

5-6 JUNE 2008

THE ART COLLECTOR

between philanthropy
and self-glorification



university of
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Institute of Biography

GRONINGER MUSEUM



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VENUE: GRONINGER MUSEUM

THE ART COLLECTOR

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CONFERENCE 5-6 JUNE 2008

INSTITUTE OF BIOGRAPHY IN COOPERATION WITH THE GRONINGER MUSEUM

Whether we consider Vincent van Gogh, Jackson Pollock, the Young British Artists or any other 'discovered' artist, in most cases private collectors have played a pivotal role in their breakthrough. Philanthropy and the love of art appear to be the driving forces behind collecting – they are apparently the major motives for spending one's capital on both famous and unknown artworks. However, perhaps less elevated motives are just as influential in the establishment of collections. Do collectors not desire to distinguish themselves through their collections? Are they not driven by a need to display status and taste and in the process to immortalize their name? In short, are collectors not mainly driven by self-glorification?

In addition to studying the often peculiar methods, motives and merits of collecting over time, this conference has a broader aim. By exploring the possibilities of interdisciplinary and comparative research we hope to re-energize debate and encourage academic research into the field of collecting. By emphasizing the late nineteenth and early twentieth century – the Golden Era of private collecting – the conference aims to inspire and provide examples for contemporary collecting.

THURSDAY 5 JUNE 2008

THE INDIVIDUAL COLLECTOR AS A TYPICAL PHENOMENON

Moderator: **Adriana Turpin**

- 10:00 Coffee and registration
10:30 Word of welcome
- 10:45 **Barbara Lasic**
Richard Wallace and the Construction of the Wallace Collection
- 11:15 **Jonathan Black**
Dora Gordine: Collecting Connoisseurs and Building to House a Collection
- 11:45 **Birgit Schulte**
Karl Ernst Osthaus: Transcending the Walls of the Museum
- 12:15 Lunch
- 13:45 **Hildelies Balk**
Taking Collecting Very Seriously: the Collections of H.P. Bremmer
- 14:15 **Eva Rovers**
Helene Kröller-Müller and the Status of Modern Art
- 14:45 **Caroline Roodenburg-Schadd**
Art Collecting and Art Promotion by P.A. Regnault
- 15:15 Tea break
- 15:45 **Esmée Quodbach**
Henry Clay Frick and the Formation of The Frick Collection
- 16:15 **Rosemary Matthews**
Isabella Stewart Gardner and her Art Collection
- 16:45 Drinks

FRIDAY 6 JUNE 2008

RESEARCH INTO COLLECTING

- 09:30 Welcome with coffee
- 10:00 **Helen Rees-Leahy**
Private Collections, Public Art, 1792-1824
- 10:30 **Dorothee Wimmer**
German Art Collectors about 1900
- 11:00 **Peter Trippi**
The Henderson Family's Patronage of J.W. Waterhouse
- 11:30 Coffee break
- 12:00 **Ekkehard Mai**
Artists as Collectors
- 12:30 **Wessel Krul**
Changes in Taste and the Problem of National Identity
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:45 **Frank Herrmann**
Collecting Then and Now
- 15:15 **Helleke van den Braber**
Art Collecting and Patronage: an Ongoing Debate
- 15:45 **Renée Steenbergen**
The Power of Private Collectors
- 16:15 Conclusions
- 16:30 Drinks



Pablo Picasso, *Violon* (1911-1912), © Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

ABSTRACTS

Barbara Lasic

RICHARD WALLACE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WALLACE COLLECTION

Set against the background of the late Victorian exhibitionary field, it will be argued that the arrival of the Wallace collection in Britain in 1871 prompted a new era in the collection's existence, with the emphasis being placed upon its increased visibility and accessibility to a wider audience. This paper will scrutinize contemporary responses to the opening of the Wallace Collection and identify the connoisseurial values that it embodied and disseminated. An analysis of the methods of display and the admission policies applied to the Wallace Collection will also demonstrate that its identity overlapped with museums as diverse as the Victoria and Albert Museum and the house of Sir John Soane.

Jonathan Black

DORA GORDINE: COLLECTING CONNOISSEURS AND BUILDING TO HOUSE A COLLECTION

During a long and illustrious career the flamboyantly talented sculptor Dora Gordine (1895-1991) proved not only highly skilled in persuading collectors to buy her work, but equally adept at befriending many of the leading European collectors and connoisseurs of her day. Such friendships conferred upon her a much needed respectability as the majority who knew her well, or thought they knew her, remained unsure as to the exact details of her origins and past life in Eastern Europe. This was a state of affairs to which the artist actively contributed and her penchant for wily obfuscation has made her a particularly challenging subject for biographical investigation.

Birgit Schulte

KARL ERNST OSTHAUS: TRANSCENDING THE WALLS OF THE MUSEUM

Between 1900 and 1921 the wealthy industrialist Karl Ernst Osthaus (1874-1921) attempted to realize his vision 'to make beauty once again the dominant force in life'. Founding the Folkwang Museum in 1902 - which soon achieved fame as the world's first museum for contemporary art - marked the beginning of his cultural projects. However, Osthaus' initiative went beyond merely establishing this museum. The purpose of his 'cultural mission' was to improve the social reality of the German city of Hagen, with art being an important means of restructuring social life.

Hildeles Balk

TAKING COLLECTING VERY SERIOUSLY: THE COLLECTIONS OF H.P. BREMMER

H.P. Bremmer (1871-1956), known as the genius behind the Kröller-Müller collection and the great Van Gogh propagandist in the Netherlands, was a strong, charismatic personality who wielded great influence over public taste and purchasing habits. His position was comparable to that of foreign contemporaries such as Julius Meier-Graefe and Roger Fry. Like them, Bremmer was a versatile man, starting out as an artist, but soon becoming active as a critic, teacher, publisher, collector, dealer and connoisseur. This paper will discuss the character of the Bremmer collections, the nature of Bremmer's influence over his followers and his combination of his puritanism and business sense which has been recognized as typically Dutch.

Eva Rovers

HELENE KRÖLLER-MÜLLER AND THE STATUS OF MODERN ART

Between 1907 and 1938 Helene Kröller-Müller (1869-1939) created a collection of modern art that was unequalled in Europe. Preoccupied with the idea of bequeathing a cultural monument to the Dutch public, she only purchased those pieces of art that she thought would endure the test of time. Her motives for doing so were hardly altruistic. She was very well aware of the fact that collecting modern art improved her social status. However, by making sure her vast collection was kept together in a museum after her death, she embedded modern art in the Dutch museum system.

Caroline Roodenburg-Schadd

ART COLLECTING AND ART PROMOTION BY P.A. REGNAULT

The Dutch art collector P.A. Regnault (1868-1954) was a self-made business man. Born into a lower middle-class family in Amsterdam, he worked his way up to become a successful entrepreneur. He started collecting art around 1900 and in 1953 he donated an important part of his collection to the Dutch state, to be placed in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. As he considered the future of art to be dynamic and unpredictable, Regnault decided that after thirty years, the state would be free to remove works from the museum if they had lost their significance. In this respect, Regnault's decision was for the sake of art, not for self-glorification.

Esmée Quodbach

HENRY CLAY FRICK AND THE FORMATION OF THE FRICK COLLECTION

One of the great collectors of America's Gilded Age, Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919) was a pioneer in the Pittsburgh coke and steel industries and an enormously successful financier. In 1871 he founded the Henry C. Frick Coke Company, which soon prospered. In the following decades, Frick amassed one of the most magnificent art collections of his day. This paper will explore Frick's interests, motives and ambitions as one of the leading collectors of the early twentieth century, as well as his aspirations as the founder of The Frick Collection, which he intended to be his 'monument'.

Rosemary Matthews

ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER AND HER ART COLLECTION

Isabella Stewart Gardner's (1840-1924) motto 'c'est mon plaisir' is carved into the brickwork above the front door of her museum in Boston as a statement of why she collected, and is the ongoing purpose of that collection. However, as Jean Baudrillard points out in *The System of Collecting* a collection *always* stands in for something else. Superficially, Gardner became a collector of art because she was wealthy enough to invest in valuable objects, but on a subconscious level Gardner's collection is inextricably linked to the many losses she experienced during her life, including the untimely deaths of members of her close family and friends.

Helen Rees-Leahy

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS, PUBLIC ART, 1792-1824

This paper describes four sites of private collecting, display and reception: the Orléans exhibitions of 1798, the Marquis of Stafford's Gallery at Cleveland House, London, the British Institution, and the collection of John Julius Angerstein at 100 Pall Mall (subsequently acquired by the British state as the first home of the National Gallery). Each was a space of assembly that, cumulatively, constituted an assemblage of spaces, in which the conditions of the public's inclusion/exclusion were continually renegotiated. What were the motivations of these collectors in opening their collections to the public (albeit on a limited basis) and how did these individual practices prefigure the eventual functioning of the National Gallery itself?

Dorothee Wimmer

GERMAN ART COLLECTORS ABOUT 1900

In late nineteenth-century Germany, male-dominated museum friends' associations and cultural elites of the industrial centres of Germany supported public art collections that for the most part were incorporated into municipal or federal agencies and governed by male administrative experts. The paper will explore the individual and political preconditions, collecting strategies and forms of art mediation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century German art collecting, understood as an interaction between museum directors, commercial agents and individuals of old and new social elites, motivated by a form of social accountability such as philanthropy as well as by the pursuit of an established social position.

Peter Trippi

THE HENDERSON FAMILY'S PATRONAGE OF J.W. WATERHOUSE

Through his later career, the English academician J.W. Waterhouse (1849-1917) relied increasingly on purchases and portrait commissions by the Henderson family. Most socially prominent was the financier Alexander Henderson (1850-1934), but it was actually Alexander's younger brothers, H.W. and Brodie Henderson, who acquired the most paintings. Although friendships bloomed between Waterhouse and various Hendersons, it must surely be the aesthetic sensibilities they shared that kept the family buying his work, long after it had grown unfashionable. This paper will position their interrelationships in the context of a major Waterhouse retrospective opening at the Groninger Museum in December 2008.

Ekkehard Mai

ARTISTS AS COLLECTORS

The artist as collector is an old and prominent theme. However, in the course of the nineteenth century as well as in recent times, the collection as a memorial became a leading motif, either for artists themselves or for specific public interests. Increasingly, art has become a personal statement and confession, a monument of memory and a contemporary ideology. By means of three case studies the characteristics of the artist as a collector will be explored: the Lenbachhaus in Munich, the Brücke-Museum in Berlin and the Emil Nolde Stiftung in Seebüll.

Wessel Krul

CHANGES IN TASTE AND THE PROBLEM OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

In the first half of the nineteenth century, collecting old masters was the most prestigious kind of art collecting in The Netherlands, both because of the international fame of these artists and because of their status as national icons. Around the middle of the century however, some Dutch collectors began to focus on contemporary European art. This paper will consider this shift in the context of the changes in taste and the problem of national identity at that time. The coal merchant C.J. Fodor (1801-1860), who left his house and art collection to the city of Amsterdam at his death, will furnish a major example.

Frank Herrmann

COLLECTING THEN AND NOW

Historically, a strong case can be made for philanthropy as self-gratification. In the UK, during the first half of the twentieth century, philanthropy was often intertwined with scholarship and this was a wonderful bonus to the museum world. In recent times, the mood has changed among the giants who hit the headlines (or have PR advisors) and for whom self-glorifying philanthropy – and tax advantages – are often the order of the day. Exceptional commercial talents have led to the ultimate combination of collecting and self-glorification.

Helleke van den Braber

ART COLLECTING AND PATRONAGE: AN ONGOING DEBATE

The contemporary discussion concerning collecting and patronage in the Netherlands has a historical counterpart in the so-called Dutch 'support debate', which raged between 1905 and 1935. In those years, many collectors and patrons entered into support relationships with artists and this active and bustling culture of collecting and patronage did not go unnoticed. In magazines and newspapers, a number of artists and critics extensively discussed whether the involvement of private collectors was beneficial to the arts. This paper will discuss how the current debate is related to the 'support debate' conducted a hundred years ago.

Renée Steenbergen

THE POWER OF PRIVATE COLLECTORS

The power of private finance in the world of culture around 1900 lay in collective patronage, with groups of collectors founding institutions to support museums, in which they could appear as patrons, contributing works of art of value to a public collection. Today, across the world, owner-directors of companies are still the largest and most generous patrons. Personal involvement is the main motive for donations to the arts. Yet giving effectively is no simple matter. The key choice is between individual or collective patronage. The traditional forms of patronage can serve as a compass for collecting and patronage today.



Georges Seurat, *Le Chahut* (1889-1890), © Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

SPEAKERS

Dr Hildelies Balk is head of National Projects and Programmes at the Department of Research & Development of the National Library in The Hague, The Netherlands. She specializes in the history of collecting art in the Netherlands, with a particular focus on the *Art Czar* H.P. Bremmer. Hildelies Balk was active as a researcher and curator in the museum world for over twenty years before taking up her current management position.

Dr Jonathan Black is a senior Research Fellow in History of Art at Dorich House Museum, Kingston University, London. He is a specialist in early twentieth century Western European history of art and military history. His most recent publication (with Brenda Martin) is the monograph/catalogue raisonné: *Dora Gordine: Sculptor, Artist, Designer* (London, 2008).

Dr Helleke van den Braber is assistant professor of Cultural Studies at Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands. She studied comparative literature and theatre history at Utrecht University, where she obtained her PhD in 2002. She teaches and publishes on the subjects of patronage, the funding of art and cultural economics. Her current research focuses on nineteenth century patronage culture in the Netherlands and abroad.

Frank Herrmann is the author of *The English as Collectors. A Documentary Sourcebook* (Nottingham, 2002). He was director of overseas operations at Sotheby's for several years, after which he founded Bloomsbury Book Auctions in 1982. He has published a range of articles on publishing and the art market.

Prof. Wessel Krul is professor of Cultural History at the University of Groningen and guest lecturer at the Université Paris-IV and the Dutch Institute in Rome.

He has published a variety of books and articles on Johan Huizinga and cultural history of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Dr Barbara Lasic is assistant curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. She studied English Literature and History at the Université Denis Diderot in Paris, and History of Art at the University of Manchester where she gained a PhD on the collecting of 18th-century French decorative arts in Britain, 1789-1914. She has held positions at the Wellcome Trust and the National Maritime Museum, both in London.

Prof. Ekkehard Mai is deputy director of the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne, Germany. He is a co-author of the nine-volume publication *Kunst, Kultur und Politik im Deutschen Kaiserreich*. He has published on seventeenth to nineteenth-century art, the history of museums and academies, art theory and art criticism and has also organized a range of international exhibitions.

Rosemary Matthews is in the second year of a PhD programme in Creative Writing at Kingston University, London. She is writing a biography of Isabella Stewart Gardner which combines biographical facts with a creative reading of the works of art, objects and memorabilia that remain exactly as Gardner arranged them over a hundred years ago.

Esmée Quodbach is a PhD candidate at Utrecht University and assistant to the Director of the Center for the History of Collecting in America, which is part of the Frick Art Reference Library in New York. She has authored a number of publications on collectors and collecting, most recently an expanded issue of the Metropolitan Museum's *Bulletin*, on the formation of that museum's collection of Dutch paintings from 1871 until the present.

Dr Helen Rees-Leahy is the Director of the Centre for Museology at the University of Manchester, where she runs the graduate programme in Art Gallery and Museum Studies. She has held a variety of senior posts, including Director of the Design Museum and Deputy Director of the National Art Collections Fund, and has organized numerous exhibitions of fine art and design. Her current research interests focus on the practice of individual and institutional collecting.

Dr Caroline Roodenburg-Schadd gained her PhD on the Dutch art collector P.A. Regnault from the University of Amsterdam (1995). She has written several books and catalogue essays, especially on art collecting. For her comprehensive study *Expressie en ordening. Het verzamelbeleid van Willem Sandberg voor het Stedelijk Museum* (Amsterdam 2004) she was awarded the AICA charter 2005 by the Dutch section of AICA (Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art).

Eva Rovers is a PhD candidate at the University of Groningen, Institute of Biography. She is writing a biography of Helene Kröller-Müller. Eva Rovers studied art history and art policy at Utrecht University, after which she taught art policy and sociology of art at the same university. The focal point of her research has been the reception and influence of early modern and abstract art.

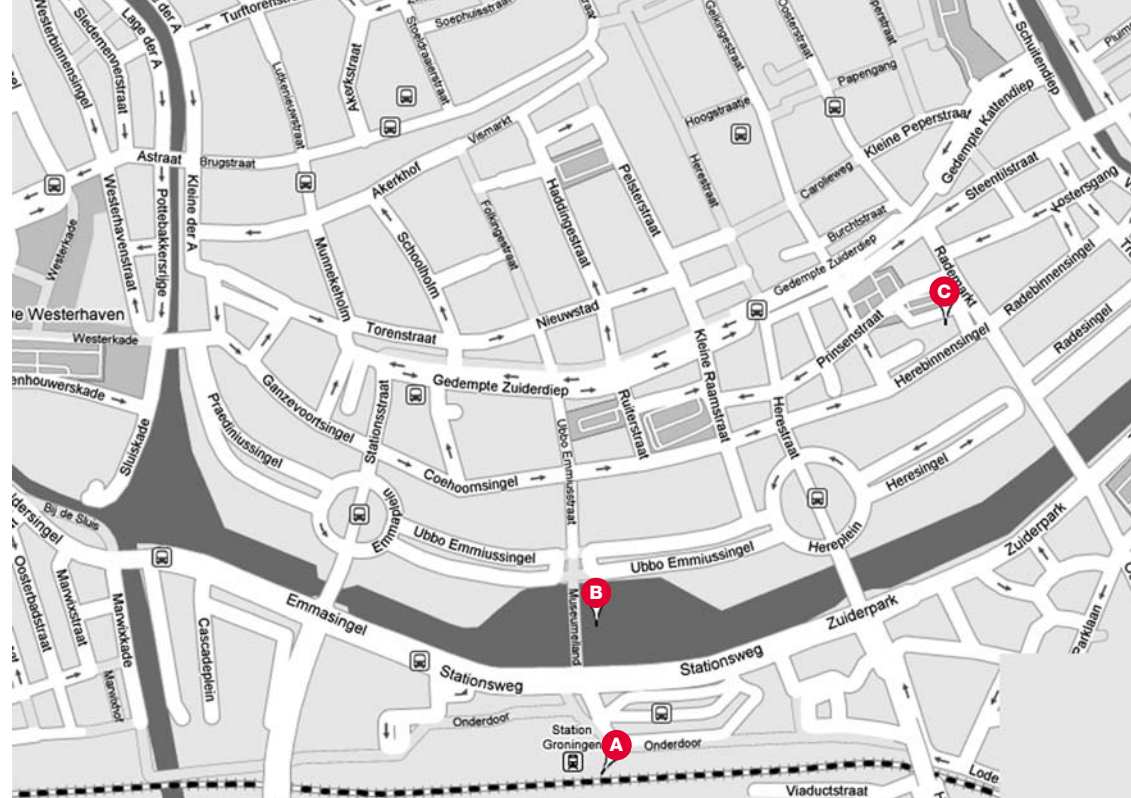
Dr Birgit Schulte has been managing director of the Henry van de Velde-Gesellschaft and deputy director/curator of the Karl Ernst Osthaus Museum in Hagen, Germany since 1991. Previously, she has worked as a curator at the Falkenhof Museum, Rheine and the Westfälische Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte in Münster.

Dr Renée Steenbergen is an independent researcher, journalist, curator and adviser based in Amsterdam. She published her book *The New Patron. Culture and the return of private money* in May 2008. Steenbergen is working for the national daily newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* since 1987 and recently for *Het Financieele Dagblad*, writing about the art market and private collecting and funding. She is currently starting a centre for research and mediation on individual giving for the arts.

Peter Trippi is president of Projects in 19th-Century Art in New York. In 2006, he became editor of *Fine Art Connoisseur* magazine, after serving three years as director of New York City's Dahesh Museum of Art. In 2002 he published a monograph on J.W. Waterhouse. Trippi is presently guest-curating a Waterhouse retrospective, opening at the Groninger Museum in December.

Dr Adriana Turpin is the Academic Director of the MA course on the History and Business of Art and Collecting, run by the Institut d'Études Supérieures des Arts in Paris in partnership with the Wallace Collection in London. With Jeremy Warren, Head of Collections at the Wallace Collection, she organized a conference on *Auctions, Agents and Dealers*, the papers from which have just been published.

Dr Dorothee Wimmer teaches in the Department of History and Cultural Studies at the Freie Universität, Berlin. In 2006 she held a scholarship at the Centre allemand d'histoire de l'art in Paris, and from 2003 to 2005 she was an academic trainee at the Neues Museum Weserburg in Bremen, Germany. She has published on modern and postmodern art and culture as well as the history of art collecting and the art market.



- A** = Groningen Central Station
- B** = Groninger Museum
- C** = Restaurant de Apedans

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