

# Dutch New York Between East and West: The World of Margrieta van Varick

September 18, 2009–January 3, 2010

Main Gallery



■ Armchair. Coromandel Coast,  
India, ca. 1680–1720.

Cup and saucer.  
Arita, Japan,  
1700-1720.



Box.  
Ceylon (Sri Lanka),  
1680-1710.



Charger.  
Dutch Republic,  
1689–1705.

This autumn the Bard Graduate Center will participate in a statewide celebration of the four-hundredth anniversary of Henry Hudson's voyage and the legacy of Dutch culture in New York with a landmark exhibition, *Dutch New York Between East and West: The World of Margrieta van Varick*. Organized by the BGC and the New-York Historical Society, Dutch New York will make a major contribution to the quadricentennial and to the scholarship of colonial New York by focusing on the life and times of a woman who in the seventeenth century lived in the rural village of Flatbush on western Long Island, a neighborhood still known by that name in the borough of Brooklyn. The exhibition helps elucidate what the historian Russell Shorto has called the "forgotten colony" in his book *The Island at the Center of the World*. Indeed, the British roots of New York City are recognized far more widely than the Dutch, despite the city's visible connections to the Dutch founders, still evoked in such street names as Amsterdam Avenue and Varick Street.

*Dutch New York* offers an innovative approach to exhibition practice by using the probate inventory of Margrieta van Varick's possessions compiled in 1696 as a means of examining life and culture in colonial New York. Born in Amsterdam in 1649, Margrieta spent several years at the other end of the Dutch colonial world—in the Far East, primarily in Malacca (present day Malaysia), before returning to the Netherlands with her minister husband, Rudolphus. In 1686 Margrieta and her family crossed the Atlantic to settle in Flatbush, where Rudolphus was the community's minister and where she opened a textile shop, having brought with her an astonishing array of Eastern and European goods. This exhibition is organized in five sections, each delineating a theme relevant to Margrieta van Varick's life and exploring the wide range of goods in her possession when she died in late 1695.

The exhibition first examines the inventory as a document of historical research and curatorial practice. A digital film features an interview with renowned historian Natalie Zemon Davis in which she considers the various challenges that confront historians who use inventories for research purposes, as well as the role of women in the seventeenth century.

