of the Dutch in the Atlantic, even as it does convey a fairly good sense of the Atlantic in Europe, as the seventeenth century came to a close: of the Atlantic world as perceived and produced by a Dutch artist, to be sure, yet as bartered and collected by European princes. Indeed, in certain ways Post’s Atlantic became *the* Atlantic: a picture of the tropical world that would ultimately be exhibited in the most prestigious gallery of Europe – the Musée du Louvre – where the painting remains to this day.

This broad and necessarily cursory glance into the work of Frans Post suggests several conclusions. First and most fundamentally, it proposes a new way to look at the much-admired landscape paintings of Post and hence a revisionist take on their meaning in the market of the late-seventeenth century. Post painted not so much nostalgia as exotica – hardly the same thing – and his works appealed to a generically European audience. A reassessment of Post’s painted oeuvre recommends, second, a reevaluation of the wider cultural production related to Post, whose images spun off into prints, maps, tapestries, ceramics, and a full range of decorative arts. These Post-inflected products should be understood in the context of exotic geography circa 1700; they speak

32 Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 287 (cat. 111), where the painting is assigned to the late 1660s (ca. 1670) and titled *House of a Portuguese Nobleman*. The Louvre, which dates the painting ca. 1650–1655, takes a broader perspective in their labeling: *A Monastery of the Capuchin Fathers [...] The House of a Portuguese Nobleman*.

not so much to the Dutch place in the Atlantic as to the Dutch role in purveying *images* of the Atlantic in various texts, pictures, and objects. More generally, the pattern of production and consumption sketched out for Post's paintings relates to the pattern of production and consumption for a far wider range of goods: of paintings by other artists, of course, yet also of books, prints, maps, curiosities, and material arts that engaged with early modern Europe's rapidly expanding world. And this brings up a third and final point pertaining to the putative Dutch Atlantic, of which Post's work has long been claimed as an exemplary cultural expression. Post's paintings are certainly Dutch in terms of their form and production – he indubitably borrowed techniques from the early modern landscape tradition of the Netherlands – yet hardly in terms of their content and consumption; they were broadly European in their market and meaning. And while they also reflect the space of the Atlantic world – the flora and fauna, the indigenous peoples and African slaves, the plantation economy and colonial rule – they flowed easily into a vaster European engagement with and narrative about the exotic world. In truth, Post seemed to go out of his way to *efface* the Dutch presence in Brazil, to compose paintings that disguised Dutch history in the Atlantic: rare is the Post composition with identifiable Dutch figures or settlements, with allusions to the Dutch West India Company or the reign of Nassau.³³ His work sold, accordingly, among a wide spectrum of European collectors and connoisseurs and those otherwise interested in the lush exotic world. In this sense, Post was a classic Dutch entrepreneur – a middleman who identified a market niche, a merchant of cultural goods who traded in images of the tropics. As often was the case in the early modern period – as was the case, as well, with other global products trafficked in this period – the Dutch played the role of go-betweens: in terms of trade and in terms of culture. Post exemplifies these early modern Dutch instincts and patterns. His work allows us to see more clearly, in dazzling compositions and luxuriantly verdant detail, how *Europe* engaged with the exotic world and how vital the Dutch connection was to this process.

33 This is a point made succinctly by Pedro and Bia Corrêa do Lago, as they write in their catalogue entry for *View of Mauritsstad and Recife*: "Why was Olinda portrayed so many times, and Mauritsstad and Recife only this once?" (Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 146).