This is a level 3 Research Aid
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Royal Asian Art Society in the Netherlands

Abstract

The Royal Asian Art Society in the Netherlands (KVVAK) is a collectors society that has established a large collection of Asian art over time. Since 1952, KVVAK's collection is displayed at the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

History

The Royal Asian Art Society in the Netherlands (KVVAK) was founded on 29 June 1918 and has held the designation "Royal" since 2018. The association was founded by the engineer H.F.E. Visser (1890-1965) and the collector and art dealer G.J. Verburgt (1871-1926), with the aim of raising awareness of and interest in Asian art and promoting scholarship in the field. The association's first president was H.K. Westendorp (1868-1941), who would later bequeath his own collection to the KVVAK. The association's collection currently comprises around 1,850 objects, consisting of various art forms such as sculptures, Japanese prints and ceramics.

After several temporary exhibitions it was decided in 1928, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the KVVAK, to establish a fund which the association could use to acquire its own collection and establish a museum. In 1932 the so-called Museum of Asian Art was opened in the Tuinzaal of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. In 1952 the collection was moved to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, where it is still on display. The KVVAK collection was initially exhibited in the Druckeruitbouw, which later became part of the current Philips Wing. After the major renovation of the Rijksmuseum in 2013 the KVVAK collection was housed in the Asian Pavilion (http://www.wikidata.org/entity/Q37769044). In addition to maintaining its own collection the KVVAK organises activities including lectures and trips. It also produces the magazine Aziatische Kunst, which is published by De Gruyter Brill.

Provenance research

The archive of the KVVAK is in the custody of the Rijksmuseum. To consult the archive, you need to contact the Rijksmuseum's collections department. In addition the Rijksmuseum research library has a collection of publications, including catalogues of past exhibitions, which are of interest for provenance research into the KVVAK collection.

Not all of the Asian art collection in the Rijksmuseum is on loan from the KVVAK; the museum also has Asian artefacts of its own. Most of the KVVAK objects are labelled ‘AK-MAK’ although a few prints are labelled ‘RP’. For the best overview of the KVVAK collection, please visit the association's website.

Related Aids

- *see also: The trade in objects from a colonial context*
- *see also: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam*

Primary sources

Archive:

NL-HaNA 2.14.73 663

Records concerning the financial management of the Museum of East Asian Art at Amsterdam, 1940-1960.

Archive:

NL-HaNA 2.14.73 674

Records concerning the acquisition of art works and the housing of the collection of the Museum voor Oost-Aziatische Kunst at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, 1947-1960.

Archive:

NL-HaNA 2.14.73 6609

Records concerning to a grant to the Museum van Aziatische Kunst in Amsterdam, 1942-1964.

Archive:

NL-HaNA 2.27.19 2934

Records concerning the approval of loan agreements of objects between the Rijksmuseum and the Asian Art Society in the Netherlands, 1970 - 1971.

Archive:

NL-HaNA 2.24.25 554-555

Photographs of the 'Aziatische Kunst' exhibition at the Museum voor Aziatische Kunst in 1936. Inventory number 554 comprises an overview of the exhibition space. Inventory number 555 comprises an overview of the 'Chinese ceramics.'

Archive:

NL-HaNA 2.24.25 1281-1288

Various photos of the exhibition rooms of the Museum of Asian Art in Amsterdam from 1931 to1958. The archive thus contains both photographs from both the Stedelijk Museum and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

Archive:

NL-HaNA 2.20.69 2982

Correspondence between the Royal Tropical Institute and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam regarding the Museum voor Aziatische Kunst, 1941.

Archive document:

NL-HlmNHA 476 2506
https://hdl.handle.net/21.12102/0BC966D7764F4EC3AB2B0A4AFF30B73A
Report by H.F.E. Visser on the desirability of bringing about the establishment of a State Museum for Asian Art as part of the reorganisation of the Dutch museums, c. 1920.

Archive document:

NL-HlmNHA 64 116
https://hdl.handle.net/21.12102/F3CA33316B0B49EEB6E8C0BC9BCAFDD4
Correspondence between H.F.E. Visser, curator of the Museum van Aziatische Kunst in Amsterdam, and the Royal Dutch Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) regarding identification and placement of a Buddha's head from the Borobudur, in the possession of the KNAW, 1939.

Secondary sources

Article:

Southworth, W. “Twelve Stone Sculptures from Java”. The Rijksmuseum Bulletin 65 (3):244-75 Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2017.
https://doi.org/10.52476/trb.9791
This article examines the history and provenance of a group of twelve stone statues from Java. All twelve are Hindu-Buddhist images from the Central Java period from the eighth to the tenth century AD. The statues were purchased by the Royal Asian Art Society in 1932.

Article:

Southworth, William. “The Provenance of Four Sandstone Sculptures from Cambodia”. The Rijksmuseum Bulletin 61 (2):140-71, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2013.
https://doi.org/10.52476/trb.10069
This article examines the acquisition and provenance of four sculptures from Cambodia in the Rijksmuseum's collection. The sculptures were acquired by the KVVAK in the early 1930s.

Book:

Campen, J. van, et all. Asian Art, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2014.
WorldCat 907556128
This book presents 119 highlights from the Rijksmuseum's Asian art collection. Objects from India, Southeast Asia, Korea, Japan and China are introduced in essays by curators.

Catalogue:

Lim, K.W., et al. Aziatische kunst uit het bezit van leden: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, 22 december 1978-4 maart 1979 : Vereniging van vrienden der Aziatische kunst 1918-1978, Amsterdam, 1979.
WorldCat 63330271
A catalogue containing objects acquired in the first 60 years of the KVVAK.

Catalogue:

Fontein, J., et al. Oosterse schatten. 4000 jaar Aziatische kunst, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1954
WorldCat 1156720537
Exhibition catalogue of the KVVAK from 1954.

Magazine:

Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst. Aziatische Kunst : mededelingenblad van de Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst, Leiden: Brill, 1986 – Nu.
https://brill.com/view/journals/vvak/vvak-overview.xml, ISBN 2543-1749
The journal of the KVVAK published by Brill.

Relevant Data

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