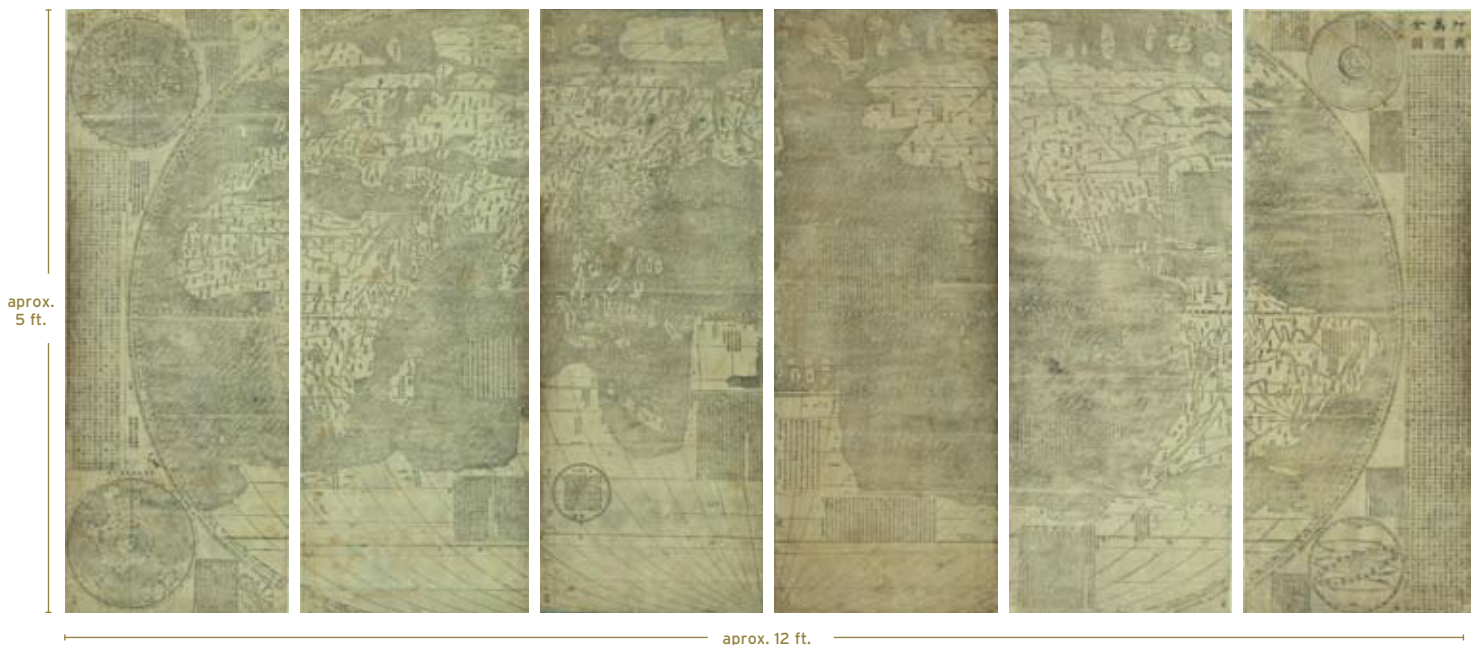


Global Positioning c. 1600: A Rare World Map

Exhibition at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts features world's first map to combine Eastern and Western cartography



Matteo Ricci, Italian, 1552–1610, *Kunyu wanguo quantu* (Map of the Ten Thousand Countries of the World), published by Zhang Wentao, Beijing, 1602. Woodblock print, six scrolls, overall measuring approximately 5 by 12 feet. Courtesy of the James Ford Bell Trust.

MINNEAPOLIS, APRIL 22, 2010

Matteo Ricci's monumental world map of 1602 is the oldest surviving Chinese map to show the Americas—and the first known map to combine Western and Eastern cartography, placing China at the world's center. Only six complete copies of the woodblock print are known to exist. Now, the Twin Cities is home to the only example in the United States, acquired last year by the James Ford Bell Trust after it emerged from a private Japanese collection. *Kunyu wanguo quantu*, or Map of the Ten Thousand Countries of the World, is on view at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) from May 15 through August 29, 2010. After this showing, "The Impossible Black Tulip," as the map is popularly called, will reside at the James Ford Bell Library at the University of Minnesota.

“Presenting *Global Positioning* gives us a great opportunity to place the Ricci map in the context of our own strong collection of Asian art, as well as provide our audiences with insight into East and West world trade in the seventeenth century,” said Kaywin Feldman, Director and President of the MIA. “We are honored to have this magnificent document at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts before it goes to its home at the James Ford Bell Library.”



Matteo Ricci, Italian, 1552–1610, *Kunyu wanguo quantu* (Map of the Ten Thousand Countries of the World, detail), published by Zhang Wentao, Beijing, 1602. Note depiction of The Great Wall of China. Woodblock print, six scrolls, overall measuring approximately 5 by 12 feet. Courtesy of the James Ford Bell Trust.

Museum visitors will gain a sense of the richly stimulating seventeenth-century Chinese society in which Ricci worked through a number of objects

hand-picked from the MIA's extensive Asian collection. Ming dynasty objects, Chinese export porcelain, Western maps, and Counter-Reformation devotional images all will help to evoke the cultural, religious, and intellectual exchange between China and Europe in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, as will a group of rare Chinese woodblock prints from a Bible published by Ricci's Jesuit colleague, Giulio Aleni.

Rachel McGarry, MIA's Adjunct Assistant Curator for Prints & Drawings said, “Ricci's map uniquely captures the exciting, strange, and contradictory world of the Age of Exploration, when the earth seemed both to expand and to shrink. Cultures virtually unknown to one another were thrust together, new lands and seas were meticulously mapped and catalogued, yet despite this explosion of knowledge, the fantastical, the legendary—giants and dwarves, satyrs and dragons—were still believable.”

Ricci was born in Macerata, a small town in the Marche region in Italy in 1552; he traveled to China as a Jesuit missionary in 1582 and remained there until his death in 1610. His religious devotion was matched by his intellectual curiosity. A professor of rhetoric with interests in science, astronomy, and geography, Ricci first gained favor in China with the powerful literati class. Adopting the dress of Chinese intellectuals and speaking extraordinarily fluent Chinese, Ricci shared the recent advances of Western science and introduced his new colleagues to the latest scientific instruments of Europe—complex astrolabes, exacting quadrants, terrestrial globes, and accurate timepieces. In his own words, Ricci “amazed the entire philosophical world of China.” His efforts were rewarded with an invitation to enter the Forbidden City in 1601, making him one of the first westerners to be admitted.

Robert D. Jacobsen, Chair of Asian Art at the MIA said, “While Ricci found a sophisticated intellectual climate in Ming China and a country with a long and distinguished mapping tradition that for over two thousand years had been a major player in international trade, he also encountered scholars who were ravenous for better geographic information about contemporary Europe and the New World discoveries. The Ricci map gave China its first overview of the total globe.”

Ricci set to work on his outsized map just after this visit. Ricci's masterpiece is the oldest surviving Chinese map to show the Americas, and the first known map to combine Western and Eastern cartography with China at the world's center.

The map's enormous size—approximately 5 by 12 feet, printed from woodblocks on six large sheets of paper—was necessary to make room for Ricci's extensive commentary. Writing in Chinese characters, he elaborated on such things as geographic systems, cosmography, and astronomy. Yet the best reading may be his colorful accounts of various regions of the world. For instance, he described the rhinoceros of Africa with some accuracy as "a beast with a head like a horse, a horn on his forehead, and an extremely thick hide." Other descriptions rely on legend, such as the crane-fearing dwarves "only about 1 foot high" in Russia, the humans "with the feet of oxen" in Turkey, and "the one-eyed people" who inhabited the region of Kazakhstan.

The Ricci Map was recently sold to the James Ford Bell Trust by London's renowned rare book seller, Bernard J. Shapero, for the benefit of the James Ford Bell Library at the University of Minnesota. The map was recently on display at the Library of Congress. After the exhibition at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the map will move to its intended home in the James Ford Bell Library at the University of Minnesota.

LECTURE

London map expert Daniel Crouch lectures on the Ricci map at the MIA on June 12, at 2 p.m. This lecture is co-presented by the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Associates of the James Ford Bell Library, and the University of Minnesota Libraries. **Admission is \$10; \$5 for MIA members.**

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The Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA), home to one of the finest encyclopedic art collections in the country, houses more than 80,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history. Highlights of the permanent collection include European masterworks by Rembrandt, Poussin, and van Gogh; modern and contemporary painting and sculpture by Picasso, Matisse, Mondrian, Stella, and Close; as well as internationally significant collections of prints and drawings, decorative arts, Modernist design, photographs, textiles, and Asian, African, and Native American art. General admission is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee. Museum hours: Sunday, 11 A.M.–5 P.M.; Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, 10 A.M.–5 P.M.; Thursday, 10 A.M.–9 P.M.; Monday closed. For more information, call (612) 870-3000 or visit www.artsmia.org.

ABOUT THE JAMES FORD BELL LIBRARY

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

The James Ford Bell Library <http://bell.lib.umn.edu/>

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