

# Dutch museum acquisitions (2015–19) supported by the Vereniging Rembrandt



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**F**OR OVER 135 years, the Vereniging Rembrandt has helped Dutch museums to acquire notable works of art for their collections.<sup>1</sup> When it was established in 1883, its main concern was to retain Dutch old master paintings in the Netherlands, especially for the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. But it soon became clear that old masters had also to be brought back from elsewhere, and the Vereniging's horizon was happily much expanded.

Between 2015 and 2019 the Vereniging Rembrandt supported the acquisition of 142 objects as far apart in time and character as a ceremonial sword from the Middle Bronze Age (no.2), bought for the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden, and an installation of blown glass by Dale Chihuly made for the Groningen Museum in 2018 (no.35). Some sixty museums from all over the country benefited from these acquisitions, to which the Vereniging contributed over €23.9 million.

In 2018–19 an exhibition at the Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, displaying a selection of around eighty acquisitions that had been supported by the Vereniging Rembrandt since 2009 was seen by over 100,000 visitors. An exhibition at the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, in 2008–09 on the Vereniging's first 125 years attracted over 300,000 visitors.<sup>2</sup> In those ten years membership of the Vereniging rose from 9,000 to well over 16,000, and its reserves increased to over €50 million.

When looking at the acquisitions supported over the past five years, it is clear that the original agenda of the Vereniging Rembrandt, to retain or repatriate important works of Dutch art, still informs much of its policy. The acquisition of the Jan van der Heyden material for Amsterdam (no.15) would have pleased the founding fathers of the Vereniging as much as it did its current board, and the sale abroad of the Rintel Menorah (no.20) would have been as scandalous then as it would be now. Bringing the Ommerschans Bronze Age sword back to the Netherlands was as natural a move as the buying of the portrait of Edzard van Starckenborgh for the castle in which he once lived (no.12). Sometimes the concept of 'home' is stretched a bit – as with a painting by Alma-Tadema for Friesland (no.24), a Parisian Van Doesburg for Leiden (no.26), or the return of the Charles Clay clock to Holland (no.17), because it once stood in a house on Amsterdam's Herengracht. But they are all fine acquisitions.

Collecting foreign old masters and decorative art without a Dutch connection has become rare. The Jean-Etienne Liotard bought for the Rijksmuseum was painted in Amsterdam (no.19), the fascinating screen by Kawahara Keiga was made for the head of the Dutch trading post on Deshima (no.22). The collecting of non-western art, other than Asian or contemporary, has come to a halt.

The Vereniging Rembrandt – afraid of fickle fashion – was always reluctant to support acquisitions of contemporary art, but the pressure

**1. Richly clad woman, by Jan van Steffeswert. 1510. Boxwood, height 18.2 cm.**

*Acquired by the Bonnefanten, Maastricht, in 2020, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Themafonds Beeldhouwkunst and Schoufour-Martin Fonds) and the BankGiro Loterij. (Photograph Peter Cox).*

Marked with a fake Dürer monogram and two other unidentified initials, this exquisite boxwood sculpture was shown at TEFAF in 2020 as a characteristic example of the so-called 'Dürer renaissance' around 1600. But a former curator of the Bonnefanten in Maastricht recognised Van Steffeswert's style and technique and it was bought on the first day of the fair. On cleaning, the Maastricht sculptor's characteristic signature 'JAN' was found in the folds of the woman's garment.



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to assist collecting in this field is mounting. In the following pages, four such acquisitions are shown. It will be interesting to see how this initiative develops.

Now, however, museums are trying to cope with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Tourism is all but dead and many exhibitions have had to be cancelled. Visitors are mainly locals. But sometimes a curse can be lucky, and the current crisis might inspire some museums to show more of their own collections. As to collecting these days, it was especially satisfying that the Vereniging Rembrandt, always present at The European Art Fair (TEFAF) in Maastricht, managed to help secure an outstanding sculpture by Jan van Steffeswert for the city's Bonnefanten museum just before the fair had to be shut down in March (no.1).

PETER HECHT

1 For a survey of acquisitions supported between 2010–14, see THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE 157 (2015), pp.141–52.

2 Reviewed in this Magazine by C. Brown: 'The Vereniging Rembrandt, Amsterdam', THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE 151 (2009), pp.125–26.



Detail of no.1, showing the artist's signature



### 2. *The Ommerschans Sword*. c.1500–1350 BC. Bronze, length 68.3 cm.

Acquired in 2017 by the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Van Rijn Fonds, Hendrickje Fonds and Eleonora Jeuken-Tesser Fonds), the Mondriaan Fonds, the BankGiro Loterij and the museum's RoMeO association of friends.

Together with its unsharpened blade, the length and weight of this sword make it clear that it must have been a ceremonial object. It was unearthed in 1894 in Ommerschans and handed over to the owner of the estate where it was found. The family moved to Germany in the 1930s and took the sword with them, unwilling to sell it or even lend it to the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden. When they had it auctioned in London, however, the museum managed to acquire it for €550,000.

### 3. *Triptych with Madonna and saints, with scenes of the Passion on the wings; when closed: Christ carrying the cross*, by the Master of St Veronica. c.1410. Oil on oak panel, 70 by 32.5 (central panel), 70 by 16 cm. (wings).

Acquired in 2018 by the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Fonds voor Klassieke Beeldende Kunst, Themafonds Middeleeuwen en Renaissance, and the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds), the Mondriaan Fonds, the BankGiro Loterij, the Stichting Bevordering van Volkskracht, the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds (thanks in part to its Breeman Talle Fonds), the Stichting Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, and various private individuals.

This triptych was one of the rare private loans to the exhibition *The Road to Van Eyck* held at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, in 2012. That three of those loans have since joined the museum's collection is little short of a miracle. The Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen is very strong in late medieval art from Northern Europe, so it made eminent sense to acquire this beautiful work, painted in Cologne. The funds to do so were found just days before it was auctioned.





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**4. Seated Virgin with a standing Christ Child, circle of Adriaen van Wesel. c.1480. Oak, with traces of original polychromy, height 28 cm.**

Acquired in 2016 by the Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Schoufour-Martin Fonds and Mr J.J.A.M Kennis Fonds), the bequest of Koos Bogaarts, the Vereniging Vrienden van Museum Catharijneconvent, and contributions by friends and family of its former director Henri Defoer.

When this small sculpture was exhibited at the Museum Catharijneconvent in 2010, it was covered in nineteenth-century paint. But when it was offered for sale a few years later, this had been removed and the museum was eager to acquire it. Although it carries an Antwerp mark, it is very close in style to Adriaen Van Wesel, the most important late-medieval sculptor from Utrecht.

**5. Christ's resurrection and triumph over death, devil and sin, by Wouter Pietersz Crabeth I. c.1560–70. Stained glass, 23.2 by 19.7 cm.**

Acquired in 2018 by the Museum Gouda with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Mr J.J.A.M. Kennis Fonds) and the Vereniging van Goudse Museumvrienden.

The brothers Wouter and Pieter Crabeth were responsible for many of the most spectacular stained glass windows in the Janskerk, Gouda, which were completed after the outbreak of iconoclasm in 1566. They have remained the pride of the city ever since. None of Wouter's smaller works were in the Netherlands until the Museum Gouda succeeded in buying this panel.

**6. Bell from the church in Alphen, Brabant, by Jan van den Ghein. 1540. Bronze, height 72 cm, diameter 67 cm.**

Acquired in 2016 by the Museum Kloek en Peel, Asten, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Mr. J.J.A.M. Kennis Fonds) and the VSBfonds.

The bells of the Mechelen Van den Ghein foundry were famous and costly, and ordering one for the church in Alphen, near Breda, was an ambitious thing to do. It was installed in 1540 and hung there until 1943, when it was seized to be melted down. Luckily it escaped this fate, but the church in Alphen fell victim to the war. After having been presented to a church in Zeeland, which was shut down in 2005, the bell was sold in 2015 to the Museum Kloek en Peel, Asten, which is dedicated to the history of bells worldwide.

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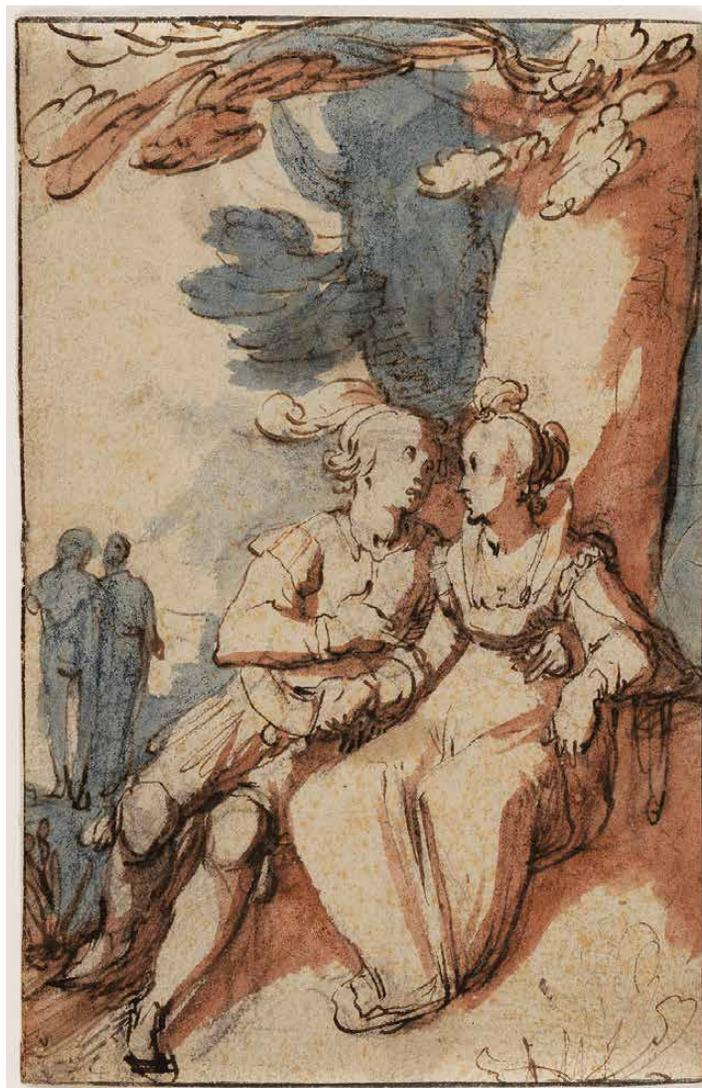


**7. Portrait of a nun, perhaps the artist's half-sister Barbara, by Abraham Bloemaert. c.1612. Red and white chalk on light brown paper, 14.6 by 13.2 cm.**  
 Acquired in 2015 by the Teylers Museum, Haarlem, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt, the Stichting Nationaal Fonds Kunstbezit and Matthijs de Clercq.  
 When the Van Regteren Altena collection of old-master drawings was auctioned in 2014–15, thirty-one lots were bought for eight Dutch museum print rooms with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt. Teylers Museum was enriched with twelve drawings, five of which were bought at the fourth and last sale, in 2015. Among them was this portrait by Bloemaert, which has part of a study of a kneeling youth on the verso that was presumably made in preparation for the *Adoration of the shepherds* (Musée du Louvre, Paris) that the artist painted for the convent in Den Bosch, where his half-sister Barbara had taken her vows.

**8. Amorous couple, by Gerrit Pietersz Sweelinck. c.1601. Black chalk, pen and brown ink, brown and blue wash on paper, 13.9 by 9.2 cm.**  
 Acquired in 2015 by the Teylers Museum, Haarlem, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt, the Stichting Nationaal Fonds Kunstbezit and Matthijs de Clercq.  
 Sweelinck's work as a draughtsman long went unrecognised, but this drawing is now considered a typical example of his work. Its iconography, with the lovers under a tree and another couple strolling in the background, suggests that we may be looking at a garden of love, a popular subject at the time. The drawing, previously attributed to Cornelis van Haarlem, is the first by Sweelinck to have been acquired by Teylers's print room.

**9. Banquet of the gods, by Joachim Wtewael. c.1601–03. Oil on copper, 15.5 by 20.5 cm.**  
 Acquired in 2019 by the Centraal Museum, Utrecht, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Themafonds 17de-eeuwse schilderkunst, Fonds van de Utrecht and Gooi Cirkel, Caius Fonds and the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds), the Mondriaan Fonds, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science's Nationaal Aankoopfonds and various private individuals.  
 The Centraal Museum, Utrecht, owns an impressive group of paintings by Wtewael, including several in large formats and a striking set of family portraits, which were acquired directly from the artist's descendants. Until now, however, it lacked one of his works on copper. Wtewael was a very successful businessman and did not paint for a living. Interestingly, his staunch Calvinism did not prevent him from indulging in licentious sexual fantasies.

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10. *Vase of flowers in a stone niche*, by Roelant Savery. 1615. Oil on panel, 63.2 by 44.7 cm. Acquired in 2016 by the Mauritshuis, The Hague, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Themafonds 17de-eeuwse Schilderkunst), the BankGiro Loterij and a private individual.

Regardless of the season in which they bloom, Savery has here combined flowers worthy of an emperor's garden with wild and common ones. The chipped stone niche in which they are placed may be meant to imply that time destroys stone and flowers alike. While some might delight in the botanical accuracy and beauty of Savery's flowers, others might point to the lizards, waiting to snap up the dragonfly, or to the burying beetle, ready to live up to its name. This painting is a spectacular addition to an already stunning collection of flower still lifes in the Mauritshuis.

11. *Still life of flowers with a crown imperial fritillary in a stone niche*, by Jacob Woutersz Vosmaer. 1613. Oil on panel, 110 by 79 cm.

Acquired in 2019 by the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Nationaal Fonds Kunstbezit, its Themafonds 17de-eeuwse schilderkunst and the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds), the Mondriaan Fonds, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science's Nationaal Aankoopfonds, the BankGiro Loterij, a private individual and the Rijksmuseum International Circle.

It is hard now to understand that still life was long considered a dull genre, and that most museum collections formed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries began paying attention to it only some fifty years ago. The Rijksmuseum acquired its three great Haarlem still lifes only between 1974 and 1984, and this large Vosmaer is its first early flower piece. But it is a worthy addition, and contemporary sensibility may well warm to its slightly morbid character and vivid colours. With Vosmaer, even the imperial fritillary looks forlorn rather than majestic.

12. *Portrait of Edzard Jacob Tjarda van Starckenborgh*, by Martinus van Grevenbroeck. c.1670–73. Oil on panel, 76.5 by 62 cm.

Acquired in 2017 by the Landgoed Verhildersum, Leens, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its BankGiro Loterij Aankoopfonds) and various private individuals.

The painter Van Grevenbroeck was unknown to the board of the Vereniging Rembrandt, as was his sitter, Edzard van Starckenborgh, one-time master of the Starckenborg in Leens. His former residence is now a museum, which was understandably keen to acquire the picture. Believing that support for local museums is essential for the well-being of the national heritage at large, the Vereniging pledged half the estimated price. The other €5,000 was found within four days through local crowdfunding and Edzard's portrait returned home for a mere €10,000.

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**13. Pair of flower pyramids. Delft, c.1690, the top segments Chinese, added c.1700. Delft earthenware and Chinese porcelain, height 153 cm.**

*Acquired in 2019 by the Kunstmuseum, The Hague, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Nationaal Fonds Kunstbezit, Van Rijn Fonds and the Stichting Van Rees-Klatte), the Mondriaan Fonds, the Kunstmuseum Fonds and the BankGiro Loterij. (Photograph Gerrit Schreurs).*

Since it has over two thousand pieces of historic blue Delftware in its collection, the Kunstmuseum in The Hague is rarely interested in buying more. But when these flower pyramids appeared at auction, it was clear that they could add the proverbial cherry on the cake. Formerly known as tulip vases, they were the most ambitious and costly products made in Delft. With their decoration reminiscent of Wanli porcelain and their shape recalling a pagoda, they also brilliantly demonstrate Delft's fascination with China. The €850,000 needed for the successful bid at auction were found within five days.

**14. Drinking vessel, engraved with the names of twenty-two aristocratic Frisian men and women, attributed to the Gelaesenhuis Workshop, Antwerp. c.1599. Glass, height 17.8 cm.**

*Acquired in 2019 by the Ottema Kingma Stichting, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Saskia Fonds), on long-term loan to the Fries Museum, Leeuwarden. (Photograph Michiel Stokmans).*

It was a great surprise when this extraordinary object surfaced on the Dutch television programme *Tussen Kunst en Kitsch* (the equivalent of the BBC's *Antiques Roadshow*). Made in Antwerp in the latest fashion, à la façon Vénise, it was engraved soon afterwards with the names of twenty-two members of the Frisian nobility. These inscriptions probably document the presence of the signatories at the engagement of Tjerck van Herema and Lucia van Walta, whose names flank the similarly engraved year of their betrothal, 1599.

**15. Cross-section of a house on fire, preparatory study by Jan van der Heyden for a print in 'Beschryving der nieuwlijks uitgevonden [...] brand-spuiten', Amsterdam 1690. c.1690. Black chalk, pen and brown ink with grey wash on paper, 34 by 46.1 cm.**

*Acquired in 2019 by the Amsterdam City Archives with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its KOG-Vereniging Rembrandt Fonds, Themafonds Prenten en Tekeningen and Kruger Fonds), the Mondriaan Fonds, the City of Amsterdam, the Stichting Vrienden Stadsarchief Amsterdam and the Stichting Genootschap Amsterdam Museum.*

Van der Heyden is best known for his painted townscapes, but he also invented the firehose and persuaded the municipality of Amsterdam to introduce a new street lantern of his own design. The drawings for the book on the firehose, the illustrated manuscript on the use of the improved street lantern and other more personal memorabilia remained with descendants of his wife's family until a year ago. The owner's decision to sell the complete ensemble to the Amsterdam City Archives and the Amsterdam Museum was greeted with joy.



**16. The Battle at Solebay, showing the 'Royal James' on fire, by Thomas Pointz after Willem van de Velde the Elder. c.1685-88. Tapestry, wool and silk, 330 by 457 cm.**

*Acquired in 2019 by the Scheepvaartmuseum, Amsterdam, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Rembrandt UK Circle), the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science's Nationaal Aankoopfonds, the Mondriaan Fonds, the Vereeniging Nederlandsch Historisch Scheepvaart Museum, the BankGiro Loterij, the Samenwerkende Maritieme Fondsen and Het Compagnie Fonds.*

Both parties in the third Anglo-Dutch War claimed victory after the Battle at Solebay in 1672, in which the Royal James was destroyed. The ship was only four months old at the time, and its loss was a very hard blow. James II, however, had it portrayed as one of the subjects in a series of six tapestries commemorating the battle. These were designed by Willem van de Velde the Elder, who had only recently left the Dutch Republic – patriotic sensitivities then and now were evidently different.





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**17. Monumental organ clock, by Charles Clay, with sculpture by J.M. Rysbrack and a painting on the clock-face by Jacopo Amigoni. 1783. Oak, mahogany, pine, ebony, brass, gilt bronze, silver, copper, painting in oil, 252 by 120 by 120 cm.**

*Acquired in 2016 by the Museum Speelklok, Utrecht, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Stortenbeker Fonds and Fonds van de Utrecht & Gooi Cirkel), the Mondriaan Fonds, the BankGiro Loterij, the VSBfonds, the City of Utrecht and the Stichting Vrienden Museum Speelklok.*

The collection of mechanical instruments in Museum Speelklok is fun to visit, and its visitors love such marvels as the self-playing violin made for the 1910 World's Fair in Brussels. Its 2006 exhibition 'Royal Music Machines' provided a spectacle of the high-brow end of this fascination. The Clay Clock, for which George Frideric Handel wrote the music, was a centrepiece there, and when it was sold at auction in 2016, the museum managed to return it to the Netherlands. It was once owned by the Amsterdam merchant Gerrit Braamkamp, whose outstanding paintings almost all fetched less than the clock when his collection was auctioned in 1771.

**18. Pale kangaroo mouse, by Aert Schouman. 1786. Black chalk and watercolour, 22 by 16.1 cm.**

*Acquired in 2015 by the Dordrechts Museum with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt and the VSBfonds.*

According to the inscription on this watercolour, Schouman did it 'after nature', in the house of Mr Vosmaer, who looked after the Stadholder's menagerie. But no matter how lively the mouse's glittering eye, there can be no doubt that the Dordrecht artist was given a preserved specimen of the American animal to work from. This is one of three Schouman drawings bought by the Dordrechts Museum at the Van Regteren Altena sale; the others were a botanical watercolour and a presumed self portrait of the artist as a young man.

**19. Dutch girl at breakfast, by Jean-Etienne Liotard. c.1756. Oil on canvas, 46.8 by 39 cm.**

*Acquired in 2016 by the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Nationaal Fonds Kunstbezit), the BankGiro Loterij, the Mondriaan Fonds, the VSBfonds, the Rijksmuseum Fonds, the Rijksmuseum International Circle and various private individuals.*

*Dutch girl at breakfast* was painted in Amsterdam in the year in which Liotard married his Dutch wife and fell in love with the art of the Dutch seventeenth century. This depiction of a girl pouring herself a cup of coffee is not only an endearing contemporary genre scene, but also a tribute to the art of Gerard ter Borch and Gabriel Metsu. The Rijksmuseum was given a large collection of Liotard's pastels in 1873, now complemented by this rare oil painting from Amsterdam.



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**20. Hanukia, known as the Rintel menorah, by Pieter Robol II. 1753. Silver, 103 by 131 cm.**

*Acquired in 2016 by the Joods Historisch Museum, Amsterdam, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Themafonds Zilver), the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Mondriaan Fonds and the VSBfonds.*

Commissioned by Sara Rintel for the Large Synagogue in Amsterdam in 1753, this rich hanukia was used there for almost two centuries. It was hidden during the Second World War, and later lent to the Jewish Historical Museum, where it bore witness to the visible presence and wealth of the Jewish Community in eighteenth-century Amsterdam. When the synagogue decided to sell it in 2015, it had already been registered as Dutch national heritage and its acquisition for the museum was financed by the State with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt and other funds.

**21. Two beauties. Japan, c.1670–80. Kakiemon porcelain, height 39.3 and 38.4 cm.**

*Acquired in 2015 by the Keramiekmuseum Princessehof, Leeuwarden, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its BankGiro Loterij Aankoopfonds and Themafonds Niet-Westerse kunst), the Mondriaan Fonds and the Wassenbergh-Clarijs-Fontein Stichting.*

In September 2015 the members of the Vereniging Rembrandt were invited to listen to several museum directors presenting an object they would like to acquire and then vote for the one they deemed most worthy of support. It turned out that these two beauties made the greatest impression on the audience, and within a year they were bought for the museum of ceramics in Leeuwarden. Such early kakiemon figurines are very rare, and these two are the first of their kind to have entered a Dutch public collection.



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**22. Eight-part folding screen with a view of Deshima in the bay of Nagasaki, by Kawahara Keiga. c.1836. Ink and pigments on silk, mounted on a wooden frame, 171.2 by 457.6 cm.**

*Acquired in 2018 by the Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Themafonds Toegepaste kunst en Design, the fund of the Utrecht & Gooi Cirkel and Van Rijn Fonds), the Mondriaan Fonds, the VSBfonds, the BankGiro Loterij and the Vereniging van Vrienden van Museum Volkenkunde.*

The existence of this screen by Keiga was a complete surprise when it was found in a private home and its owner was not aware that it was of more than decorative value. It was probably commissioned in 1836 by the head of the Dutch trading post on the island of Deshima, but its history and the name of its maker – although it is signed – had been forgotten. Unique for its size, it is a striking example of Keiga's use of Western perspective, and a spectacular addition to his many smaller works in the Museum Volkenkunde documenting Japan for a Western audience, despite official prohibition to do so.



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23. *Portrait of Felix Auerbach*, by Edvard Munch. 1906. Oil on canvas, 85.4 by 77.1 cm.

Acquired in 2017 by the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Maljers-de Jongh Fonds and the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds), the BankGiro Loterij, the VSBfonds and the members of The Yellow House.

Munch's best portraits owe much to Van Gogh in their raw and radical expression. Here Felix Auerbach is presented as a man of the world, cigar in hand. But his saddened eyes betray that his life was not about societal success. He was a professor of theoretical physics in Jena, who had his house designed by Walter Gropius, and befriended the musical and artistic avant-gardes of his day. In 1933 he and his wife – both assimilated Jews – committed suicide within a month of Hitler seizing power.

24. *Entrance of the theatre*, by Lawrence Alma-Tadema. 1866. Oil on canvas, 70.4 by 98.4 cm.

Acquired in 2015 by the Fries Museum, Leeuwarden, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Saskia Fonds and Van Rijn Fonds), the BankGiro Loterij, the Mondriaan Fonds, the Wassenbergh-Clarijs-Fontein Stichting and the Vrienden van het Fries Museum.

In the 1950s, when Alma-Tadema's art was still out of fashion, his *Entrance of the Theatre* was hanging in a restaurant in Baltimore, yet in his own time it was the painting that established his reputation in the United States. It was also one of the artist's first pictures in which he depicted daily life in ancient Rome, portrayed in near photographic detail. The lack of any other content – no history, no gods – made these paintings very popular with the Victorians. Friesland now claims Alma-Tadema as a native son, although he left for Antwerp at the age of sixteen and then made his career in London.

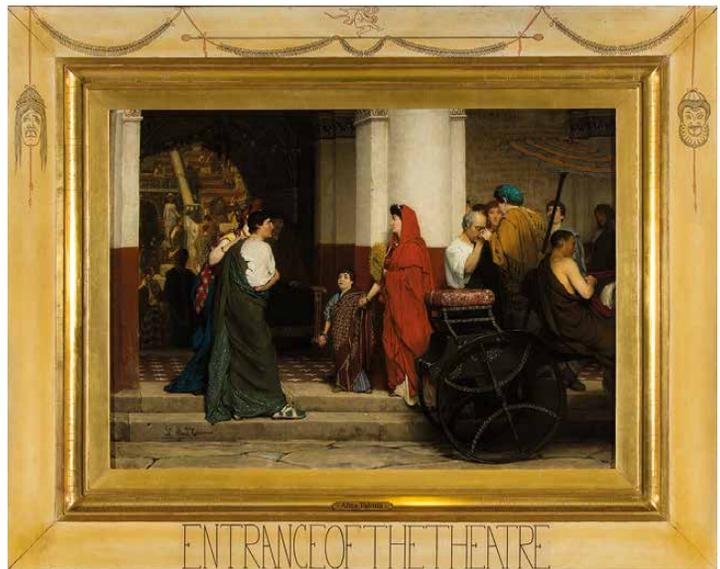
25. *Peasant burning weeds*, by Vincent van Gogh. 1883. Oil on canvas on panel, 30.5 by 39.7 cm.

Acquired in 2019 by the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, and Drents Museum, Assen, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Themafonds Impressionisme/Claude Monet Fonds, Hendrickje Fonds and the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds), the Mondriaan Fonds and the BankGiro Loterij, with special funding for the Drents Museum from the Province of Drenthe, the Beringer Hazewinkel Fonds, the Stichting Vrienden van het Drents Museum and the Stichting Steunfonds, and for the Van Gogh Museum from the Vincent van Gogh Stichting.

In 1883 Van Gogh spent three months in Drenthe. He loved the empty land and was moved by the hardship and poverty he saw. Several of his contemporaries had also visited Drenthe, but they looked for what was picturesque, not tough. Only six of Van Gogh's pictures from this period have been identified. Four are in the Van Gogh Museum, and in 1997 the Vereniging Rembrandt helped the Drents Museum to acquire another. This study, which we know Van Gogh himself was particularly pleased with, is now owned jointly by both institutions.



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**26. *Contra-composition VII*, by Theo van Doesburg. 1924. Oil on canvas, 45.3 by 45 cm.** Acquired in 2017 by the Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden, with the support of the the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Nationaal Fonds Kunstbezit, Van Lith-Dumont Fonds and BankGiro Loterij Aankoopfonds), the Mondriaan Fonds, the VSBfonds, the Vereniging van Belangstellenden in Museum De Lakenhal, the Lucas van Leyden Mecenaat, the City of Leiden, the De Banderfonds administered by the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds, and various private individuals.

Leiden has a very good municipal collection in which can be found excellent examples of work by most of the artists who have practiced there over the centuries. But arguably the town's finest moment in the early twentieth century, when Theo van Doesburg began publishing *De Srijl* there in 1917, was not well represented. This striking picture, so reminiscent of Piet Mondrian, was therefore a very welcome addition to the collection, despite its being painted in Paris, sold to an American collector and bought at auction in London. Nevertheless, it was welcomed 'home' in Leiden town hall.

**27. Four-part tea set, by Jan Eisenloeffel, produced by Stoffels and Co., Amsterdam. c.1903. Silver and ebony, various sizes.**

Acquired in 2017 by the Drents Museum, Assen, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt.

This tea set was acquired as one of nine items of silver for the museum in Assen, which specialises in Dutch art around 1900. These nine pieces, in turn, were part of a much larger group of silver from the period 1880-1940, assembled by the collector Annelies Krekel, from which four museums were allowed to choose the pieces they most fancied. This was an excellent idea, encouraging the museums to cooperate and build on their strengths. The Vereniging Rembrandt gladly supported this initiative, which is very much in line with its own ideals.



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**28. Coffee pot, by Emmy Roth. c.1930. Silver and ivory, height 29 cm.**

Acquired in 2017 by the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt and the Mondriaan Fonds.

The collection of decorative art at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen is mainly focused on design – or rather, on objects in which the unique and the industrially produced go hand in hand. In pursuit of this interest the museum chose ten objects from the Krekel collection, ranging from a tea set by Christopher Dresser and a Henry van de Velde platter to this coffee pot by Emmy Roth, made not long before she left Germany for Palestine in 1933. It was hard to find work there, but after another year in Europe she returned to Tel Aviv, where she committed suicide in 1942.

**29. *On the IJ in 1837*, by Charles Leickert. 1870. Oil on canvas, 102 by 150 cm.**

Acquired in 2019 by the Veenkoloniaal Museum, Veendam, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Groninger Fonds), the J.B. Scholtenfonds and various private individuals.

This painting is one of a series of fifteen, made by eleven different artists for W.A. Scholten, a pioneer in the fabrication of potato starch. Each painting shows a scene from his life, in this case from the winter of 1837, when Scholten crossed the frozen IJ on foot, refusing to pay ten times the regular fare that the ferry charged because of the bad weather. On his return, the ferryman offered to take Scholten back for free. But he preferred to walk again and fell through the ice. Even after that, he refused the ferryman's repeated offer – and was still proud of his actions in 1870.

**30. *Le miroir vivant*, by René Magritte. 1928. Oil on canvas, 54.5 by 73 cm.**

Acquired in 2015 by the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Dura Kunstfonds), the Mondriaan Fonds, the Stichting Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, the Stichting Fonds Willem van Rede, the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds (thanks in part to its Breeman Talle Fonds), the BankGiro Loterij and various private individuals.

The outstanding collection of Surrealist art in Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen was built around two series of acquisitions from the Edward James Foundation in the 1970s, which included five of Magritte's most famous paintings. In such pictures as the man looking into a mirror and seeing the back of his own head, it is the image itself that provokes wonder in the viewer. In an earlier phase, previously unrepresented in Rotterdam, Magritte painted words to trigger our fantasy – in this case, words on clouds: 'cupboard'; 'horizon'; 'laughter'; and 'the shrieking of birds'. Personal associations are hard to suppress.

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31. Durban, South Africa: four women on a bench labelled Europeans / Blankes; a man passing by, dummy material for the photobook *Sweet life*, by Ed van der Elsken. 1960–66. Vintage print photograph, mounted on one of a series of eighty-six sheets, 22.5 by 34 cm.

Acquired in 2016 by the Universitaire bibliotheken, Leiden, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its BankGiro Loterij Aankoopfonds) and the Mondriaan Fonds.

In 1952 the Leiden print room became the first Dutch institution to collect photographs; in 1984 it was the first to receive help from the Vereniging Rembrandt for doing so. Buying early was a good idea: in 1984 it acquired three-hundred photographs by George Hendrik Breitner for a song and in 1975 it bought two dummies for Van der Elsken's 1966 photobook *Sweet life*. In 2016 these were joined by all the other preparatory material for this project apart from the final dummy, which was later sold to the Rijksmuseum.

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32. *Gewitterfront*, by Neo Rauch. 2016. Oil on canvas, 150 by 100 cm.

Acquired in 2016 by the Museum De Fundatie, Zwolle, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Titus Fonds), the BankGiro Loterij, the Mondriaan Fonds and the VSBfonds.

This Neo Rauch was painted in 2016 and was bought immediately. It is a characteristic work of the artist, who likes to present us with figures in old-fashioned dress in an impossible but imaginable world. Meaning is evoked but never clear. We do not know if the impotent drum is meant to refer to Günter Grass' famous novel *The Tin Drum* (1959), nor if the kneeling man refers to Willy Brandt on his knees in the Warsaw ghetto. But the image with its menacing sky is likely to haunt the viewer.

33. Cupboard with twelve Old Testament scenes, by Hendrik Nicolaas Werkman. 1943. Oak cupboard, height 184 cm.; paintings on plywood panels, each 26 by 40 cm.

Acquired in 2017 by the Groninger Museum, Groningen, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its E.A. en C.M. Alkema-Hilbrands Fonds), the BankGiro Loterij, the Stichting Beringer Hazewinkel, the Stichting J.B. Scholtenfonds, the Stichting H.S. Kammingafonds, the Groninger Museum Salon, the Vereniging Vrienden van het Groninger Museum, and Han Leutscher-Hazelhoff in memory of Dick Leutscher.

Werkman's so-called 'hot printing' is collected internationally, but the reputation of his paintings has remained local. This cupboard was commissioned by the minister who established the illegal printing press for which Werkman made much of his best work, and its choice of scenes from the Old Testament brings to mind his sources of inspiration at the time. It also helps us to recall that Werkman was arrested and taken from prison to be executed three days before Groningen was liberated in 1945.



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**34. Detail of *Tomb of the unknown craftsman*, by Grayson Perry. 2011–16. Cast iron, oil paint, glass, rope, wood and flint celt, height 305 cm.**  
 Acquired in 2016 by the Bonnefanten, Maastricht, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Titus Fonds and Innorosa Fonds) and the Mondriaan Fonds.  
 The *Tomb of the unknown craftsman* was created when Perry was working on his 2011 exhibition for the British Museum, London. It is a cast-iron ship, carrying hundreds of objects from or reminiscent of the museum's collection, with a celt reclining in the middle like royalty lying in state. Perry thus honours the contribution of the anonymous craftsman to civilisation, celebrating his creativity and intelligence, while showing how his heritage travels on forever to an unknown destination. The work has proved very popular with the public.

**35. *Grand stairwell installation*, by Dale Chihuly. 2018. Seventy elements of handblown glass, installed on three walls twelve metres high.**  
 Acquired in 2019 by the Groninger Museum with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Titus Fonds, Themafonds Glas, Innorosa Fonds and Groninger Fonds), the Mondriaan Fonds, the De Marees van Swinderen-de Blocq van Scheltinga bequest, the Van Os-Van Calcar bequest, de Groninger Museum Salon, the BankGiro Loterij, Reineke Bennema and Willem Bok and Het Singeldorp. (Photograph Sies Veenstra).  
 This site-specific installation, which Chihuly made for his exhibition in Groningen in 2018, was so popular with visitors that many organisations and individuals wanted to contribute to help acquire it. Chihuly's playful but technically very accomplished art worked so well with the architecture of the Groninger Museum that his so-called 'Persians' look as though they had grown naturally on the walls of Alessandro Mendini's building.

**36. *Farewell to Washington Square*, by Paul Thek. 1972. Acrylic on canvas, 244.3 by 167.5 cm.**  
 Acquired in 2019 by the Kunstmuseum, The Hague, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt (thanks in part to its Titus Fonds, Coleminks Fonds and Themafonds Naoorlogse en Hedendaagse kunst) and the Mondriaan Fonds.  
 Thek is much admired by other artists. He was also a source of inspiration for Susan Sontag, who took the title of her essay *Against interpretation* from a conversation with Thek during which he had explained to her that 'we don't look at art when we interpret it'. Painted shortly before he left the United States for good, *Farewell to Washington Square* shows Thek working at night, with the twin towers of the World Trade Center nearby, through an eccentrically decorated window frame. A centrally-placed and finely painted semi-peeled orange is very present; so too is anxiety, it seems.

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