Rudi Ekkart • Eelke Muller

# LOOTED ART & RESTITUTION

**The Exodus and Partial Return of Dutch Art Property During and After World War II**

Waanders Publishers, Zwolle



# FOREWORD

In 2021, the minister of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) decided to place passive and active informative tasks in the restitution policy for World War II (1933-1945) under ministerial responsibility following the advice in the report *Striving for Justice*. As part of the Ministry of OCW, the National Cultural Heritage Agency (RCE) was thus given an additional task. This task suited well with the RCE's other responsibilities, such as the management of the Netherlands Art Property Collection (NK Collection) and the handling of restitution claims. This concentration of tasks and duties means that potential claimants, collection managers, researchers and other interested parties can now go to one place with their questions.

Information and publications on looting and restitution of cultural goods in the period 1933-1945 are also among the RCE's responsibilities. In this context, a reissue of the publication *Roof & Restitutie* was deemed desirable. This original edition appeared in 2017 at the initiative of the Ter Borch Foundation to accompany the exhibition of the same title in the Bergkerk Church in Deventer. The project was realised in close consultation with the RCE.
Rudi Ekkart and Eelke Muller were the curators for the exhibition and the authors of the book *Roof & Restitutie*. They were willing to extend their original text with a brief update of the developments since 2017. The publisher was also asked to deliver an English edition of the publication as a survey on the subject, covering the pre-war period until the present. In 2023, we commemorate 25 years of restitution policy in the Netherlands and this is an excellent occasion to present the revised edition of *Roof & Restitutie* and introduce the English edition, *Looted Art & Restitution*.

I am very grateful to the authors for their efforts. I would also like to thank Eva Kleeman and Daaf Ledeboer of the Ter Borch Foundation for agreeing to an updated publication and a translation into English.

Susan Lammers, General Director of the National Cultural Heritage Agency (RCE)

# 1 THE INTERBELLUM

During the period between World War I and World War II, the art trade and collecting thrived in the Netherlands. Current restitution issues are closely related to the extent of flourishing and the share Jewish dealers and collectors had in it. Amsterdam was an art centre of international importance during the interbellum, and many art dealers and collectors of old masters and modern art could also be found outside in the rest of the Netherlands. A large group of dealers and collectors were not exclusively focused on Dutch art but were clearly internationally oriented in their commercial activities. Italian works were particularly popular on the old master market as were French and German paintings in the niche of more recent art. The strong Dutch interest in Italian art was reflected in the major exhibition held at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1934, which included nearly 1300 art objects belonging to Dutch museums, collectors and dealers.

Of these, only about twenty per cent was public property and eighty per cent came from collectors and dealers. Among others, the exposition included over 400 paintings, more than 250 drawings and nearly 140 sculptures. A more general focus on the Dutch art trade was the exposition organised by the Association of Dealers in Old Art in the Netherlands (‘Vereniging van Handelaren in Oude Kunst in Nederland’ VHOK) at the Rijksmuseum in 1929, featuring more than 1350 works from the property of members of this association or those recently traded by members. By initiative of the same association, a viewing of artworks from the inventory of the international trade was held, again at the Rijksmuseum in 1936. Foreign dealers joined their Dutch colleagues at this event. With its 957 catalogue numbers, it was of a slightly more modest size. The exhibitions mentioned above were only the tip of the iceberg of the undertakings by dozens of dealers in paintings, drawings and applied arts based in Amsterdam and elsewhere in the Netherlands. Not surprisingly, Jacques Goudstikker, who was chairman of the VHOK from 1928 until his death in 1940, was the driving force and protagonist in all three major exhibitions mentioned.

**2**
**Vanitas Still Life with Celestial Globe and a Book**
**CARSTIAN LUYCX (1623-after 1657), attributed**
**Canvas, 90 x 95 cm, Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, NK3067**

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In 1925, Dirk A. Hoogendijk (1895-1975) established an art gallery in Amsterdam. He quickly became one of the leading art dealers in paintings in the Netherlands, selling many works by famous masters. A highlight of his career appeared to be the sale of the painting *The Supper at Emmaus* by Johannes Vermeer to the Boijmans Museum in 1937. When after the war the seemingly extraordinary piece turned out to be a falsification, the discovery also backfired on Hoogendijk. He continued his art trade, however, albeit on a more modest scale than before the forgery scandal. The still life attributed to the Antwerp painter Carstian Luycx was acquired by Hoogendijk before the start of the German occupation. He sold it in September 1940 to Walter Andreas Hofer, who especially became well-known as an art agent for Hermann Göring. The painting eventually ended up in the collection of the Führermuseum in Linz in 1944.

**4**
**Wigbold Slicher and Elisabeth Spiegel as Paris and Venus with Amor, 1656**
**FERDINAND BOL (1616-1680)**
**Canvas, 118 x 157 cm, Dordrechts Museum, Dordrecht, on loan from RCE, NK1701**

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The art dealing firm Katz was established in Dieren in 1883 by David Katz. It began as a furniture store but his two sons Benjamin Katz (1891-1962) and Nathan Katz (1893-1949) transformed the business into one of the largest art dealers of old master paintings in the Netherlands in the 1930s. Branches of the firm were opened in Switzerland and in The Hague on the first of May in 1940. During that year's summer, the Katz brothers sold a portion of their large stock to Alois Miedl, who had taken over Kunsthandel Goudstikker. Business continued to flourish in the early period of the German occupation. However, the Katz gallery was placed under non-Jewish management in 1941, in accordance to the command of the German authorities. Nathan Katz fled to Switzerland with his family in February 1942. Benjamin also managed to flee soon after. When the war ended, the management of the art firm was restored to the Katz family. Benjamin recontinued the gallery in the Netherlands until his death, while Nathan and his son remained in Switzerland.
The depicted painting by Ferdinand Bol was sold by the Katz gallery in 1940 to the museum director Hans Posse, whose responsibilities included procuring the art collection for the intended Führermuseum in Linz.

example, this applied to many nineteenth-century paintings, such as those by the Romantic school, which were coveted by German collectors and therefore skyrocketed in price (fig. 10). This development also contributed to the big boom in the art trade. It was precisely in the field of nineteenth-century art that a tremendous number of new dealers emerged, many of whom were amateurs in this field and not members of any professional organisation. Moreover, they were seldomly registered with the Chamber of Commerce. There was also a rise in the auction business: the activities of several auction houses were of modest size before the outbreak of the war grew enormously, while all sorts of new sale rooms were also opened.

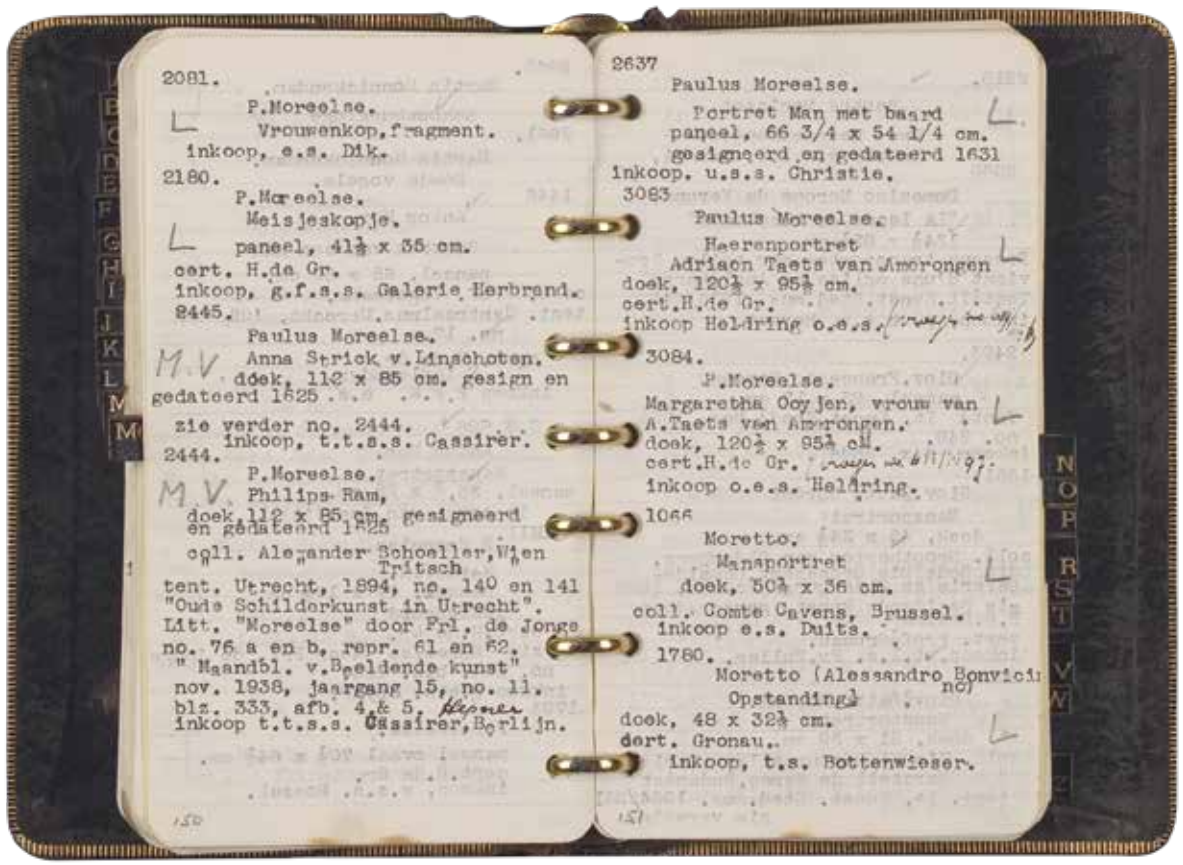


# III THE JEWISH ART TRADE DURING THE OCCUPATION

On 10 May 1940, the German invasion of the Netherlands began, followed by the Dutch capitulation five days later. The fear of living under Nazi rule drove many Jews to suicide or attempts to flee the country in these days. Fierce anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish legislation in Germany and Austria were a warning that these extreme measures were also to be expected in the Netherlands. The best-known example of a Jewish art dealer who chose not to wait for such events to happen was Jacques Goudstikker. He managed to board the last Dutch freighter to leave the port of IJmuiden with his family on 14 May 1940. The ship was due to set sail for South America after a stopover in England. Goudstikker's attempt to flee ended in tragedy on the night of 15-16 May with a fatal fall into the ship's hold (fig. 11).

After the panic of the first weeks of the occupation, a moderate calm returned to the Netherlands. The Germans established a civilian occupation regime in the Netherlands, led by Austrian lawyer Arthur Seyss-Inquart. The new regime initially showed a friendly face. The German authorities aimed for a 'self-nazification' of society and intended to gently guide the Germanic fraternal people towards (re)integration into the German Reich. Immediate harsh anti-Jewish actions or measures would create unrest and were therefore deemed counterproductive. The German occupier pretended that a 'Jewish issue' did not exist in the Netherlands. Meanwhile, diligent preparations were quietly being made to isolate and eliminate the Jewish citizens of the Dutch population.

The occupying forces had tightened their grip on society and an administrative separation of Jews and non-Jews was implemented before the end of 1940. The pressure on the Jewish population gradually increased. Step by step, Jews were banned from public life, robbed of their possessions, denied their rights, and finally murdered in extermination camps. Their systematic dispossession, deportation and murder greatly contributed to the devastating effect of the persecution. Of the approximately 140,000 Jews in the Netherlands, 73% did not survive the war, a percentage far exceeding that in Belgium, Luxembourg and France.


2081.
P.Moreelse.
Vrouwenkop,fragment.
inkoop, e.s. Dik.
2180.
P.Moreelse.
Meisjeskopje.
paneel, 41½ x 35 cm.
cert. H.de Gr.
inkoop, g.f.s.s. Galerie Herbrand.
2445.
Paulus Moreelse.
M.V. Anna Strick v.Linschoten.
doek, 112 x 85 cm. gesign en
gedateerd 1625.
zie verder no. 2444.
inkoop, t.t.s.s. Cassirer.
2444.
P.Moreelse.
M.V. Philips Ram,
doek 112 x 85 cm. gesigneerd
en gedateerd 1625
coll. Alexander Schoeller,Wien
Tritsch
tent. Utrecht, 1894, no. 140 en 141
"Oude Schilderkunst in Utrecht".
Litt. "Moreelse" door Frl. de Jonge
no. 76 a en b, repr. 61 en 62.
" Maandbl. v.Beeldende kunst"
nov. 1938, jaargang 15, no. 11.
blz. 333, afb. 4 & 5.
inkoop t.t.s.s. Cassirer,Berlijn.
150
2637
Paulus Moreelse.
Portret Man met baard
paneel, 66 3/4 x 54 1/4 cm.
gesigneerd en gedateerd 1631
inkoop, u.s.s. Christie.
3083
Paulus Moreelse.
Heerenportret
Adriaen Taets van Amerongen
doek, 120½ x 95½ cm.
cert.H.de Gr.
inkoop Heldring o.e.s.
3084.
P.Moreelse.
Margaretha Ooyjen, vrouw van
A.Taets van Amerongen.
doek, 120½ x 95½ cm.
cert.H.de Gr.
inkoop o.e.s. Heldring.
1066
Moretto.
Mansportret
doek, 50¾ x 36 cm.
coll. Comte Cavens, Brussel.
inkoop e.s. Duits.
1780.
Moretto (Alessandro Bonvici
Opstanding
doek, 48 x 32¾ cm.
dort. Gronau.
inkoop, t.s. Bottenwieser.
151
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P R S T V W Z

**Jacques Goudstikker's Black Book, 1940**

When Jacques Goudstikker fled the Netherlands on 14 May 1940, he took with him his little black book, which listed the inventory of his entire collection of paintings, drawings and sculptures. It was later the property of his widow, Dési von Halban (1912-1996), and was transferred to the Stadsarchief Amsterdam after her death. The information in the book has always been the main reference basis for the Goudstikker heirs in their search for the art dealer's dispersed possessions.

The looting of Jewish property was also systematic. The German authorities provided a legal basis for their activities by issuing regulations with the force of law. Several administrative bodies were officially set up in order to carry out the confiscations, forming an intricate looting bureaucracy. The revenues of the confiscations were used, among other things, to fund the deportation of Jews.

## THE ART MARKET

Most major art dealers sold their ware directly to German clientele during the occupation. Initially, Jewish dealers also had the opportunity to make a profit. This population group was not yet prohibited from doing business at the start of the war. Yet many of them, especially those who had experienced or followed the political developments in Germany, must have feared that this commercial freedom would not last long.

During the occupation, countless transactions in the art market took place without direct pressure or intimidation. Numerous German buyers were able to fall back on a supplying network that had already been established long before the war. The Amsterdam art dealer Evert Douwes wrote in a 1948 report: 'The Museum Directors came to see if there were any acquisitions for their museum, among them were some with whom we had been in contact for years and with whom, because of our like-minded interest, we had become more or less familiar or friends over the years'. However, a German client at the door could be a distressing experience. Freedom of doing business was a relative concept at this time, especially for a Jewish entrepreneur. Such was the case for, among others, the art dealer Gustav Cramer from The Hague, who had emigrated from Germany in the 1930s because of his Jewish origins. In July 1940, the German art historian and museum director Hans Posse called on him. Posse was one of Hitler's representatives and was responsible for the large-scale acquisitions of art for a Führermuseum to be set up in Linz as well as other collections. Reportedly, Posse demanded from Cramer to sell two well-known paintings by Italian masters, thereby setting the price himself. Cramer was, 'as a Jew having escaped from Germany, obviously in no position to oppose to the forced sale of these paintings'.

**Hermann Göring on the steps of the art gallery Kunsthandel Goudstikker, Herengracht 458, Amsterdam, 1941**

Göring regularly selected the pieces for his collection himself and was therefore not entirely dependent on the sleuthing or advice of his agents and buyers.