

# Portraits in a Nutshell

The Art and History of Coquilla Nut Snuff Boxes and Bottles

Edited by Donna S. Sanzone

**A gorgeously illustrated look at snuff boxes and bottles carved from the Brazilian coquilla nut reveals a larger history of commerce, cultural exchange, and power in the Atlantic world.**

*Portraits in a Nutshell* showcases intricately carved snuff boxes and bottles sculpted from the Brazilian coquilla nut between the seventeenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. Both utilitarian and decorative, these bottles and boxes were produced and used by diverse people of wide-ranging geographic origin, racial background, and social standing. As a result, coquilla nut snuff boxes present a rich material archive of the Atlantic world and the central role of Indigenous and Black histories within it.

Despite being just three or four inches long, these coquilla nut snuff boxes encapsulate an early modern history of transoceanic movement and creativity. The carvings depict animals and fantastical creatures, scenes of religious and courtly life, portraits of political and military leaders, abolitionists and activists, and people at the margins of colonial society. These images are available to the public and to scholars for the first time in this book and will be of interest to antique collectors, art historians, social historians, and anyone interested in the unusual and the curious.

Over 250 detailed photographs of snuff bottles and boxes from the unique and wide-ranging collection of David Badger, not only illustrate the exceptional skill of their creators but also tell the story of millions of Africans transported to Brazil during centuries of the transatlantic slave trade. The text demonstrates the interconnectedness of the Atlantic world, the movements of peoples and ideas, and the commercial exchange of goods and cultural and material objects in Africa, Brazil, the Caribbean, and North America. In this beautiful book, these objects reveal a story never before told.

With a preface by Matthew Francis Rarey, Associate Professor of African and Black Atlantic Art History at Oberlin College, and an introduction by Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, Professor of Art History at the University of Pennsylvania and director of the Arthur Ross Gallery.

**Donna S. Sanzone** is an editor, researcher, and writer. In addition to holding executive-level positions at G.K. Hall, Macmillan, and Grolier Academic Reference, she was executive editor for the Harper Collins/Smithsonian Institution joint reference program, working with Smithsonian museums to produce exhibition catalogs and other illustrated works.

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ART HISTORY

"Richly illustrated, this beautiful volume brings to light for the first time a fascinating and intriguing collection of dozens of snuff boxes and bottles, showing that even small vessels conceived for tobacco storage and consumption embodied the wealth of African, Native American, and European cultures during the era of the Atlantic slave trade."

— Ana Lucia Araujo, author of *Humans in Shackles: An Atlantic History of Slavery*

