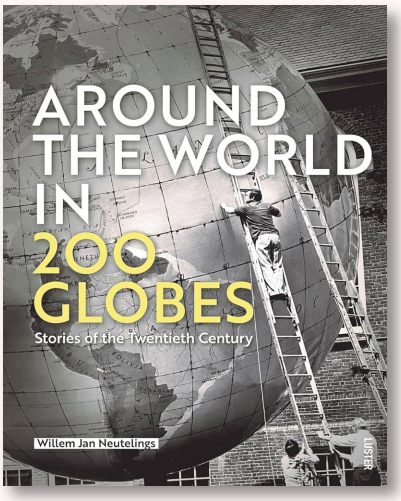
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AROUND THE WORLD IN 200 GLOBES: STORIES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

By Willem Jan Neutelings

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264 pages

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Review by: Hans van der Maarel, Red Geographics

This book illustrates historical developments in the manufacture and use of globes throughout the twentieth century, using two hundred examples. The globes are divided into nine thematic chapters—such as "Technology," "Style," "Education," "Society," and "Pop Culture"—and each chapter is subdivided into brief sections dedicated to some aspect of globe production or use pertinent to the chapter's theme. The "Technology" chapter, for example, contains eleven sections categorizing the various materials that can be used to create globes, such as "Paper," "Cast-iron," "Bakelite," or "Plastic." The "Style" chapter covers various styles of globe, with sections devoted to "Art Deco," "Modernist," and so on.

Each section occupies one- or two-page spreads with photos and a brief text. There is usually a full-page image, alongside one or more smaller images of globes that fit that category. For example, the "War Globes" section of the "Society" chapter features a large photo (99) of a 1939 twelve-inch Weber Costello globe "with grim black landmasses contrasting with white oceans . . . [and] thick blood-red political borders that would soon be fiercely contested," paired with a 1940s Cram advertisement for their "self revising" globe on the prior page (98). The last section in each chapter is titled "More Globes," and is filled with additional, smaller, globe photos, each with a short description. Sometimes these globes have been mentioned elsewhere in the chapter, but often not.

The brief accompanying text places the globes in their broad historical or societal context. For example, the "Tectonic Globes" section (84–85)—from the "Education" chapter—begins by introducing Alfred Wegener's plate tectonics theory, and goes on to discuss how Marie Tharp helped prove that theory with her bathymetric map that clearly showed the until then unsuspected existence and extent of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. Having set that stage, it goes on to mention various other tectonic globes, some of them shown in other parts of the book. A National Geographic globe, based on Tharp's map, is this section's main feature, but there is another example in the section on scientific globes. The continents on that one are attached by Velcro, thus allowing educators to demonstrate continental drift.

Of special interest is the spread on braille globes, which includes a globe that uses a combination of braille labels, wide rivers cut into raised landmasses, and textured embossing to give the visually impaired user a good overview of the shape of the Earth.

The section on outer space covers several pages, showing celestial globes, Moon globes (with, depending on the year of their design, the far side rendered empty), but also the globes used for spacecraft navigation. A notable example is the globe incorporated into the Orbitometer used by the cosmonauts aboard the Soviet Salyut space station to

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fix their position in space relative to the Earth, stars, and constellations.

The final chapter is entitled "Future," and is something of a catch-all for a variety of globes—such as magnetically levitating globes—that do not fit easily into the earlier categories.

The globes in *Around the World in 200 Globes* are, as mentioned in the subtitle, from the twentieth century. Unfortunately, this means that there is no coverage of the many interesting developments that have occurred in the first quarter of the twenty-first. For example, there is no mention of **Bellerby & Co. Globemakers**—founded in 2008—the North London makers of truly spectacular artisanal handcrafted globes. It is also worth mentioning that the clear focus on European and North American globes means that there are hardly any globes shown that were not produced in those regions. In fact, there are two chapters—"European" and "North American & UK"—that focus each of their subsections on a single commercial globe production company from the region, for a total of twenty.

The photos in this book, especially the full-page ones, are very nicely done and make this a perfect coffee-table book. As a broad overview of the variety of globes that were produced over the technologically, politically, and socially eventful twentieth century, there is a lot to be found in *Around the World in 200 Globes*. As a comprehensive or in-depth study of the same period—or a look forward to the present century—it may fall a bit short. It all depends on what you want.