Kunsthandel Van Lier

Abstract

The Van Lier art trading company was founded in 1924 by Carel van Lier. He traded in art and ethnographic objects from Africa, Asia and North America. After the Second World War, Van Lier's company was continued by his widow. Eventually, the company was taken over and continued by Leendert van Lier (not a relative).

History

Carel van Lier (1897-1945) started a gallery in Laren in 1924 and moved to Amsterdam three years later. In the early years, Kunstzaal Van Lier primarily dealt in modern European art. However, Van Lier also became fascinated with the aesthetics of African sculpture and woodcarving. The exhibition of his private collection of African art at the Gemeentemuseum Amsterdam in 1927 influenced modernist painters at the time. Soon Van Lier was dealing in Asian art, African sculpture and ethnographic objects from around the world, including Native North America. These objects were acquired from private collectors in the Netherlands, during purchasing trips to London, Paris, Brussels and Antwerp, and through his network of relations in the international ethnographic art trade, in particular the Paris art dealer Charles Ratton.

During the Second World War, Carel van Lier, who was of Jewish origin, enjoyed some form of protection due to his marriage to his non-Jewish wife, Elisabeth van de Velde. Among other things, it allowed him to continue his art dealing activities. His business was eventually placed under administration in 1942, which presumably meant that he could no longer carry out his work. Van Lier was arrested by the German occupying forces in April 1943 because of his involvement in the resistance. After deportation and internment in various concentration camps, Van Lier died in Mühlenberg in March 1945.

After the war Carel van Lier’s widow Elisabeth van de Velde continued the business for several years before selling it to Leendert van Lier (1910-1995, not a relative) in 1949. Leendert van Lier also sold tribal art, Chinese ceramics and modern European art. In 1954 he moved to Utrecht, where he conducted business from his home. Leendert van Lier had a similar arrangement from 1961 in the small town of Veere in the province of Zeeland, where he continued to attract lovers of tribal art, such as professor and collector Theo Van Baaren. The art dealer made regular trips to London and Paris to acquire objects for his trade. After his death, his collection of ethnographic objects was auctioned at Christie's in Amsterdam in 1997.

Provenance research

Records from the period of Carel van Lier and his wife (1927-1948) are kept at the RKD, as are a number of records from the period of Leendert van Lier (these appear to mainly relate to European art). The remainder of the archives are in the possession of the heirs of Carel van Lier and Leendert van Lier.

During the Second World War tens of thousands of cultural artefacts from the Netherlands ended up in Germany, including objects from the collection of Kunsthandel Van Lier. Some of these objects from Van Lier, which were sold to the Museum für Völkerkunde during the war,

were returned to the Netherlands after the war and subsequently added to the national collection. As such they are part of the Netherlands Art Property [Nederlands Kunstbezit] collection (http://www.wikidata.org/entity/Q28103043) and can be found on the website of the NK collection. In 2007 descendants of Carel van Lier applied for restitution regarding these objects, after which one object was returned to the family.

Related Aids

- The trade in objects from a colonial context
- Groote Koninklijke Bazar
- Wereldmuseum Leiden

Primary sources

Archive:

> *RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History / Carel van Lier NL-HaRKD.0108 Letters and postcards, mainly from artists, and other documents covering the period 1927-1948*
>
> https://rkd.nl/nl/explore/collections/108

Archive:

> *RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History / Leendert van Lier NL-HaRKD.0065 Various Kunstzaal van Lier invitations, 1951-1953; various catalogues including Mostra internazionale del Surrealismo, 1961. A scrapbook with photos of work by Bob Hanf; 2 photos of artworks, photocopies of letters from Eugène Brands and others, 1954-1955.*
>
> https://rkd.nl/explore/collections/65

Secondary source

Book:

> *Lier, Bas van. Carel van Lier: kunsthandelaar, wegbereider, 1897-1945. Bussum: Thoth, 2003. Biography of Carel van Lier.*
>
> https://search.worldcat.org/title/902336725?oclcNum=902336725, ISBN 9789068683431

Relevant Data

TO BE FILLED

first edited by Wiebe Reints as original_author on 2024-05-07
last edited by Abacus as translator on 2025-04-24 (applies to section: Main-text; Sources)