

THE DUTCH LIBRARY IN PARIS - A FOREIGN CULTURAL INSTITUTE LIBRARY WITH A SPECIAL CHARACTER*

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Abstract: The library of the Fondation Custodia and the Institut Néerlandais has been a well-known Institution in Paris ever since its foundation by Frits Lugt (50 and 40 years ago, respectively). The following will describe and compare different foreign cultural institutes in Paris and specifically their libraries. Furthermore, the unique character of the Dutch collection will be highlighted, as well as the way in which the Library is adapting to new techniques : of special interest will be the development of special links with other art libraries, e.g the Institut National de l'histoire de l'art (INHA) in Paris and the Rijksbureau voor kunsthistorische documentatie (RKD) in the Hague.

1. Introduction

The collection of the Dutch connoisseur and art collector Frits Lugt is housed in the 18th century Hôtel Turgot, 121 Rue de Lille, in the elegant seventh arrondissement of Paris. It is currently managed by the Fondation Custodia. The Lugt family spent the second world war in the United States and was very impressed by the initiatives taken by private collectors in the United States. So they decided in 1947 to follow their example and to donate the capital necessary for the establishment of the Fondation Custodia, thus ensuring that their work could be continued after their death.

The Institut Néerlandais occupies the street side building of 121 Rue de Lille, the Hôtel Levis Mirepoix. The Institut Néerlandais was founded in 1957 again at the initiative of Frits Lugt, this time in partnership with the Dutch government. Given that the original plan to set up an art centre in the Netherlands failed, it was decided to opt for a location in Paris, France, the second homeland of Frits Lugt.

The Institut Néerlandais and Fondation Custodia, founded by the same man, and sharing the same address are still closely linked today. The Custodia staff regularly organises exhibitions in the Institut Néerlandais and edits the catalogues. For example, the exhibition "Rembrandt et son école, dessins de la collection Frits Lugt" was organised in 1997 and shown in the Institut Néerlandais. It was also shown at the Teyler's Museum in Haarlem. Similarly,

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some of the concerts organised by the Institut Néerlandais staff are given in the elegant salons of the Fondation Custodia.

There is no doubt that the library is the area where the two institutions come together: visitors to the library consult books owned either by the Fondation Custodia or by the Institut Néerlandais. The books share the same bookshelves, only their ex libris is different. Of the two librarians one is employed by the Fondation Custodia, the other by the Institut Néerlandais. As a result, the library's operation and management is probably where the spirit of its founder Frits Lugt has been most respected.

2. History

Frits Lugt was not only an art collector but also an eminent scholar. He compiled catalogues of the collections of Dutch and Flemish drawings of the Louvre, the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris.

His name is also associated with two unrivalled works of reference : *The marques de collections* (1921, supplement in 1956) and the *Répertoire des catalogues de ventes publiques 1600-1825*, 4 volumes (1938, the last volume appeared in 1987 after his death). It may seem amazing nowadays that a Dutchman could write those works in French but in those times (the first volume appeared in 1921) French was the language used by art dealers and auction houses.

When Frits Lugt worked at the auction house of Frederik Muller & Co in Amsterdam, his primary occupation was compiling auction catalogues. This may have been the reason he later put together the "*Répertoire des catalogues de ventes*" (index of auction catalogues). The basis for this index was his own collection of auction catalogues, which he later donated to the 'Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie' (RKD) in The Hague, where the collection is still located today. He was particularly attached to this institution since its foundation in 1930, and supported it by donating his art library, his collection of reproductions as well as paying for a number of subscriptions.

The collection of Frits Lugt includes prints, drawings, artists' letters, paintings, portrait miniatures, manuscripts, indian miniatures and last but not least the art library.

When Frits Lugt created the Fondation Custodia he started building up another art library having donated his former collection to the RKD. When first starting to build his collection, his interest was mainly in drawings, prints and old books. He especially liked illustrated books, the subjects of which were very diverse, e.g. a fencing manual, a book about the care and the use of the crossbow, emblem books

etc. In fact Frits Lugt strove to recreate a 17th century gentleman's ideal library. Furthermore, he specifically acquired books that would support his art collection. This is still one of the principles behind the current acquisitions policy, except with Dutch art and literature, where the objective is to build a comprehensive collection.

This collection has recently been extended even more, and complemented by publications in many other areas.

3. Library Collection

The Library shared by the Institut Néerlandais and Fondation Custodia consists of approximately 200 000 titles (250 subscriptions included).

The main emphasis of the collection was, and still remains today, Dutch art and literature, but it also contains a significant element of foreign art history.

a) ART HISTORY

The main objective of the art history collection is to give a complete picture of what is published on Dutch art, both domestically and abroad. In addition, the emphasis is placed on the acquisition of general works of reference, monographs about Dutch artists, and catalogues of Dutch Museums (both catalogues describing the museum's possessions as exhibition catalogues on foreign artists).

Furthermore, the collection includes a large number of monographs about non-Dutch artists : the French, English, German and Italian artists are particularly well represented. Regarding foreign artists, the emphasis is placed on the period up to 1900.

A substantial part of the collection is also dedicated to catalogues of museums and private collections world wide - trying to be as complete and up to date as possible for the French museum and exhibition catalogues - as well as auction catalogues since 1960. Moreover, the Library contains a compilation of works analysing drawings and prints, collector's works, Indian and Persian miniatures, as well as memorial publications by and for art historians (*libri amicorum* and so on).

Finally a large selection of international periodicals is also available.

b) OLD EDITIONS

The substantial collection of old editions - put together by Frits Lugt and continually expanded after his death in 1970 - is managed by the Fondation Custodia in the Hôtel Turgot. The purpose of his collection was to give a comprehensive overview of the highly advanced production of books in the

Netherlands in the 16th, 17th and the 18th centuries, and specifically the production of illustrated books. The collection's themes - to name just a few - represent works and sources on art history, emblems, song books, topographic and historiographic works, travel descriptions, works on natural sciences, triumphalia and calligraphy. The works of the most influential writers and critics of those times are also available, often in the first or early editions, as well as works of Dutch authors published in France (and vice-versa), and early translations in Dutch or French literature.

c) AUTOGRAPHS

The autographs (more than forty thousand of them) form a fascinating part of the collection. The majority are letters by Western European artists from the Renaissance to the present as well as letters from collectors, connoisseurs, and art historians. They perfectly complement the drawings collection, by highlighting the relationship between the handwriting of an artist and his/her drawing style.

Most appealing are the letters illustrated with sketches, such as Albrechts Dürer's letter including the drawing of a rose, a brush and a dog, the Matisse letter with the sketch of his Italian model Lorette. There is also Jozef Israels letter written in French to Mr. Pelgeram and Mr. Lefevre in London, and embellished with a 'Rembrandtlike' sketch or, in a different style, the delightful letter of George Lemmen to Mrs Weber where he describes and illustrates his journey back home.

d) LITERATURE

Modern Dutch literature (after 1945) is kept systematically up to date, as well as the translation of Dutch literature into French. The fact that the Netherlands was chosen as the central theme of the Frankfurter Messe in 1994 was instrumental in helping to alter the preconceived notion that the Netherlands is only able to world-class painting. Dutch literature, for adult and for children, has been translated in dozens of languages ever since. The library also holds a representative selection of older Dutch literature, of history in general and history of Dutch literature and book production in particular (typography, illustrations, printing, editing, ex libris and publishing).

4) Comparison with libraries of other Cultural Centres in Paris

There are over forty different foreign cultural centres in Paris, some countries such as Italy, Germany, Poland or Portugal having more than one.

The objective of the following is to compare the most important and interesting ones, from the point of view of their history, their collection, or the activities they organise.

First, we must differentiate between cultural institutes belonging to a big organisation such as the Goethe Institut, the British Council, the Centre Culturel Cervantes or the Canadian Cultural Centre and the "others", more atypical ones, such as the Centre Culturel Suédois, the Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian, the Institut du Monde Arabe and the Bibliothèque Polonaise de Paris.

The common thread to all these cultural centres is that they are a showcase of their country, they promote the country's culture and their libraries clearly reflect this. The exception to this is the American Library in Paris which caters to Americans living in Paris. It is the kind of library you typically find "back home" in the United States (comparable to public libraries in the Netherlands). There is a big library (approximately 100 000 volumes), exclusively in English, although the authors can be foreign; a large children's section is also available. Most members of the Library are Americans, though French people can sign up as well; in fact the library is extremely popular with French high school students. The library of the American University in Paris is not included in this conference as it is only open for their own students and teachers.

The four main centres of Germany, Great Britain, Spain and Canada have several things in common. The staff members are usually diplomats specialised in cultural affairs and all four of them are mainly language centres. Their most important activity is teaching, promoting the language and translating literature. They essentially act as a kind of information desk, answering a great variety of questions related to their country. They deal with exchange programs between universities, with student scholarships, and also liaise between artists and the art galleries in Paris. While they have reference books in many fields (economics, politics, history, literature and art history), their libraries invariably focus on literature, going so far in some cases as to close the art section (e.g. the British Council), apparently for lack of demand. Film, video and music are generally well represented and visitors have (often free) access to Internet. Their visitors are mostly French.

What makes these centres most interesting are their specific activities.

For example :

1. The British Council acts as an agent for the British Library in London. It is even one of their main activities as they have over 1000 clients in France for whom they do everything from doing research to keeping the accounts.
2. The Centre Culturel Canadien systematically searches archives in Paris and the rest of France in order to discover and to study the historical links between Canada and France.

3. The Centre Culturel Cervantes holds all the bibliographic data of the Spanish National Library as well as an index of all theses and university libraries.

4. The different Goethe Institutes in France have all their specialties: theatre and dance in Lyons, children's literature in Nancy, architecture and urban development in Lille and philosophy, literature and economics in Paris.

Of the smaller organisations the following cultural centres are interesting in comparison with the Institut Néerlandais/Fondation Custodia : the Centre Culturel Suédois, the Institut du Monde Arabe, the Centre Culturel Portugais/ the Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian and the Bibliothèque Polonaise de Paris.

The Centre Culturel Suédois, called the Tessin Institute and founded in 1933, is the only Swedish Cultural Centre abroad and also the first foreign cultural centre in Paris; the other cultural centres were only established after the Second World War. The initiative for the Tessin Institute was taken by the Swede Gunnar W. Lundberg, an art amateur, maecenas and cultural counselor at the Swedish embassy, together with the Swedish government. The goal was to promote cultural and artistic exchanges between France and Sweden. The majority of the collection (approximately 6000 objects) as well as the library has been donated by Gunnar W. Lundberg.

The paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints and decorative art (mostly 18th century) are exclusively of Swedish artists, or French artists influenced by Sweden and vice-versa. The same is true for the library, which is specialised in the relations between France and Sweden. The library has been entirely merged with the Nordic Library (Bibliothèque Nordique) which - thanks to this donation - now holds a very significant 160 000 volumes, and is located at the university library the "Bibliothèque Geneviève" in Paris. This very complete Nordic Library is entirely integrated in this Parisian university library and represents a unique source for researchers.

The Cultural Centre itself now holds only a small library of general more encyclopaedic works (approximately 6000 volumes).

Portugal has several cultural centres : The Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian, l'Institut Comoes - in charge of the language courses in Paris -, the Cap Magellan centre and the Centre Culturel Portugais which reports to the ministry of foreign affairs. The main interest of these centres are the relations between Portugal and France. Their activities include organising concerts, conferences, meetings with writers, translators, and so on. The Cap Magellan centre has a younger, mostly Portuguese public, and organises forums that help mediate between students and companies. The Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian, an emanation of the

Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian in Lissabon, is from our point of view the most interesting one.

The centre is endowed with significant funds, a famous art collection and a very important art library in Lisbon. Their library in Paris is more encyclopedic in nature but still has a small but choice collection. It is specialised in all matters Portuguese, whether direct or through the Portuguese influence in the world. Visitors are mostly students, scholars and professors from all over the world. A very important activity is the publication of works in French that relate to Portugal. One of their creations is the collection: "Poètes et prosateurs du Portugal" (Portuguese poets and writers). Every year they publish a volume of ARCHIVES with articles on the findings of Lusitanian scholars. Doctorate theses and historical or archeological essays are also regularly published by the centre. Finally, financial aid is granted for translations from Portuguese into French.

The "Institut du monde arabe", the IMA is again very different. It does not represent one single country but all the different Arab states (les pays arabes réunis), and are specialised in everything that relates to the Arab world. The Institute opened its doors in 1987 and is housed in a prestigious modern building on the banks of the Seine. It was managed by a Foundation, but the funding, which was intended to be sufficient to finance the Institution, ended up being fully used for the construction of the - very expensive - building. As a result, the Institute is now financed for over 50% by the French Government, the remaining part coming from the different Arab States. The spacious library, which is a very busy and lively place, is managed by 24 people and seats 150 people.

The IMA collection is very encyclopedic and literary in nature, and consists of approximately 60 000 books of which 650 are ancient, 1250 periodicals and a very substantial number of microfiches. It is also the only centre in Paris where everything is computerised. Access is free everywhere, except for the ancient books and the Ninard collection. This collection, donated by Ninard who lives in Paris and still visits occasionally the centre, consists of precious and ancient travel books about Marocco.

Poland has two cultural centres in Paris. The first one is sponsored by the Polish government, has a very small general library, and no budget at all.

The books are chosen by the Polish government and then sent to Paris. The second centre is "la bibliothèque polonaise de la Société historique et littéraire polonaise de Paris" and is fascinating. It is not a cultural centre in the strict sense of the word, but a literary society founded in 1832 by Polish emigrants following the defeat of the Polish people in 1930 by the Russian Tsar Nicolas 1st. The

Society was fully independent from the start, and remains so to this day: it is funded through members' contributions and donations. The description of the society as "literary" is in fact misleading, as the aim of the society was really political, especially in the early days. The main objective of the society was to collect and disseminate information relating to the history and future of Poland, as well as more contemporary subjects : the intent was to consolidate and maintain the international awareness of, and support to the Polish cause. In some way Paris became the intellectual capital of Poland.

The Library was open to any scholar, kept precious manuscripts and sponsored publications. The different directors in charge bequeathed to the Society many public and private archives, such as the collection of books, manuscripts, prints and paintings from the famous Polish writer Adam Mickiewicz.

The size and quality of the collections at the Polish Library make it one of the most prestigious in Paris. The library contains approximately 220 000 books and documents, mostly about Poland, of which 90 000 have no bindings (loose pages). Among the most treasured works are : the 3 first editions of Copernicus, one of the first editions of Martin Luther, as well as old Polish and French works about law and political science from the 17th to the 19th centuries.

The press and periodicals number over 2000 titles, of which some extremely rare collections of Polish daily papers from 19th and 20th centuries.

Furthermore, the Library holds a very large collection of geographical maps and atlases, and a significant archive collection about the history of Polish immigration. Also, a collection of the illegal underground press is available, as Paris was one of the most important centres of the clandestine press during the Solidarnosc period since 1981.

Among the many manuscripts and autographs, we find letters of Polish kings, of other European monarchs or popes, of Frédéric Chopin and Victor Hugo, a letter (in French) by Goethe, and many others. The Society is continuously enriching its collection but is currently more focused on renovating its beautiful, if decaying premises on the quai d'Orléans.

The art collections (approximately 20 000 objets) consist of paintings and sculptures by Polish immigrants, but also contain engravings, prints, posters and photographs. Souvenirs from Chopin are kept in a small parlour : prints, engravings, portraits and mortuary masks.

It is clear from the above that the collection of the Institut Néerlandais and the Fondation Custodia is truly unique. Not only is the size of the common Library

impressive (only the Polish Library is comparable in terms of number of volumes), it is also of great importance that the art collection and the documentation are located in the same place. This is usually only true for the largest institutions. Besides being the centre for Dutch art and owning a world famous collection, which is regularly exhibited on its own premises, exhibitions of Dutch art from other collections are organised. Custodia staff are also helpful in documenting the stock of Dutch paintings in France: for example, an exhibition has been organised last spring in the Institut Néerlandais about the Dutch and Flemish paintings of the Fabre museum in Montpellier. This has followed similar exhibitions of paintings from the Lyons and Quimper museums. The presence of the art historical library, and especially the art collection have largely contributed to making the Institut Néerlandais one of the most famous cultural centres of Paris.

5. Technological progress and cooperation with the Bibliothèque des Arts

The computerisation of all the Institut Néerlandais/Fondation Custodia collections has not been completed yet. Access to books on Dutch art and literature acquired prior to 1988 happens via a card system; books purchased after 1988 are accessible via a computer program (Strix - Dosis).

The same applies to old editions which are catalogued in the card system of the Library. The collection of autographs is accessible for the Custodia staff via a special cardsystem up to 1990; autographs purchased after 1990 are accessible via the Micromusées computer program, which is used by 50 museums in France. (excluding the d'Orsay Museum and the Louvre museum, except for the photographic collection) and a few in Britain, Switzerland, Belgium and Canada. The marques de collection (collection of seals) have also been entered in an Access database.

The existing cooperation with the Bibliothèque des Arts in Paris is of great importance to the Library. An organisation is currently being created - the Institut National de l'Histoire de l'Art (INHA) - to coordinate between the four main art libraries in Paris: the Bibliothèque d'art et d'archéologie (Doucet), the Bibliothèque Centrale des Musées Nationaux, the Bibliothèque des Beaux Arts and the Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes. All four have far-reaching plans to integrate their libraries :

- a joint Internet site
- the possibility to consult all four libraries from all locations * the use of a single computer program
- the coordination of purchasing policies etc.

It has been agreed that the Library of the Institut Néerlandais and the Fondation Custodia will contribute to this coordination effort, in order to streamline the information on art history between the libraries in Paris. This will enable the consultation of all available information via a common computer network. The vision is to include, at a later stage, institutions from all over France.

Unfortunately, final decisions will only be taken in June 1998 by the relevant authorities. I therefore hope to be able to update you on this system in August.

Résumé

Le collectionneur d'art Frits Lugt a créé en 1947 la Fondation Custodia et en 1957 (avec l'aide du gouvernement néerlandais) l'Institut Néerlandais.

La Fondation Custodia gère la collection d'art tandis que l'Institut Néerlandais organise des concerts, des conférences, des expositions, des cours de langues, le tout centré sur la culture néerlandaise. Les deux institutions, bien que très distinctes, sont étroitement liées, surtout les bibliothèques qui ne diffèrent que par leur ex libris. En effet, Frits Lugt possédait en plus de sa collection de dessins, peintures et gravures une bibliothèque impressionnante d'histoire de l'art qui a été considérablement enrichie ces dernières années. Les collections jointes des bibliothèques comprennent environ 200000 volumes (dont 250 périodiques). L'objectif de la collection est d'offrir une image aussi complète que possible des beaux arts et arts décoratifs des Pays-Bas et des Flandres. La collection d'ouvrages anciens offre une vue d'ensemble des livres produits aux 16e, 17e & 18e siècles. Les autographes d'artistes (plus de 40.000) forment une partie fascinante de la collection. La collection de littérature néerlandaise comprend de la prose aussi bien que de la poésie, tant en néerlandais qu'en traduction française.

Une comparaison avec un nombre d'autres bibliothèques de centres culturels parisiens nous montre le caractère unique de l'Institut Néerlandais. Tous les centres culturels sont en quelque sorte une vitrine de leur pays, et leurs bibliothèques en sont le reflet. Ce sont principalement des bibliothèques générales, encyclopédiques, politiques, économiques et littéraires. Ces instituts coordonnent l'octroi de bourses d'étudiants, offrent des cours de langues et de traduction, et organisent des expositions itinérantes sur le pays en question. De plus, ces instituts jouent souvent le rôle d'agents entre les galeries et les artistes. Les exceptions à ce schéma sont le centre culturel suédois fondé par le mécène Gunnar W. Lundberg et la société historique et littéraire de Pologne, intéressante par sa collection et par son histoire politique.

Afin d'améliorer la gestion, la bibliothèque de l'Institut Néerlandais et de la Fondation Custodia est en cours d'informatisation. Enfin, une collaboration étroite avec la grande bibliothèque des arts (INHA) à Paris est prévue pour la fin de l'année, ce qui permettra une amélioration sensible du service pour les utilisateurs.

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