



Lecture

# Locating the Hispano-Philippine Ivory

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In 1590, Domingo de Salazar, the first Bishop of Manila, wrote to the Spanish king Philip II about the skills of the local Chinese immigrant population in the Philippines, singling out their production of ivory sculptures in particular. Salazar claimed: “with their ability to replicate those images that come from Spain, I understand that it should not be long when even those made in Flanders will not be missed.” This lecture considers the curious geography of the Hispano-Philippine ivories described by Salazar — sculptures made by Chinese immigrants to the Philippines, who were working after Spanish models to displace Flemish objects. In describing the production and market for these ivory sculptures, Salazar invokes the breadth of the Spanish empire, from Flanders to the Philippines. Considering the complex routes and relations of exchange embodied in the production, patronage and export of these so-called *Hispano-Philippine* ivory sculptures, challenges art historical

approaches to these objects, as *hybrid* objects, products of forced conversion or colonial coercion. The production of such ivory sculptures necessitated a coordination of resources and skills, artistic and commercial ingenuity, product and process innovations. Reconstructing the different trajectories of these ivories’ production and use, challenges historiographical assumptions about the nature of artistic influence, the practice of colonial copying, the divide between devotional and mercantile concerns, local and global networks. Locating the Hispano-Philippine ivory means recovering the interconnected actions and ambitions of a range of actors — artists, patrons, merchants, consumers — behind these extraordinary objects, revealing paradigmatic issues in the study of early modern globalization, namely how we reconcile complex, interlocking spatial and cultural geographies.



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