Lecturer: Dr. Doreen Müller
Doreen Mueller is lecturer at Leiden University and a historian of Japanese art. She specialises in Japanese paintings and prints. She is also interested in the social history of objects, considering the people who made and used these objects, and what these objects meant to them.

Lecture:

Title: Desirable Objects – Japanese Porcelain in Seventeenth-century Europe

Abstract:
Around the world, Japan is known for exporting useful things like cars as well as arguably less useful things like manga, anime and J-Pop. Generally, people have an idea what these things are and what they are meant to do. In seventeenth-century Europe, kings, aristocrats and wealthy people wanted to own exotic Japanese objects like porcelain. They used these objects as tableware and to decorate their homes with. The problem was that European homes and food were quite different from Japan, and that the Japanese who made these porcelain objects were not quite sure how to make them fit European requirements. There was a lot of guessing and imagining with curious results on both sides. In this lecture, we will look at examples of Japanese porcelain in seventeenth-century Europe, and consider how these objects bridged the cultural differences between Europe and Japan.

Tutorial:

Title: A Pair of Porcelain Elephants from Japan – Why was this a desirable product in Seventeenth-century Europe?

Abstract:
We will discuss two porcelain elephants that were exported to Europe from Japan in the seventeenth century. We will explore what we can learn by carefully looking at this object, and what it can tell us about the people who made it and the people who owned it.

Preparation:

- Look at the image of the Kakiemon Elephants in the British Museum (https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00tt6d9). Describe them in your own words (one page): What are they made of? How big are they? How do we know that they are Japanese and that they were made in the seventeenth century? Do they look Japanese to you?
- Listen to the audio description of the Kakiemon Elephants in the collection of the British Museum (https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/2GxcNk50mtf0xytwH0qRPtv/episode-transcript-episode-79-kakiemon-elephants). Consider why these elephants might have been desirable objects in seventeenth-century Europe. What does this object tell us about the people who made it? Why is it important to know about this object?