

I Bequest from the Fondation Custodia in Paris to the Library of the National Museum in Warsaw

In January 2011 an exceptional bequest for the Library of the National Museum arrived in Warsaw. On the initiative of its director, Dr Ger Luijten, the renowned Fondation Custodia in Paris had donated several thousand art history books. The donation includes holdings and exhibition catalogues (including those co-organized by Custodia), artist monographs and critically appended editions of primary sources. Some of them come from the collections of the foundation's late former director Carlos van Hasselt and Polish-born André Nieweglowski.

All the steps in this undertaking deserve special recognition. Director Luijten took on the organizational side of the enterprise, hiring the Dutch transport firm Jan Kortmann, which fulfilled all formalities and became solely responsible for the shipment, organizing its door-to-door delivery. The foundation's librarians, Wilfred De Bruijn and Hans Buijs, packed the books according to schools (Italian, French, etc.) and subjects to make it easier for the staff of the National Museum in Warsaw to organize them. The donors also gave the museum the freedom to pass any books it does not need to other institutions in Poland.

Despite the fact that the scholarly relationship between Fondation Custodia's current director and our museum dates back to his long tenure as head of the Rijksprentenkabinet of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, Dr Luijten's idea for the donation came as a great surprise to us. His research on the artistic and social aspects of old Dutch engravings, as well as his studies of publishing houses in both Northern and Southern Europe, repeatedly brought him to the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw. Significantly, for over ten years he had frequently given much-appreciated consultations to the staff of the European Etchings Room. This outstanding researcher's and expert's tenure as the scholarly editor (jointly with Christian Schuckman) of *The New Hollstein. Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450–1700* series contributed to the growth of our contacts. They culminated in the unforgettable, brilliant special lecture on "Rembrandt. The Painter as Printmaker," which Dr Luijten, an expert on Rembrandt's etchings, gave in November 2006 during the *Rembrandt. Rysunki i ryciny w zbiorach polskich* [Rembrandt. Drawings and prints in the Polish collections. A catalogue]¹ exhibition celebrating the artist's 400th birthday, organized by the then-director of the National Museum in Warsaw, Ferdynad B. Ruszczyc.

The special bond linking our museum and the foundation was a multi-year project initiated by the continuators of the work of Frits Lugt in which they expanded the 1921 and 1956

¹ *Rembrandt. Rysunki i ryciny w zbiorach polskich. Katalog* [Rembrandt. Drawings and prints in Polish collections. A catalogue], Anna Kozak, Joanna A. Tomicka, eds (Warsaw: Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, 2009).

editions of his *Les marques de collections de dessins et d'estampes. Supplément*,² which did not take into account seals; Dr Peter Fuhling served as the Dutch side's coordinator. Taking part in this project were the staff of the Department of Prints and Drawings. The instigators of the project ranked the substance of their contributions, not to mention the nature and progress of their cooperation, highly. Expressing their appreciation was Rhea Sylvia Blok as she summarized the progress and outcomes of their work at an international conference of the International Council for Curators of Dutch and Flemish Art (CODART ELF, Ghent, 9–11 March 2008). Over the years, Agnieszka Chmielewska, Piotr Czyż, Marcin Romeyko-Hurko, Piotr Borusowski and Piotr Kibort of the Department of Prints and Drawings took part in this project.

Most of the donated books are scholarly, but some are popular. Two fields are most richly represented, the art and culture of the Netherlands and graphic art and painting, a reflection of the foundation's collection and interests. The donors also included Fondation Custodia publications that had been missing from the Library of the National Museum in Warsaw. Now, the library has an almost full set.

Describing the donation, Małgorzata Polakowska, director of the Library of the National Museum in Warsaw, asserts that not only was it one of the largest gifts in the history of the institution, but that it has also augmented the collection with valuable items until now absent from its specialized scholarly library. This library is used by both researchers and students, and all those interested in art and the many facets of research conducted internationally. Furthermore, numerous publications in the donation had until now been unavailable not only in the National Museum, but in any other library in Poland. From now on, this magnificent gift from Paris will serve Poland's whole scholarly community.

² Frits Lugt, *Les marques de collections de dessins et d'estampes... avec des notices historiques sur les collectionneurs, les collections, les ventes, les marchands et éditeurs etc.* (Amsterdam: Vereenigde Drukkerijen, 1921) and Lugt, *Les marques de collections de dessins et d'estampes. Supplément* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956).