

Henri Verstijnen (1882-1940)

Andrea Kroon

Dear List Members:

A group of art historians is planning an exhibition and publication about the Dutch artist/designer Henri Verstijnen (1882-1940). They would like to come into contact with museums, archives and private collectors who may have examples of his work or other relevant information on the artist.

Information about Verstijnens work in Germany and Austria from 1902 onwards would be especially welcome, since it is unclear if any of his designs for ceramics or the ceramic objects themselves survived. This is why we are appealing to colleagues for information.

Please feel free to forward the enclosed call for information to anyone who might be interested. Thank you in advance for your kind-co-operation.

Yours sincerely,
Andréa Kroon.

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CALL FOR INFORMATION

Henri Cornelis Gerard Marie Verstijnen (1882 Soekaboemi, Indonesia - Den Haag, the Netherlands 1940) studied drawing at the art academy in Arnhem in The Netherlands, but most of his skills were self-taught. One of his first commercial jobs was to design vases for the firm E. Estié & Co (= Plateelbakkerij Zuid-Holland N.V.) in Gouda circa 1900. In 1902 he started a tour of Germany and Austria. He worked as a designer for the glass and ceramics factory E. Wahlliss and the metal ware factory Baduin Heller & Söhne in Teplitz. It is unclear if any of his designs or examples of the decorated ceramics from this period survived. After this study-trip he settled in Maastricht in the Netherlands, where he was employed as a designer at the Société Céramique factory for several years.

Verstijnen moved to Den Haag in 1918, where he joined the artists organizations 'Haagse Kunstkring' and 'Schilderkundig Genootschap Pulchri Studio'. His work was on show in the galleries of these artists clubs and several other galleries around the country. The artistic work of Verstijnen

includes drawings, graphics, pastels and oil paintings. He is best known for his floral and animal subjects: flowers, birds, pets and exotic animals in their natural environment. He toured the zoo's of Europe for inspiration. Orchids, lilies, cranes, peacocks and under-water scenes of fish are recurring themes. His style is naturalistic, but also shows the influence of Art Nouveau and Symbolism. Because Verstijnen was a member of a Theosophical lodge, his work also includes images of lotus-flowers, Buddha's and religious/esoteric symbolism. He signed his work in full or with a monogram of the initials "H.V."

Verstijnen supported his income from artistic works with commercial assignments. He illustrated (childrens) books and designed book covers, posters and advertisements. His calendars with animal designs were very popular, as were his caricatures for the newspaper 'De Groene Amsterdammer' between 1925 and 1935, in which he portrayed animals as humans.

A group of art historians is planning an exhibition and publication about Verstijnen. They would like to hear from anyone who has information on the artist, or knows of surviving examples of his work in museum or archive collections. For more information, please contact:

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