In the seventeenth century, the vast network traversed by the Dutch trading companies facilitated a truly global circulation not only of commodities, but also of people. In the process it enabled embodied, eyewitness accounts that conveyed important new knowledge about far corners of the earth. Maria Sibylla Merian’s pioneering field research in Suriname and the artwork with which she recorded it offer a prime example that made a major contribution to the history of natural science. Such visual imagery was uniquely capable of conveying certain information—yet analyzing the mechanisms of its transfer clarifies and qualifies significant dimensions of its accuracy, reliability, and value. This talk draws conceptual tools from historians and philosophers of science and cognition (including Bruno Latour—and a recent critique), to better apprehend this particularly visual mode of knowledge transfer—one of the key conduits for the circulation of culture in the early modern period.