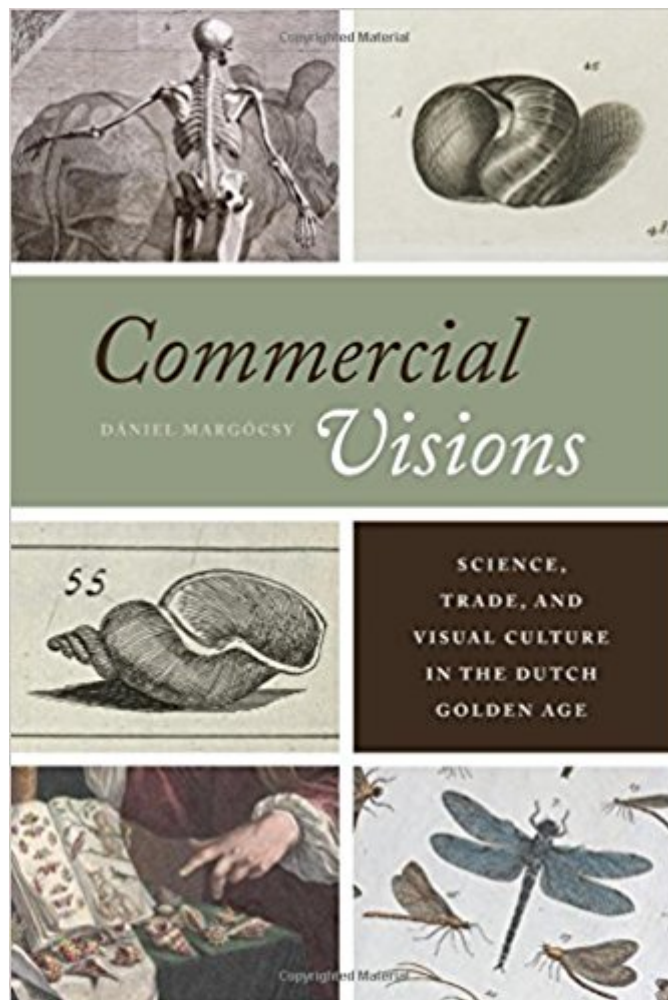




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Commercial Visions: Science, Trade, And Visual Culture In The Dutch Golden Age



Synopsis

Entrepreneurial science is not new; business interests have strongly influenced science since the Scientific Revolution. In *Commercial Visions*, Daniel MargÃcsy illustrates that product marketing, patent litigation, and even ghostwriting pervaded natural history and medicine; the "big sciences" of the early modern era; and argues that the growth of global trade during the Dutch Golden Age gave rise to an entrepreneurial network of transnational science.

MargÃcsy introduces a number of natural historians, physicians, and curiosi in Amsterdam, London, St. Petersburg, and Paris who, in their efforts to boost their trade, developed modern taxonomy, invented color printing and anatomical preparation techniques, and contributed to philosophical debates on topics ranging from human anatomy to Newtonian optics. These scientific practitioners, including Frederik Ruysch and Albertus Seba, were out to do business: they produced and sold exotic curiosities, anatomical prints, preserved specimens, and atlases of natural history to customers all around the world. MargÃcsy reveals how their entrepreneurial rivalries transformed the scholarly world of the Republic of Letters into a competitive marketplace. MargÃcsy's highly readable and engaging book will be warmly welcomed by anyone interested in early modern science, global trade, art, and culture.

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Customer Reviews

"In the Netherlands of the 16th and 17th centuries, global trade and commercial competition produced numerous commodity networks, including those dealing with the marketable aspects of natural history and medicine. . . . Thus, MargÃcsy suggests, product marketing, patent disputes,

and intense competition resulted in a turning away from the Renaissance's rambling natural histories and aesthetically centered portrayals of flora and fauna and encouraged the development of accurate scientific illustration, competing visual epistemologies, a standardized Latin taxonomy, color-printing techniques, improved specimen preparation, and more. The author offers a very readable and richly illustrated account of these developments, including a portrayal of the lives of natural scientists, physicians, and other interesting entrepreneurial characters active in the commercial centers of that time. Highly Recommended." (CHOICE)"Commercial Visions gives us Margitsy at his best: a robust scholar who serves up delightful prose and imaginative arguments as he moves from such mundane topics as seashell taxonomy to the downright bizarre business of wheeling-and-dealing preserved cadavers. . . . By exploring his eccentric cast of characters's financial motivations, Margitsy has assumed a leading place among an upcoming generation of early modern scholars who have begun to examine--seriously and critically--economic motivations in scientific interactions." (Justin Grosslight Arts Fuse)"Commercial Visions explores the commodification of early modern science by examining the circulation, collection, preservation, and representation of knowledge of plants, insects, and other natural curiosities and the means by which practitioners guarded the secrets behind anatomical preparations and scientific illustrations. Many of these explorations, especially in the later chapters, should be of interest to art historians and historians of the book, as well as historians of science. Margocsy's discussion of fact making, collecting, and the circulation of knowledge's all major foci of recent histories of early modern science's benefits from his detailed consideration that provides original insights and revisions." (The American Historical Review)"Commercial Visions considers scientific knowledge as a commodity, looking carefully at how the growth of global trade in the Dutch Golden Age shaped anatomy and natural history as commercial practices. . . . Readers are guided on a tour through a world of seashells, forgeries, and wax-filled cadavers, evidence of a commercially-driven proliferation of ways to represent living and dead bodies and a series of heated debates about them. Commercial Visions convincingly demonstrates that paying attention to the commercial aspects of early modern science can inform how we think about early modern circulation, the history of 'objectivity,' and the concept of the public sphere." (Carla Nappi New Books in Science, Technology, and Society)"Margitsy's book offers a significant and subtle exploration of the relationship between science and commerce. Thoroughly researched with rich case studies, Margitsy has provided an excellent analysis of early modern scientific culture." (Michael R. Lynn, Purdue University North Central Seventeenth-Century News)"Of great interest to historians of science with a broad array of specialisations. Margitsy's work speaks directly to many

important recent arguments in the history of science, offering valuable new insights and sometimes radically different perspectives on the relationship between science and commerce in the early modern Dutch Republic. His arguments have great relevance to work on other geographical areas and time periods, including the present-day. Most importantly, he provides an intriguing alternative to the prevalent historiographical narrative of the effects of commercial revolution in Europe.

Commercial Visions convincingly shows that strong market competition motivated the differentiation of knowledge commodities, causing proliferation--not standardisation--in ways of picturing and ordering the world." (Natalie Lawrence, University of Cambridge Endeavour)"A very original and masterfully written contribution to the burgeoning field of studies on early modern culture." (Klaus Hentschel, University of Stuttgart Metascience)"MargÃ csy documents how collectors and scientists used these tools to break out of the confines of social networks into a shared commercial/scientific space, in the process discovering new clients in faraway locales, promoting their brand, creating markets for their work, and acquiring rare specimens and new ideas, as well as profitable opportunities. . . . MargÃ csyâ s book offers a subtle and nuanced rethinking of how science and commerce--and production of knowledge and production of profit--dovetailed in the late seventeenth century." (Rebecca Tucker, Colorado College The Seventeenth Century)"Marg ocsy offers another look on the Dutch Golden Age and perhaps also on other geographical areas in the early period of the scientific and industrial revolutions. He shows, how in the seventeenth century, knowledge and creativity in the Netherlands are very much linked to the power of the market. . . . Members of the so-called Republic of Letters treated scientific knowledge as a commodity, and not as a public good. For modern manufacturers of licensed medicines this might ring a bell." (Kees Zandvliet, University of Amsterdam Journal of Historical Geography)â œMoney and science have long been connected. Scientific activity needs to be paid for, but at times it can also turn into a nice little earner. As science became more materialistic, one of the most important tools for investigation became the ability to picture phenomena. In excavating how that happened in the early stages of the Scientific Revolution, in one of the most commercialized regions of Europe, MargÃ csyâ s book makes a major contribution to the histories of science and of art.â • (Harold J. Cook, Brown University)â œThrough the front door, around the parlor, and out through the back, Commercial Visions takes readers on a Netherlandish visit to the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Scientific Revolution. MargÃ csy paints a richly researched portrait of the business, pleasure, and performance of the new scienceâ and wonderfully complicates the story of the relationship between the production of knowledge and the production of profit and careers. Readers of Shapin and Schaffer and Daston and Galison will enjoy and profit from reading Commercial Visions!â • (Michael

Sappol, author of *A Traffic of Dead Bodies*)—This impressive new account of scientific entrepreneurship in early modern Amsterdam offers fresh and often challenging arguments about relations between knowledge and the global marketplace. MargÃcsy's well-informed historical guidebook offers a tour of the headquarters of Dutch trade and commerce; and in so doing, it sheds an original light on how the most dramatic achievements of the period, in the knowledge of animals, plants, and the human body, were linked quite directly with the power of the market. The book subtly demonstrates how the entrepreneurial interests of Amsterdam knowledge-makers led to vicious competition, unstable patterns of publication and exchange, and a relentless struggle for market share. Using brilliantly rendered and remarkably illustrated examples of atlases, handbooks, advertisements, and models, the work represents a rare and successful attempt to link together sophisticated art history, solid economic analysis, and a fine-grained account of the roots of modern dilemmas of science, of credit, and of trust. MargÃcsy's book at once establishes itself as a highly significant contribution to the debate on the role of imagery in Dutch art, the social roots of modern sciences, and the tell-tale relation between market forces and intellectual competition. • (Simon Schaffer, University of Cambridge)

Daniël MargÃcsy is assistant professor at Hunter College, City University of New York, and lives in New York.

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