

In memoriam Ger Luijten (1956-2022) - Rembrandthuis

On Monday, 19 December 2022, at the age of 66, drs. Ger Luijten, art historian and director of the Fondation Custodia in Paris, very suddenly passed away. With his death, the art historical world has lost not only a particularly amicable person, but also an important connoisseur and guardian. The Rembrandt House collaborated with Ger and his team in Paris on various projects; driven by a mutual love of works on paper, old as well as new. But also in his earlier role as Head of the Print Collection at the Rijksmuseum, the Rembrandt House could always count on Ger's enthusiastic and generous collaboration, arising from a powerful drive to share art with others.

After completing his studies in Art History at Utrecht University, Ger embarked on his museum career in 1987 at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, where he served until 1990 as research assistant for the Rotterdam collection of prints and drawings. He left for the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam to become Chief Curator of prints of the Rijksprentenkabinet, where in 2001 he was appointed Head of the Print Collection. Exhibitions he produced during this period on drawings and prints of the 16th and 17th centuries yielded important catalogues such as *Dawn of the Golden Age. Northern Netherlandish Art, 1580-1620* and *Mirror of Everyday Life: Genre Prints in the Netherlands, 1550-1700*. As part of his work in explaining and sharing the art of printmaking, Ger also played an important role as editor of catalogues of oeuvres of Dutch and Flemish printmakers who appeared in the Hollstein series. He served on the editorial boards of scholarly periodicals, including *Simiolus*. And he was closely involved, as board member, in activities and developments at the RKD and the Vereniging Rembrandt.

Collaboration between Ger and the Rembrandt House mostly took place during his early years as director of the Fondation Custodia. In 2010 Ger succeeded the retired Mária van Berge-Gerbaud as director, and for the twelve subsequent years Ger devoted himself with heart and soul to the foundation that administers the legacy of Frits Lugt, and to the staff that cares every day for this important Dutch collection in Paris. The collection of the Fondation is linked to that of the Rembrandt House Museum thanks to the presence of work by Rembrandt. Besides works by many other artists, Frits Lugt acquired a considerable number of prints by Rembrandt, of extraordinary quality. And at the same time also a large group of drawings, and no less than two handwritten letters, by the master. In 2010/11 the Rembrandt House Museum and Fondation Custodia dedicated an exhibition to Frits Lugt and his collection, entitled [*Kabinet van een kenner \(Un cabinet particulier / A connoisseur's cabinet\)*](#). And in 2012 the Fondation and the Rembrandt House were two of the three venues to present selections of [*drawings from the collection of the Hamburger Kunsthalle*](#), on the occasion of the completion of a comprehensive collection catalogue of this German collection of Netherlandish works on paper.

Besides a fascination for Rembrandt, our institutions also share a love of contemporary graphic art. Both the Rembrandt House and Fondation own a substantial collection of work by contemporary graphic artists – more specifically etchers, whose work is indebted to Rembrandt. In collaboration with the Hercules Segers Foundation and on the initiative of former Rembrandt House director Ed de Heer many exhibitions of these graphic artists were

presented. Under M`aria van Berge-Gerbaud the Fondation had already joined this initiative. Upon his appointment Ger continued with it and in 2013 the two museums organized the exhibition *Peter Vos. Metamorfosen*. When new leadership of the Rembrandt House decided in 2017 to take leave of these monographic exhibitions, Ger continued with renewed passion. In recent years he opened the Paris venue for graphic artists Anna Metz and Siemen Dijkstra, among others.

Ger's love of the arts, and in particular for art that is refined and poetic, found expression not only in important exhibitions and publications but also in personal contact with others. Enthusiastic, and drawing on vast knowledge, Ger always knew how to clarify what art has to say. The gift of conveying knowledge and passion made him a great teacher of young art historians and everyone who worked with him. The memories of Ger's inspiring personality, but also of visits to the Fondation, where Ger toured us through the museum and his new collection of "sublime" oil sketches, will always remain with us.

Leonore van Sloten, Senior Curator, Rembrandt House Museum



Ger in passionate conversation in the galleries of the Fondation Custodia. Photo: Fondation Custodia.