



Asian Art Society in the Netherlands

VERENIGING VAN VRIENDEN DER AZIATISCHE KUNST

Collecting Asian Art in the Western World: Past, Present & Future

International Symposium
celebrating the 100th Anniversary of
the Asian Art Society in the Netherlands



SATURDAY 23 JUNE 2018, 10.00 – 19.30 HRS.

AUDITORIUM RIJKSMUSEUM AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS

Collecting Asian Art in the Western World: Past, Present & Future

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS AND PUBLIC MUSEUMS

Private art collectors and their gifts are at the foundation of most European and American art museums. This also applies to the field of Asian art, in the East as well as in the West. Especially from the late nineteenth century onwards connoisseurs have created outstanding collections, individually and collectively via societies. Most of the major collections of Asian art originally started as private initiatives and later developed into museums.

VVAK AND ITS 100TH ANNIVERSARY

The Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst (VVAK), or Asian Art Society in the Netherlands, was founded in 1918 as an entirely private initiative. The collection of the VVAK distinguishes itself from the collections of the various Dutch ethnographical museums by focusing on high quality art works only. The VVAK does not collect any form of export art made for the West. The growing collection was initially shown at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, before it was moved to the Rijksmuseum in 1952, where it has been on loan ever since. The vast majority of the art objects displayed in the Asian Pavilion of the Rijksmuseum is the property of the VVAK.



ASIAN ART SOCIETIES IN EUROPE AND AMERICA

One of the earliest examples of a collectors' society is the Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen (Batavia Society for Arts and Science) in Batavia, now Jakarta, which was founded as early as 1778. Its collection is divided between the National Museum in Jakarta and the Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden. The English followed the Dutch with the foundation of the Oriental Ceramic Society in 1921, where after Germany founded the Gesellschaft für Ostasiatische Kunst in 1926 (East Asian Art Society). It was only after the Second World War that the first collections were initiated in the United States: the Society for Asian Art in San Francisco and the Asia Society in New York City, both in 1958. They both resulted in the foundation of museums and their members collectively assembled excellent art objects to exhibit publicly.

EUROPEAN FOUNDERS OF ASIAN ART MUSEUMS

One of the first museums for Asian art in Europe was initiated by the French connoisseur Emile Guimet and was based on his interest for ancient religions. The collecting policy of the VVAK was strongly guided by its co-founder and first chairman, the banker Herman Karel Westendorp, who personally bought important pieces for the society's collection in the countries of origin in the 1930's. Shortly after 1945, the Swiss gave rise to the Rietberg Museum, which is founded on the vast collections of the German Eduard von der Heydt.

COLLECTION POLICIES: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

The history of collecting can be viewed through a variety of paradigms, as keynote speaker prof. John Guy argues. He will analyse historical, cultural, political and ethnic framing of collecting Asian art, both in private and public arenas. The heyday of collecting non-western art is over now. Today, the export and import of art from other continents is strictly regulated. The provenance of each object must be checked on the (legal) circumstances of its acquisition. At the same time, museums reconsider ways to exhibit Asian art and heritage, protecting it while at the same

time trying to attract a broader and younger audience.

The symposium therefore will conclude with a discussion on how to deal with changing perceptions and public and political views on collecting non-western and Asian art. How will museums as well as private collectors and their societies respond to these changes and how will they maintain their specific position and collecting strategies? Co-operation between Asian and western public and private collectors may open up new ways to acquire, exchange and exhibit Asian art in its rich variety.

PROGRAMME

FROM 9.15

- Welcome & Registration at the VVAK desk in the entrance hall of the Rijksmuseum

Coffee/tea in the Auditorium

10.00 - 10.15

- Welcome by **Taco Dibbits**, Director General of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam
- Opening by **Pieter Ariëns Kappers**, Chair of VVAK, the Asian Art Society in the Netherlands



PART 1

MORNING PROGRAMME

Introduction to the programme by **Lex Holst**, Vice Chair of VVAK

10.15 - 10.50

- 'The highest of cultures': motives of VVAK members for collecting Asian art- past & present

Dr. Renée Steenbergen, board member of VVAK, specialist in collecting history and arts philanthropy

10.50 - 11.25

- Collecting by the 'Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen' (1778)

Prof. Marijke Klokke and **dr. Francine Brinkgreve**, respectively Professor of Art and Material Culture of South and Southeast Asia, Leiden University, and Curator for the Insular Southeast Asia collection, National Museum of World Cultures (a.o. Museum Volkenkunde Leiden and Tropenmuseum Amsterdam)

11.25 - 11.35

- Dialogue: Reflections on collecting Asian art in the Netherlands, publicly and privately- past and present

Moderator: **Lex Holst**, Vice Chair of VVAK

11.35 - 12.00 *Coffee/tea/water break*

12.00 - 12.35

- Sparking Interest for the arts of East Asia. On the history of the East Asian Art Society in Berlin (1926-1955, re-established in 1990)

Dr. Herbert Butz, former Deputy Director and Curator of Chinese Archaeology and Chinese Applied Arts at the Museum of Asian Art, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

12.35 - 13.10

- Passion and Connoisseurship: Charles L. Freer (1854-1919) and Arthur M. Sackler (1913-1978) at the core of the American national collection of Asian Art

Prof. Jan Stuart, Melvin R. Seiden Curator of Chinese Art, Freer Gallery of Art and Sackler M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

13.10 - 13.30

- Dialogue: New perspectives on exhibiting Asian art in western museums

Moderator: **Lex Holst**, Vice Chair of VVAK

13.30 - 14.30 *Lunch in Foyer*

Possibility to visit the Asian Pavilion guided by curators Asian Art of Rijksmuseum



PART 2

AFTERNOON PROGRAMME

Moderator: **Dr. Renée Steenbergen**, board member of VVAK

14.30 - 15.05

- Westendorp's spectacles: the VVAK & collecting for the greater good

Menno Fitski, Head of Asian Art, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

15.05 - 15.40

- From «ars una» to the Museum Rietberg: Eduard von der Heydt and his legacy

Esther Tisa Francini, Lic. phil., Head of the Archives and the Provenance Research, Museum Rietberg, Zürich

15.40 - 16.05 *Coffee/tea/water break*

16.05 - 16.40

- From Utopia to Museum: the birth of Emile Guimet's Museum of Religions

Dr. Pierre Baptiste, Curator Southeast Asian Art, National Museum for Asian Art – Guimet, Paris

16.40 - 17.25

- Keynote speech: Antiquarian collecting - Old World New Age

Prof. John Guy, Irving Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

17.25 - 17.45

- Discussion with afternoon speakers: The future of collecting Asian art in the Western World

Moderator: **Dr. Renée Steenbergen**, VVAK

17.45 - 17.55

- Closing remarks / wrap up

Prof. Anne Gerritsen, Professor Kikkoman/VVAK Chair of Asian-European Intercultural Dynamics, Material Culture and Art, Leiden University

Closing remarks by **Pieter Ariëns Kappers**, Chair of VVAK

VVAK 100TH ANNIVERSARY RECEPTION

18.00-19.30

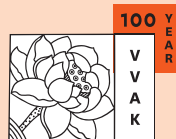
Drinks and canapés at the Atrium of the Rijksmuseum

Performance: Gamelan ensemble Swara Santi

*Shiva Nataraja (King of Dancers), India bronze, h 153 x w 114.5 cm,
12th century acquisition 1935, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam,
collection VVAK, AK-MAK-187*

REGISTRATION

Member 35,-, non-member 80,-. Coffee & tea, lunch & reception are included. Detailed information is available on the website: www.vvak.nl. If you wish to ensure a reserved place, please go to our website to register.



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