



A Red Like No Other: How Cochineal Colored the World

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The captivating story of the pursuit of the most powerful color. A global symbol of power, wealth, mystery, and sexuality, red has seduced viewers and inspired artists for millennia. Painters and other artists engaged in a quest for the source of the perfect red that conveyed the luxury, spirit, and substance of living. In the 1520s, Spanish explorers found it in the grand Aztec markets—in a dye derived from the cochineal insect. The ensuing global spread of American cochineal changed art, culture, science, and trade for centuries.

A Red Like No Other follows the precious bug juice from Mexico to Europe and beyond as it insinuated itself into all forms of art, politics, and commerce to color the world in vivid red hues. The images show how the colorant touched cultures and artists worldwide, including pre-Columbian weavers, painters of Spain's Golden Age, Middle Eastern rug makers, and Navajo weavers. El Greco, Tintoretto, Velázquez, van Dyck, Rembrandt, Vermeer, and van Gogh used it, as did Spanish fashion icon Mariano Fortuny. Today contemporary artists and designers continue to embrace the colorant for its beauty and meaning. An international team of more than forty scholars and experts brings a wide spectrum of original research on the symbolic meaning of red, the material meaning of cochineal in art and trade, and the history of the artists driven to find the perfect red.

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