

Albert J. Elen

**Missing**

**Old**

**Master**

**Drawings**

from the



**Franz Koenigs Collection**

CLAIMED BY THE STATE OF  
THE NETHERLANDS  
THE NETHERLANDS OFFICE FOR FINE ARTS  
THE HAGUE, PHONE: (070) 3638963





### Chart A

1921	29
1922	1 (move to Haarlem)
1923	69 + 505
1924	29
1925	112
1926	182
1927	169
1928	226
1929	539
1930	149
1931	19
1932	-
1933	-

Koenigs' recorded acquisitions 1921-1933.

Note that this chart includes appr. 75% of all drawings; the remaining 25% have not had their year of acquisition specified

### The collection: its composition and arrangement

An inventory of the collection was made by Dr. J.H.F. Lütjens, who arranged the drawings according to schools, giving each a country code and accession number. The composition of the Koenigs Collection can therefore best be analysed along these categories (chart B).<sup>7</sup>

### Chart B

Inv.	School	no.	actual number
D.I.	German school (15th-18th c.)	281	281
D.II.	German school (19th c.)	23	23
I.	Italian school (15th-18th c.)	562	1100
F.I.	French school (17th-18th c.)	304	304
F.II.	French school (19th c.)	226	226
N.	Netherlandish school	194	194
H.	Dutch school	261	264
V.	Flemish school	106	105
R.	Rembrandt school	136	136
S.	Spanish school	33	20
E.	English school	19	19
		-----+	-----+
		2145	2671

The composition of the Koenigs Collection along the categories in the old inventory

The Italian drawings constitute by far the largest part of the Koenigs Collection, even without the voluminous Gaburri albums. Nearly all great masters from the early 15th to the late 18th centuries are represented by one or more drawings. The main representatives are the Venetian masters Veronese (21 drawings), Jacopo Tintoretto (40) and Giambattista Tiepolo (50). Some of the Italian drawings in the Koenigs collection stand out for their rarity and exceptionally fine quality. For instance, the two studies of female nudes attributed to Antonio Pisanello (cat.no. 358 and 360), the famous *Landscape with a shepherd* by Giorgione<sup>8</sup> and the *Study of a nude woman seated* by Titian (cat. no. 399), are all considered to be among the best drawings by these masters. With regard to the last-mentioned drawing, Weathey in his 1987 oeuvre catalogue states that 'the disappearance of this superb drawing was one of the major artistic losses of World War II...'<sup>9</sup>

If counted together, the Dutch and Flemish schools (D., R., V. and N. categories) take a second place with 699 drawings. Koenigs was only interested in 16th- and 17th-century Netherlandish drawings. Of the 18th and 19th centuries he owned virtually nothing. The Flemish school is represented mainly by its three greatest masters, Anthony van Dyck (16 drawings), Jacob Jordaens (21) and especially Peter Paul Rubens (42). These artists together are responsible for 75% of the 106 Flemish drawings in the Koenigs Collection.

Only one category was created specifically for an individual artist and his school: Rembrandt van Rijn (R.). The number of Rembrandt drawings in the Koenigs collection originally amounted to 83. However, modern scholarship has rejected the authenticity of 48 of these, which are now classified as Rembrandt school or given to his pupils. Nonetheless, 35 autograph drawings is still an impressive number.

The German school contains a relatively large number of anonymous drawings (73), mainly of the 15th century. The artists best represented are Albrecht Dürer (17 autograph drawings, not including two drawings by his workshop and 8 in his style), Hans Baldung Grien (10), Sebald Beham (15), Christoffel Christian Boxdorfer von Konstanz (11),



## Van Beuningen acquires the Koenigs Collection

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Shortly before the German invasion of The Netherlands on 10 May 1940 the Koenigs Collection in Museum Boymans was bought *en bloc* by the wealthy Rotterdam harbour industrialist and coal merchant, collector and long-time benefactor of Museum Boymans, Mr. D.G. van Beuningen (1877-1955). He acted on the urgent request of the museum's director, Dr. Dirk Hannema (in office 1921-45), who was asked by Koenigs' Jewish bank Lisser & Rosencranz either to pack the drawings for shipment to the United States or to buy them. The bank was in the process of winding up their business in fear of the threatening invasion by the Nazis.<sup>15</sup>

Thanks to Mr. van Beuningen's prompt cooperation the collection could be saved from leaving the country and subsequent dispersal in the art market. Not only the Museum Boymans, but also Franz Koenigs was exhilarated by this altruistic intervention by Van Beuningen. Koenigs spontaneously presented the museum two extremely rare drawings by Vittore Carpaccio from his so-called 'second' collection.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, the high spirits soon gave way to serious concern.

### Art collecting by the Nazis during World War II: the *Sonderauftrag Linz*

On 20 June 1939, less than a week before the *Anschluss* of Austria to Germany, Adolf Hitler appointed Dr. Hans Posse, a leading museum expert, to *Sonderbeauftragter* Linz. After a forced retirement on 12 March 1938, Posse was reinstated on 22 July 1938 as director of the Staatliche Gemäldegalerie Dresden, of which he had been director since 1913. This was done on the personal instigation of Hitler.<sup>17</sup> Posse was charged by Hitler with the task of co-ordinating the 'collecting' of works of art in occupied territories, destined for the so-called Führer-Museum that Hitler planned to build and furnish in Linz, an Austrian town midway between Munich and Vienna, where he had spent part of his youth. For three years, until his death on 7 December 1942 (he died of cancer) prematurely

ended his work, Posse travelled indefatigably to and fro through the expanding Third Reich in order to locate and acquire works of art, mainly paintings, for the proposed museum in Linz. He had purchasing agents working for him and maintained special accounts for the financing of his acquisitions. Of all works of art confiscated by the Germans or acquired by forced or voluntary sale he had first choice.<sup>18</sup> Although Posse operated quite independently, the *Sonderauftrag Linz* was controlled by *Reichsleiter* Martin Bormann, Hitler's secretary and deputy. Posse's choices were usually discussed with Hitler personally and sometimes overruled. Posse had the works of art transported to Munich and Dresden for storage. The countries he visited most regularly after the out-burst of war, were Italy and The Netherlands. Less than two months after the German invasion of The Netherlands, Posse arrived to take full advantage of the situation. His first visits were from 26 June to 5 July, from 18 to 22 July, and from 8 to 14 August 1940.<sup>19</sup>

Posse had a tight programme every time he came to Holland; he paid regular visits to most of the Dutch art dealers, especially those in Amsterdam and The Hague, and showed particular interest in the private collections of Fritz Mannheimer (Amsterdam), Franz Koenigs (Haarlem), Professor Otto Lanz (Amsterdam) and D.G. van Beuningen (Rotterdam).

### Posse acquires part of the Koenigs Collection for Linz

The renowned Koenigs Collection in Museum Boymans did not escape the attention of the Nazi art-hunters. It was the first large collection in The Netherlands that Posse pursued and which subsequently ended up losing virtually all its German drawings - for obvious reasons the main object of Nazi interest - as well as an additional selection of 226 drawings by masters from the Italian, French, Dutch and Flemish schools. They too were intended for Hitler's planned but never realized Führer-Museum in Linz.

On several occasions during his frequent visits to The Netherlands from 1940 to early 1942 Posse met



Lucas Hermann Peterich (1902-1985/86), the German-born son-in-law of D.G. van Beuningen who had recently bought the Koenigs Collection.<sup>20</sup> On Friday 28 June, Tuesday 13 August, Saturday 21 and Monday 23 September 1940, Posse visited Museum Boymans in the company of Peterich in order to see the Koenigs Collection and discuss its acquisition for the Führer-Museum. On the latter occasion the director, Dr. Dirk Hannema, made objections to the sale of the entire collection and said he would part with the German drawings only.

In a letter to *Reichsleiter* Martin Bormann dated 10 October 1940, Posse summarizes the relevant discussion he had with Hitler the previous day:

'I merely showed the Führer photos of the latest purchases and reported about the future purchase of some objects and certain whole collections, for instance that of Otto Lanz, Amsterdam - and that of Koenigs - one of the famous collections of old master drawings in Rotterdam, containing 24 drawings by Dürer, 40 by Rembrandt, etc. - in which I had been interested for several months. In principle the Führer agreed to the acquisition. The price of the part of the Koenigs collection now on sale is 1.500.000 Dutch guilders; for the Lanz collection more than 1.000.000 florins. I have suggested the choice of the objects most suitable for the Führer's purposes, which justify their price, and that the extensive remainder be put up at auction, where we will surely be very well repaid. I shall be travelling during this week to France to attend to certain matters, and I am going from there via Brussels to Holland (The Hague), to take up transactions which have fallen due in the meantime, especially the Koenigs collection. I wish to arrive earlier than other people, and catch them napping ...'.<sup>21</sup>

The subject was again raised during Posse's visits to Rotterdam on 5 and 7 November, when he selected non-German drawings, mainly Italian drawings and French 17th and 18th century drawings, disregarding 19th-century French drawings, as well as English and 16th-century Dutch drawings.<sup>22</sup> By not including any of the well-represented French 19th-century drawings - especially impressionist masterpieces - Posse strictly conformed to Nazi philosophy, which barred the work of nearly every non-German artist who worked after 1800 and attempted to exalt 19th-century German artists by removing all relevant competition.<sup>23</sup>

The fact that Hannema had been appointed a member of the Dutch Culture Council (*Nederlandsche Kultuurraad*) and supervisor of the Dutch museums (*Gemachtigde voor het Museumwezen*) in the organization of the *Reichskommissar SS-Obergruppenführer* Arthur Seyss-Inquart<sup>24</sup>, put him in an influential position and this probably prevented the sale of the entire collection. On 19 and 21 November Posse discussed by telephone the appraisal of the Koenigs drawings with the art dealer Dr. Boerner from Leipzig. Negotiations dragged on until 3 December 1940, when Posse, Hannema and Van Beuningen reached an agreement about the sale of part of the Koenigs Collection. The sale price was settled at 1.400.000 Dutch guilders.<sup>25</sup>

There were also other interests at stake. Van Beuningen urgently needed money to finance the purchase of several paintings from the Cook collection in Richmond and therefore probably saw no alternative but to sell part of the recently acquired Koenigs collection. Moreover, his company, the Steenkolen Handelsvereniging, was the sole agent in The Netherlands of the Rheinisch-Westfälische Kohlsyndicat in Essen (Germany) and the Rheinische Kohlenhandel & Rhederei-Gesellschaft in Mühlheim (Germany) and responsible for the transportation and transshipment of German coal, so he probably did not want to jeopardize this business by resisting the sale of the drawings to the Nazis.<sup>26</sup>

Thirty-three years afterwards in 1973 Dr. Hannema, who notwithstanding his great achievement in building up Museum Boymans had been removed as director in 1945 because of his collaboration with the Germans during the war<sup>27</sup>, wrote the following lines in his autobiography: 'After hard months of fighting the German Museum authorities, who wanted to buy the entire collection, a solution was found that seemed to me the best means to reach the amount needed [to finance the acquisition of the Cook paintings]... In the first place all the German drawings were surrendered, as they were fetching the highest prices at the time. Van Beuningen committed himself to donating all the other drawings to the foundation [Stichting Museum Boymans]'.<sup>28</sup> The choice of the German drawings



was of course due not only to their high value, but first and foremost to the likely demand of the Nazis that the German drawings at least should be handed over *en bloc*. It is very unlikely that there would have been any room for discussion in this matter and the negotiations would have concentrated on the selection of non-German drawings in order to reach the sale price that Van Beuningen and Posse had perhaps previously agreed upon so that Van Beuningen could finance the purchase of the paintings from the Cook collection.

### Some German drawings escape deportation by the Nazis

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It was undoubtedly the firm intention of Posse to take all German drawings in the Koenigs Collection, but several circumstances prevented him from getting all of them. Firstly, two drawings, one by Albrecht Dürer (fig. 2) and one by Mathias Grünewald (fig 3), were on loan to an exhibition in New York at the time of the invasion and occupation of The Netherlands by the German forces.<sup>29</sup> They were returned after the war. One drawing by Augustin Hirschvogel escaped Posse's attention as it was then stored as a drawing by Pieter Cornelisz. Kunst, a Dutch artist. Two drawings by Koenigs' father-in-law Leopold Count von Kalckreuth (D.II. 5 and 9) were not part of the collateral and the partial sale, but were still kept by the family. Finally, five Italian incunabula from the famous library of Willibald Pirckheimer (1470-1530), each containing a single miniature by his close friend Albrecht Dürer, which had also been selected and packed, were secretly removed from the crate by a staff member on the night before being collected for transportation to Germany and were thus fortunately saved from deportation.<sup>30</sup>

### A missing collection

In a letter dated 15 January 1941 Posse reported to Bormann that the payment of the purchase was not yet effected.<sup>31</sup> This was settled sometime between February and July 1941. Van Beuningen donated all remaining drawings, approximately 2200, to Museum Boymans, together with four paintings by

Hieronymus Bosch and four by Rubens.

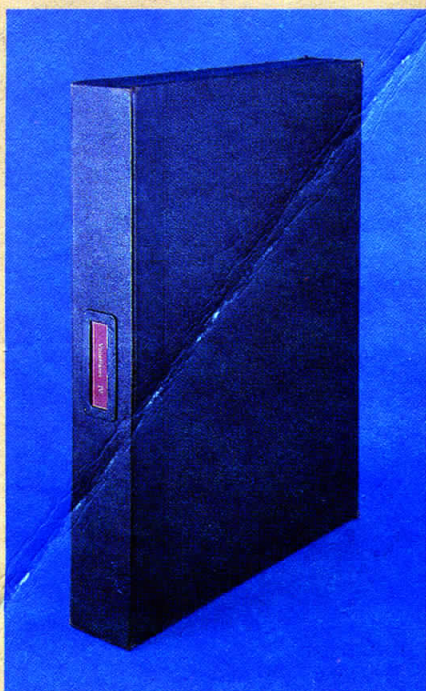
The 526 selected drawings were left in their black boxes (ill. on the rear dust jacket) and packed in four crates, which were collected at Museum Boymans on 5 March 1941 by one A.E. Sippell (fig. 5), who was authorized by counsellor (*Gesandtschaftsrat*) Major Dr. F.W. Wickel of the German legation in The Hague, who worked as a representative for Posse as *Leiter des Sonderreferats Kulturaustausch* (fig. 4).<sup>32</sup> In a letter dated 25 May 1941 Posse acknowledged the receipt of the drawings in Dresden, which were handed over to him 'the other day in the presence of Mr. Peterich', who apparently had accompanied the transport (fig. 6).

In the spring of 1941 not only did Museum Boymans lose part of the Koenigs Collection, but the latter lost its creator. Franz Koenigs died under mysterious circumstances in a train accident in Cologne on 6 May 1941, at which time the selected drawings were well under way from Rotterdam to Dresden. Just two years previously he had been awarded Dutch citizenship, which he had applied for because of his abhorrence of the Nazi regime and he had come to feel like a Dutch citizen after 17 years of living in The Netherlands.

After the drawings were received in Dresden they were put in storage in the Kupferstich-Kabinett, the print room of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen. From that time onwards their history runs parallel to that of the Dresden collections, which is extensively described by its present director, Dr. Werner Schmidt, in the catalogue *Vermisste Zeichnungen des Kupferstich-Kabinettes Dresden* of 1987 and will therefore only be summarized here<sup>33</sup>, with some additional notes regarding the relevant postwar testimony of Dr. Hermann Voss, Posse's successor as *Sonderbeauftragter Linz*.

From 20 July until 9 December 1942 the graphic collections of the Kupferstich-Kabinett were moved for safety reasons to the Castles Weesenstein and Wurschen, both in the vicinity of Dresden. In February and March 1945 the prints and drawings that were kept in Castle Wurschen were transported to Castle Weesenstein and added to the greater part of the holdings of the Kupferstich-Kabinett. The presence of the Koenigs drawings in Castle





This catalogue of the missing old master drawings from the Franz Koenigs collection serves a number of purposes. In the first place it should be seen as an introduction to an exceptionally fine and varied collection of 526 old master drawings which was illegally removed from The Netherlands during the Second World War. It not only confirms the longstanding claim by the State of The Netherlands upon these drawings but also proclaims the State's intention to pursue that claim with determination.

The amply illustrated and easily accessible catalogue is meant to be an instrument for the locating and identification of the missing drawings, only 35 of which have been recovered so far. We invite any person who has been or will be confronted with a drawing included in this catalogue, or who has any knowledge about the present whereabouts of such drawings, to contact the Royal Netherlands Embassy in his or her country or The Netherlands Office for Fine Arts (Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst) in The Hague.

With 30 illustrations in colour and 352 in black-and-white  
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