

VAN GULIK 2-DAY EVENT • PROGRAM • 10 APRIL 2021

Saturday 10 April • 13.00-16.30 (CET)

# Robert van Gulik and Chinese Culture

REFINED ENJOYMENT OF ELEGANT LEISURE



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10 April 2021

## Robert van Gulik and Chinese Culture

### REFINED ENJOYMENT OF ELEGANT LEISURE

The Royal Asian Art Society in The Netherlands (KVVAK) and China Cultural Center Den Haag are delighted to present an online cultural programme: *Robert van Gulik and Chinese Culture, Refined Enjoyment of Elegant Leisure*, to explore Van Gulik's practice of the Chinese arts and his fascination for the taste of the Chinese Literati (scholar-officials who also wrote poetry, practiced calligraphy and painting, and played music).

Robert van Gulik 高罗佩 (1910-1967) was a well-known Dutch writer, sinologist and diplomat. He is famed for bringing back the Tang dynasty hero Judge Dee in his historical detective novels, which enabled readers around the world to delve into and experience the traditional Chinese way of life.

This programme coincides with the current exhibitions on Robert van Gulik's Chinese art practice and collection at the Rijksmuseum and the China Cultural Center Den Haag.

The interactive afternoon will be broadcasted live from China Cultural Center Den Haag and will feature tours of the respective exhibitions on show. A key note lecture, *Song of Wind in the Pines*, will be given by the son of Robert van Gulik, Willem van Gulik. His talk will focus on the guqin (Chinese zither) and its place in the world of Robert van Gulik and the Chinese literati.

The guqin has a history of more than 2000 years and was the favourite instrument of the Chinese literati and imperial aristocrats, who played it



## PROGRAM

*Moderator: Rosalien van der Poel (Board member KVVAK)*

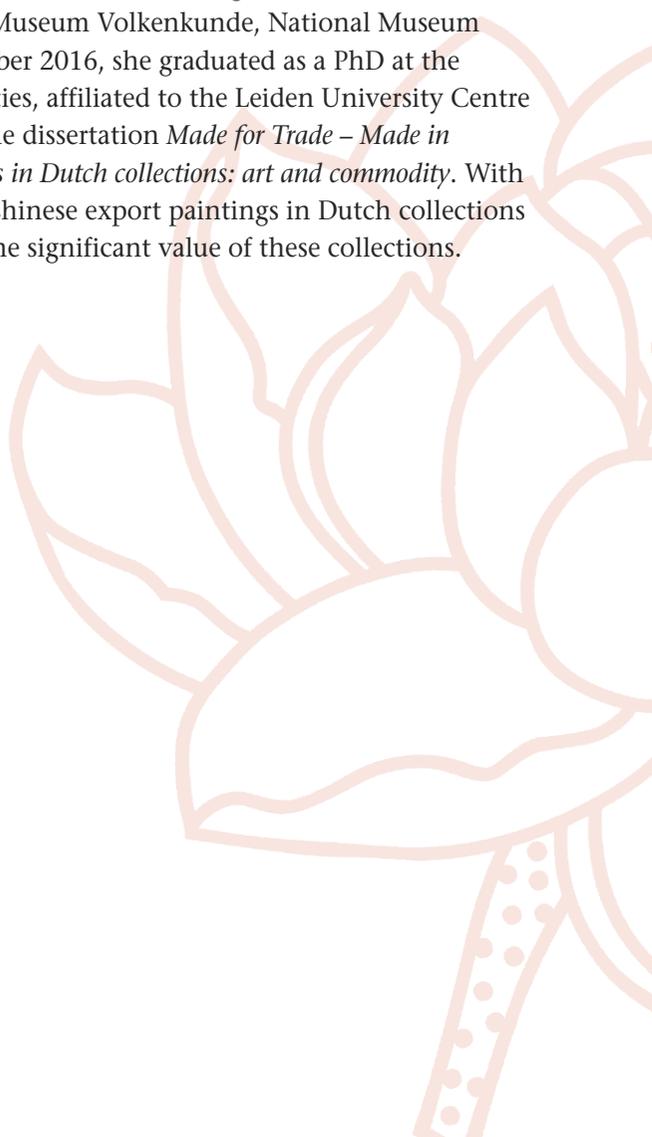
- 12.45 Online walk in
- 13.00 Welcome by Pieter Ariens Kappers (Chairman KVVAK),  
Huang Hongchang (Director China Cultural Center Den  
Haag), Fei Yuliang (Chinese Art Collector)
- 13.15 Reflections on the KVVAK Young Scholars' Symposium  
Rethinking Robert van Gulik: New Perspectives and  
approaches  
*Anne Gerritsen (Chair of Asian Art Leiden University, KVVAK)*
- Online tour of 'Robert van Gulik and his Passion for  
Chinese Art' at the Rijksmuseum  
*Ching-Ling Wang (China Curator, Rijksmuseum)*
- Online tour of 'Refined Enjoyment of Elegant Leisure'  
at the China Cultural Center Den Haag  
*Marie-Anne Souloumiac-Van Gulik (Independent Curator)*
- 13.35 Keynote lecture 'Song of Wind in the Pines'  
*Willem van Gulik (Professor Emeritus, Leiden University  
Institute for Area Studies, son of Robert van Gulik)*
- 13.55 Music performance Flowing Water (on Robert van Gulik's  
guqin)  
*Cheng Yu (Director Youlan Qin Association)*
- 14.00 Closing words of part one

- 14.10 Break
- 14.30 Film 'On the Track of Robert van Gulik' by Rob Rombout
- 16.00 Discussion by Zoom with the public with Rob Rombout  
moderated by Marie-Anne Souloumiac
- 16.30 End of programme



## BIOS

**ROSALIEN VAN DER POEL** is a board member of the Royal Asian Art Society in the Netherlands (KVVAK). She works at Leiden University as Institute Manager of the Academy Creative and Performing Arts. Furthermore, she is a research associate at Museum Volkenkunde, National Museum of World Cultures. In November 2016, she graduated as a PhD at the Graduate School for Humanities, affiliated to the Leiden University Centre for Arts in the Society with the dissertation *Made for Trade – Made in China. Chinese export paintings in Dutch collections: art and commodity*. With her profound knowledge of Chinese export paintings in Dutch collections she emphatically advocates the significant value of these collections.

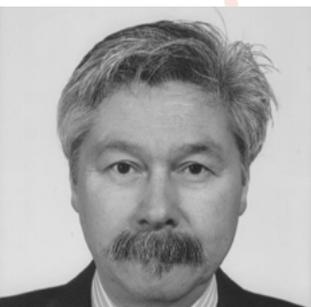


**ANNE GERRITSEN** holds the Chair of Asian Art at Leiden University. This position is generously sponsored by the Royal Asian Art Society in the Netherlands, Hulsewé Wazniewski Foundation, Isaac Alfred Ailion Foundation, Foundation for the Study of China at Leiden University, and the Jan Menze van Diepen Stichting. She has her institutional home base in the Leiden Institute for Area Studies (LIAS) but contributes regularly to LIAS-Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS) collaboration. She is also Professor in the History Department at Warwick University. Her research interests include material culture in history, food and food cultures in Asia and Europe, theory and methods of history, and gender.



**WILLEM VAN GULIK** is born 1944 in Chongqing (People's Republic of China) received an international school education, graduated in Oriental Studies and Cultural Anthropology at Leiden University (the Netherlands). He was Curator of the East-Asian department at the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden (1971-1982) and Director-General (1982-1991). From 1991-1994 he was a senior advisor for the project Privatization National Museums in the Netherlands, Ministry of Welfare, Public Health, and Culture. Furthermore, he was appointed as the Leiden University Foundation extraordinary professor in the Arts and Material Culture of Japan (1985-1994), followed by appointment in 1994 as professor of East Asian Arts and Cultures in the Faculty of Humanities and in the Faculty of Archaeology.

In 2009, Van Gulik retired as Professor Emeritus, Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS). He also has been a board member of the Vereniging Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst (Association Friends of Asian Art) from 1989-1997.



**CHENG YU** is an internationally renowned *pipa* lute and *guqin* zither virtuoso, ethnomusicologist and specialist in Chinese music. She is the co-founder and artistic director of the UK Chinese Music Ensemble, the award-winning Silk String Quartet, and the director of the London Youlan Qin Society. Her latest album – Longyin was recorded using Robert Van Gulik's *guqin* and silk strings and will be released under the ARC label in the summer of 2021. Cheng Yu is based in London, she teaches the *pipa* and *guqin* and does research at SOAS (The School of Oriental and African Studies), University of London. She will perform *Flowing Water*, which vividly depicts various movements of flowing water from a gentle trickle to a powerful waterfall.



**ROB ROMBOUT** (Amsterdam, 1953) is an independent film director and renowned lecturer, teacher and jury member. He was a professor at the LUCA School of Arts in Brussels and co-founder and executive of the DocNomads Program (international master's degree in documentary filmmaking). He has been a professor at INSAS (Brussels) and a lecturer in France at the University of Paris 8 and the University Marc Bloch in Strasbourg. For many years, he has been leading workshops all over the world (Brazil, Vietnam, China, Canada, United States, Lebanon). He was the first professor sent by INSAS to teach at the SKDA (Hanoi) and to set up of a common program between the two schools.

He directed documentaries for over thirty years. All his films were shown on international television channels and have been awarded in several festivals. The last 5 years, he moved to other forms of exposure of his work in solo exhibitions and retrospectives (Belgium, Netherlands, Portugal, France, Australia, Azerbaijan).

Rob Rombout's documentaries are based on practices commonly associated with fiction. However, they manage to reconcile these processes with those related to documentary filmmaking.



**CHING-LING WANG** is the curator of Chinese art at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. He received his doctoral degree in East Asian art history from Freie Universität, Berlin in 2013. His research interests include Chinese painting, Chinese court art, exchange of visual and material cultures between Europe and Asia in the 17th and 18th centuries, as well as contemporary art.



**MARIE-ANNE SOULOUMIAC - VAN GULIK** 高若兰 (Paris, 1981) is a cultural entrepreneur and a granddaughter of Robert van Gulik. She graduated in 2005 from Goldsmiths College, University of London with a master's degree in Visual Anthropology. Marie-Anne runs a creative agency which promotes best practices and new models between China and the West. She is also a co-founder of Dee Projects a platform to promote Judge Dee and Robert van Gulik as a source of knowledge, inspiration and creativity in the contemporary context.



## ABOUT THE GUQIN

**THE GUQIN or QIN** (pronounced 'chin') is an unfretted zither with seven strings. Its harmonics, glissandi, vibrati and deep resonance create an expressive, contemplative and sophisticated sound world that was much loved throughout its history by literati including Confucius, the poet Li Bai and Emperors Kangxi and Qianlong. The prefix 'gu' means 'ancient', indicative of a long known history stretching back over 2000 years. The *qin* became the favourite instrument of the literati and imperial aristocrats, who played it for self-cultivation and associated it with Chinese chess, calligraphy and brush-painting. In 2003, *guqin* music was designated as a 'masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity' by UNESCO in order to raise awareness of the importance of *guqin* artistry.



A MEETING IN A GARDEN PAVILION



THE FORTRESS INSCRIBES A PILLAR

## ABOUT ON THE TRACK OF ROBERT VAN GULIK



**ROBERT VAN GULIK** (1910-1967) is one of the world's most popular Dutch writers, but relatively unrecognized in his own country. A diplomat, Chinese specialist and scholar, he became famous with his detective series about Judge Dee, which in many ways, are projections of his own life: a permanent duality between his real life and the hero in his books.

*(Written and directed by Rob Rombout, 88 minutes, Spoken in English, Dutch, French, Chinese and Japanese in English)*

### FILM SYNOPSIS

On The Track Of Robert van Gulik is a documentary quest about one of the most read Dutch writers in the world, Robert van Gulik (1910-1967). This diplomat, author and scholar was a highly versatile man and a connoisseur of Japanese and Chinese languages and cultures. He owes his fame to his detective fiction starring Judge Dee.

The filmmaker Rob Rombout follows in his footsteps to discover the author's legacy in his diaries, the people he inspired and the witnesses to his life. During Rombout's years-long travels through the Netherlands, Indonesia, Japan, the U.S. and China he located many of van Gulik's contemporaries and devotees of both Judge Dee and van Gulik: people whose lives changed after entering his universe. These are unique people who emulate the writer, the scholar and the diplomat.

Robert van Gulik's life reads like a novel. His books are in many respects projections of his own life. In one of his rare interviews, van Gulik accidentally disclosed: ' ... Judge Dee, that's me...'. It can be difficult to

draw the line between fact and fiction with a character like Robert van Gulik. In the documentary, reality and fantasy, past and present will flow into each other, at times imperceptibly.

The narrative form is a quest where the filmmaker takes us on a journey in the author's tracks. At times by plane, by ship or literally on tracks, by train just as the writer himself often travelled. The film is structured (often broken up) with fragments of diaries and stylized interviews. The filmmaker's own voice blends into the spoken diary texts.

The challenge is to bring to life a deceased writer using modern day images and without recourse to archive images. The author's private archive material will be used in moments: handwritten letters, manuscripts, diary extracts, photographs and films.

So, this is not a biopic or reconstruction but a journey in search of what is left behind. The film presents a liberal interpretation of the writer's life and at times provides a pretext for the exploration of other subjects. One door opens another. Through the portrait of van Gulik, the filmmaker addresses themes such as the relationship between fact and fiction, the East and the West, diplomacy and writing and the romantic and the erotic.

The duality and the mystery of the man at the heart of this film are reflected in the cinematic form it takes: a continual flirtation with the boundaries of the documentary genre.



## ORGANISATION

### THE ROYAL ASIAN ARTS SOCIETY IN THE NETHERLANDS (KVVAK)

The Royal Asian Art Society in the Netherlands (KVVAK) was founded in 1918. The Society's main goal is to disclose high-quality Asian art to a wider audience, to create interest in it and to stimulate academic research in this field. The KVVAK collection is internationally regarded as a world-class collection and is exhibited in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.  
[www.kvvak.nl](http://www.kvvak.nl)

### CHINA CULTURAL CENTER DEN HAAG

China Cultural Center Den Haag is a non-profit cultural institution set up in the Netherlands by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of People's Republic of China. It is dedicated to fostering the cultural exchanges and cooperation between China and the Netherlands.  
[www.ccchague.org](http://www.ccchague.org)

