

Fritz Mannheimer's purchases via the art trade from Russia, circa 1928-1933

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Online with more illustrations: <http://kalden.home.xs4all.nl/mann/Mannheimer-russian.html>

In 1952 the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam was vastly enriched with 1400 objects from the estate of the Amsterdam Jewish banker Dr Fritz Mannheimer (1890-1939). During his years in Amsterdam as a banker, from 1916 to 1939, Mannheimer purchased 3000 high quality objects of applied art and fine art. The complicated story of acquisition, the enforced Nazi purchase, recuperation and distribution has been discussed in my earlier article, [see web site](#).¹ About 1/30th of this treasure, some 100 objects, were purchased, through intermediaries, in Russia around 1930.

This article attempts to answer these questions: Which art dealers, advisors or intermediaries did Mannheimer employ for buying from the Soviets? And which objects now in the Rijksmuseum originally stem from what collections in Russia?

Post-revolution art dealers and art auctioneers

Immediately after the 1917 revolution, the Soviet state was in upheaval and the government initially allowed spontaneous violent attacks by angry mobs on property of the upper class. Then a law was issued in October 1918, nationalizing all private property, whether belonging to nobility or private citizens; even property belonging to institutions and churches was seized.²

All of this property had to be itemized and registered by sending complete inventory lists to a new office called the *Antikvariat*. It is known how this branch operated, but its archive was lost.³ For selling the goods, in trade with foreign

¹ K. Kaldenbach, 'Mannheimer: an important art collector reappraised. History of ownership from 1920-1952: From Mannheimer to Hitler; recuperation and dispersion in Dutch museums, based on archival documents.' (published online 2014)

² N. Semyonova and N.V. Iljine, ed. *Selling Russia's treasures: the Soviet trade in nationalized art, 1917-1938*. New York, 2013. A team of scholars from the Hermitage and other experts wrote this definitive study of 362 pages; it is an expanded and reworked version of the original Russian-language book published in Moscow, 2000.

³ W. Bayer (ed.) *Verkaufte Kultur: die sowjetischen Kunst- und Antiquitätenexporte, 1919-1938* Frankfurt am Main, 2001, p. 14.

countries, *Antikvariat* worked with a small number of art traders as intermediaries.⁴ In order to optimize selling, specific markets were highly targeted. Dutch master paintings were mainly exported to Holland.⁵ The most expensive art objects went to buyers in England and France and initially 'emotionally charged' objects relating to the late Czar's family went mainly to the USA.

In an effort to serve the revolutionary fervour at the art and education front, registry was also started of all museum property by *Narkompros*, a central office working on re-distribution of art works. The ideology was: putting art objects in the optimal building in Russia for the purpose of teaching, for ideology and for 'best use'.⁶ Between 1927 and 1933 the Soviet authorities decided to give this idea of 'best use' a new twist: large-scale sales of fine art and applied art objects from museums were sold abroad in order to raise funds, mainly used for industrialisation, for machinery for agriculture and for oil production. The slogan was: *art for tractors*. Initially museum-quality objects were kept safely within Russia.⁷ In the next step, the thin wedge of seizure was moving in: Museum quality objects were also sold, and if lucky, the original owning museum would receive 25% of the value.⁸ The *Antikvariat* office first operated abroad through agents who organized a sale in London in 1917. These were quite shady outlets of art.⁹ Soon the Hermitage became a transfer, selection and valuing point for mountains of fine art and applied art, removed from elsewhere in Russia.¹⁰

Few facts about an art dealer selling Russian art to Mannheimer are now clear; from archival sources, one known trader is the art dealer firm Van Diemen, active in Berlin and in Amsterdam. He sold an oil painting by S.J. van Ruysdael, *View of a River and a Boat*.¹¹ It was bought in 1930 by Van Diemen in the Hermitage, and sold in 1933 to Mannheimer.¹²

A second likely art trader used by Mannheimer is the German auction firm Rudolf Lepke, which had officially gained buying authority in Russia in 1923.¹³ Hans Karl Krüger, their local agent in Russia, and trade partner in this firm, handled art requests from the West.¹⁴ A large amount of Russian art objects was offered in the

⁴ Semyonova and Iljine, op. cit. For this study it is a telling fact that in this book the name Mannheimer is never mentioned. This implies that intermediaries have been active on Mannheimer's behalf.

⁵ Dutch art was specifically sold by *Antikvariat* to the art trader Van Diemen. This art dealership had outlets in various countries and some of it ended up in the Amsterdam store, bought by Mannheimer, see Bayer 2001, op cit, p. 15.

⁶ Bayer 2001, p. 23

⁷ Bayer 2001, p. 31.

⁸ Bayer 2001, p. 31

⁹ R.J. Baarsen, *Paris 1650-1900. Decorative art in the Rijksmuseum*, Amsterdam, 2013. p 17

¹⁰ Semyonova and Iljine, p. 129.

¹¹ <http://www.herkomstgezocht.nl/eng/index.html> consulted 15 February, 2014. In this official Dutch web site 'Searching for provenance' 4700 objects are listed with lost Jewish WW2 roots. An online search for Mannheimer objects showed 246 items, each with an NK number = *Stichting Nederlands Kunstbezit*, or Netherlands Art Property Foundation. This one is listed as oil, 52 x 80 cm. inv. NK3047

¹² Heuß 2001, op. cit. p. 205. Its present location is unknown.

¹³ Semyonova and Iljine, p. 133.

¹⁴ E. Solomacha, see her chapter on sales from the Hermitage in *Verkaufte Kultur*, edited by Bayer 2001, p. 44.

November 1929 sale by Lepke in Berlin.¹⁵ This was the first highly visible and famous (or infamous) sale of seized Russian goods. Emigrated former owners vehemently protested when their property came up at auction and started lawsuits, but in the end to no avail. Mannheimer, being German, would have received the sale catalogue and would have used Lepke's firm. Art objects bought by the Lepke firm in Russia had been wrapped and crated in Russia, then taken to Leningrad harbour and then by ship either via Stettin or Hamburg, the cargo to end up in Berlin. From the moment the goods left Leningrad the auctioneer and buyers had to consider their shaky legal ownership, and thus high risks.¹⁶

The traders below are possibly, but less likely, to have been involved for Mannheimer's acquisitions. A well-connected art trader was Franz Zatzenstein [originally Catzenstein], who later renamed himself Francis Matthiesen.¹⁷ Matthiesen's agent Mansfield was posted in the Hermitage. Mr. Matthiesen had further ties with the Colnaghi firm (acting agent Gutekunst) and the Knoedler firm (acting agent Charles Henschel).¹⁸ The high-volume buying around 1930 by Calouste Gulbenkian and Andrew Mellon resulted in the end in the vast collection of the Gulbenkian museum in Lisbon; the Mellon paintings served to jumpstart the National Gallery, Washington DC.¹⁹ See annex.

Joseph Duveen also bought objects, including furniture from Russia. One piece went to Mannheimer, and from there to the Wrightsmann Collection, ending up in the MMA, New York. Archival sources show that Mannheimer was his client.²⁰

The RKD files also name art collector C.J. van Aalst (1866-1939) as a friend of Mannheimer's.²¹

Rijksmuseum as buyer

In 1931 for f 156.000, the Rijksmuseum had bought from the Hermitage, via the Colnaghi firm, two large portraits by Anthonis Mor. They show the English trader *Sir Thomas Gresham* (SK-A-3118) who was stationed in Antwerp and had banking business in the Republic, and that of his wife (SK-A-3119).²² A more important deal

¹⁵ Lepke Sale cat. Nr. 2000, November 1928, with 447 art objects.

¹⁶ Semyonova and Iljine, p. 263, note 6.

¹⁷ Semyonova and Iljine, p. 272. See also J. Walker. *Self-Portrait with Donors: Confessions of an Art Collector*. Boston and Toronto, 1969, p. 243. In this account, Franz Zatzenstein-Matthiesen visiting Gulbenkian's saw paintings from the Hermitage which he just had put on his list made for the authorities, of the one hundred paintings in Russian collections, which should never be sold. Email from the Matthiesen firm, 28 February 2014.

¹⁸ Solomacha, p. 52 and p. 116.

¹⁹ Semyonova and Iljine, for Gulbenkian, paying low prices, pp. 260-265; see pp. 270-275 about Mellon buying for a total of \$ 6,654,000.

²⁰ J. Lopez, *The Man Who Made Vermeers, Unvarnishing the Legend of Master Forger Han van Meegeren*, Harcourtbooks, 2008, 115.

²¹ [http://www.rkd.nl/nl/explore/artists#filters\[collectienaam\]=Aalst%2C+Cornelis+Johannes+Karel+van](http://www.rkd.nl/nl/explore/artists#filters[collectienaam]=Aalst%2C+Cornelis+Johannes+Karel+van)

²² Semyonova and Iljine, pp. 154-155.

was however struck in 1933 when the Rijksmuseum gained two Rembrandt paintings:

1. Rembrandt's *Titus* (SK-A-3138) which was bought in 1933 from the Pushkin museum of fine arts in Moscow and
2. Rembrandt's *Peter's Denial* (SK-A-3137) initially from the Hermitage, afterwards temporarily moved to the Museum of fine arts, Leningrad / St. Petersburg.

Financing of the purchase of these two paintings for a total sum of f 800.000 was partly arranged through a loan from a Pension fund of Dutch Colonial employees and partly by a donation from the Rembrandt Society fund to celebrate their 50th anniversary.²³ Van der Ham, in his history of *200 years Rijksmuseum* describes how paying back this purchase loan caused a 40-year lasting stress hole in the annual Rijksmuseum purchase fund.²⁴

The painting Rembrandt's *Peter's Denial* is described by the Hermitage as having been a crucial painting and a grievous loss. In the Rijksmuseum it has however not been shown to the public for well over a decade, both during and after the renovation; it is exhibited in the Dordrecht Museum. Rembrandt's *Titus* has always been on show in the Rijksmuseum.

As a result of the wholesale dumping in the West of such large amounts of gold, precious stones, fine art and applied art in the West, market prices continuously tumbled down, and the gains by the Russian state did not bring in the cash as planned.²⁵ Finally in 1933 a staff member of the Hermitage became again highly alarmed when spotting a new export list document in the *Antikvariat* office containing plans for export of yet another series of important works of art. In a protest letter sent with utter trepidation, Stalin was requested to stop all art sales.²⁶ Stalin agreed.

This was the balance of the damage done: from 1928-1933 the total number of art works exported included 59 masterworks, 350 very important paintings and 2471 works of fine art.²⁷ Plus a vast number of seized precious and semi-precious stones, applied art objects, silver and gold objects.

Mannheimer objects with Russian provenance

With hindsight, Mannheimer was just a small-time buyer in this field. His purchases from Russia comprise of no more than 1/30th of the 3000 works of art are listed in his inventories in 1936 and 1940. Postwar, in 1952, the Rijksmuseum registry has received the lions' share, 1400 Mannheimer objects. When filtering with

²³ Semyonova and Ijine, p. 218.

²⁴ G. Van der Ham, *200 jaar Rijksmuseum. Geschiedenis van een nationaal symbool, Waanders, Zwolle*, n.d. (2000), p. 265. The Rembrandt Society also provided funds.

²⁵ Walker, op. cit, p. 116 mentions a letter dated 14 January 1931, from Matthiesen to Henschel,: "...tremendous dumping..."

²⁶ Solomacha, p. 55

²⁷ Solomacha, p. 56

the key word 'Hermitage', a list shows 89 varied objects. However, apart from the Hermitage there were more Russian sources for art treasure. When searching through the several Mannheimer inventories the total sum exceeds 100 items.²⁸

Where did Mannheimer actually buy? It has been theorized that specialized art dealers sent him multitudes of objects to judge these at his leisure at his villa.²⁹

He lived immediately south of the Rijksmuseum, and it is likely that he would primarily have also used the antique trader shops at the Spiegelstraat and Spiegelgracht area just north of the Rijksmuseum.³⁰ No Mannheimer purchase ledgers are known in archives and no sources of correspondence are known either. Neither do we know whether he also purchased anything during his international travels from 1916 to 1933. He is likely to have visited Berlin and is known to have visited Romania. After 1933, being a Jew, he may not have felt entirely welcome travelling and doing business in Germany. He probably was not allowed to travel and trade at all inside the Soviet area.

Did Mannheimer hire art experts and art advisors? Seeing he spared no expense in purchasing, he may have marshalled the help of the very best art historian and dealers to gain advice and to hunt for and pry loose desirable objects. One name readily comes up: the 1936 inventory of Mannheimer's holdings of all 3000 items was made with the expert help of art historian Otto von Falke (1862-1942) who likely stayed as a guest for many months in a room in Mannheimer's villa.³¹ Some of the objects listed in the Rijksmuseum inventory (such as the gold *Triptych reliquary*) had already been catalogued by Von Falke in Berlin decades before that. He may thus have been Mannheimer's key advisor and collaborator.

According to Heuß (2000 and 2001) who has studied the Nazi photo album books and lists of art objects now in the State archive in Koblenz, other Russian

²⁸ Six separate inventories of Mannheimer objects were produced, the first in 1934 (the *Artistic* list); then the 1935/36 by Otto von Falke (for opening up his villa for tax reasons); the 1939-40 was made just after Mannheimer's death, produced by the Rijksmuseum staff for the legal expert, E.J. Korthals Altes was appointed as trustee administrator to deal with the tangled ownership of the treasures and real estate. Subsequently in 1942 the Nazi inventory was made in cellars where all art was stored; then in 1942-1945 the Linz *Führermuseum* inventory exists, and finally the 1948/49 Rijksmuseum inventory exists (now in the *Nationaal Archief*) with descriptions of all 3000 individual objects of fine art, applied art, furniture and books. In the end 1400 items, the cream of the crop and the lion share, remained in the Rijksmuseum.

²⁹ A. L. den Blaauwen, *Meissen Porcelain in the Rijksmuseum / Catalogus van de verzameling kunstnijverheid van het Rijksmuseum te Amsterdam*, vol. 4, Zwolle / Amsterdam, 2000, pp. 8-9. Expert dealers in Berlin were Saemy Rosenberg, Arthur Wittekind and Hermann Ball.

³⁰ A. Gerigk, 'Zwischen den Fronten, Berichte aus dem neutralen Ausland' in *Signal*, 1 April 1940, available online at this authors web site.

³¹ The first inventory of the whole Mannheimer collection was made by Otto von Falke, working in Amsterdam from November 1935 to March 1936, pp. 1-400 with an index. One full copy is in the Rijksmuseum library. Another copy is in the Nationaal Archief, SNK 2.08.42, 964.

sources for Mannheimer paintings were these mentioned below.³² Some objects ended up in the Rijksmuseum, some elsewhere.

Russian provenance lists of Rijksmuseum objects stemming from:

- 1. Hermitage**
- 2. Basilevski collection, Petersburg**
- 3. Great Gatchina Palace**
- 4. Kremlin fortress in Moscow.**
- 5. Antoniev Monastery in Novgorod**
- 6. Stieglitz museum, now Applied Art Museum, St Petersburg**

1. Objects from the Hermitage

The now most celebrated object stemming from the Hermitage is the life-size marble Falconet statue of a young boy, '*Amour Menaçant*' bought in 1933 by Mannheimer for FF 1.250.000.³³

Probably also indirectly, Mannheimer purchased five paintings, among these: S. v. Ruisdael, *Ferry on a River*, 52 x 80 cm. 1930 first sold to Van Diemen, likely sent to the Amsterdam branch, then to Mannheimer in 1932.³⁴; P. Wouwerman, *Pulling a Cat Tied to a String* (in German: '*Katzenziehen*') 76 x 96 cm. Bought 1932 from an unknown dealer.³⁵

This purchase list shows that Mannheimer was a relatively late buyer for Hermitage paintings, but the list of five may not be exhaustive because Mannheimer is known to have bought and again sold art objects.

A list of applied art objects from the Hermitage can be gathered from various Mannheimer inventories. Alphabetically listed, the Rijksmuseum owns

³² A. Heuß 2000, *Kunst- und Kulturgutraub: ein vergleichende Studie zur Besatzungspolitik der Nationalsozialisten in Frankreich und der Sowjetunion*, Heidelberg 2000, p. 61.

A. Heuß 2001, 'Russisches Kulturgut in (westeuropäischen) jüdischen Sammlungen: Von den Berliner "Russenauktionen" bis zur "Arisierung"' in: *Verkaufte Kultur: die sowjetischen Kunst- und Antiquitätenexporte, 1919-1938*, Ed. W. Bayer. Frankfurt, 2001, pp. 205-206.

³³ F. Scholten and J. de Hond, 'The elk antler from the funerary chapel of Louis the Pious in Metz', in *Burlington Magazine*, vol. CLV, no. 1323, June 2013, pp. 372-380. See note 7.

³⁴ See art dealer Van Diemen in

http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/guides_bibliographies/provenance/dealer_archives.html

Consulted 27 February, 2014.

³⁵ Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, B. 323/86, *Anhang zum Inventar des Führermuseums Linz* as cited in A. Heuß 2000, p. 205. *Katzenziehen* was a popular but nasty lower class game in which the cat was hung from a string tied to the hind legs. The rider passed by and had to yank him off, and got scratched. Details in C. Hofstede de Groot, *Beschreibendes und kritisches Verzeichnis der Werke der hervorragendsten holländischen Maler des XVII. Jahrhunderts*, Vol 2, Esslingen 1908, p. 591. A comparable painting is 'Pulling eel' shown in F. Duparc and Q. Buvelot, *Philips Wouwerman 1619-1668*, Zwolle, 2009, cat.nr. 13.

the following sets from the Hermitage: *Crystal Water Jugs; Chalice; Bocal; Ink stand; Meissen Chocolate drinking Set* of 25 parts, including painted cups with orange-red background. (BK- 17402-A to X) plus related *Jugs*, with assorted *Tea Pots, Boxes; Meissen Cups and Bowls* (BK-17402-H-1); *Meissen Tea Set* (BK-17017); five decorated *Meissen Vases*; two *Notebook Covers*; a *Mirror*; silver *Sauce Jugs* (BK-17021-A and B); three *Snuff Boxes* (incl. BK-17144); four small art *Objects*; six *Pendants*; a small *Voltaire Statue* by Houdon (BK-16932).

Also purchased by Mannheimer but lost in the 1940 London Blitz were these Hermitage items: a 16th C. jewel showing Acteon; a prayer book with scenes of birth and resurrection of Christ; a manuscript on vellum with 12 miniatures, belonging to Queen Anne of Brittany; five gold boxes including an exceptionally large one; Amor with torch; a 'chasse' box in Limoges enamel, champlévé with religious images; a large miniature, showing the Schowalow family, 1781.³⁶ A bronze statue by Donatello survived the Blitz unscathed, came on the market and was bought by the Rijksmuseum in 1960.

2. From the Basilewsky collection, Petersburg. Alexander Petrovich Basilewsky (also spelled Basilevsky, 1829-1899) resided in Vienna, Florence and finally Paris where he settled in 1860. From his art gallery in his Parisian home a watercolour was made (see Fig 1). His collection was about to be auctioned off in Paris when Tsar Alexander III bought the entire collection in 1885 for FF 6.000.000 to be placed in the Hermitage. Much later, around 1930 the Hermitage also served as a clearing and sorting institute for seized goods.³⁷ Although parts have been sold off, much of the Basilewsky collection is still in the Hermitage.

Mannheimer bought the following objects from the Basilewsky collection: The top part of a *Bishop's Staff* (BK-17203); an *Elk's Antler* dating from 1000-1100 (BK-16990)³⁸; a group of *Aquamaniles* (BK-16911, BK-16912); a *Pyx*, or *Eucharistic dove*, a bird-shaped box for keeping the Holy Host (BK-17205).³⁹ A silver *Reliquary Bust of St. Thekla* (BK-16997). A similar silver *Bust of St. Ursula* was bought in 1955 from the Rijksmuseum, by Basel to be placed in the Basel Historic Museum⁴⁰;

³⁶ Nationaal Archief, 2.08.42, 430, letter dated 8 August 1939 from Chenue/Rosenbaum, London to Ms Mannheimer.

³⁷ Nationaal archief, SNK 2.08.42, 549, *Artistic list* 16, p 131. Heuß 2001, op. cit. p. 206. (spelling varies, also as: Basilevsky / Basilewski / Basilewsky. However, in the large A. Darcel and A. Basilewsky, *Catalogue Raisonné* published in Paris 1874, he himself chose the spelling Basilewsky. (Rijksmuseum libray, 105 C 63). Book title: *Collection Basilewsky : catalogue raisonné précédé d'un essai sur les arts industriels du 1er au XVIe siècle*.

See also the exhibition catalogue *l'Ermitage de Basilewski*, Milan, 2013. (873 F 27).

³⁸ F. Scholten and J. de Hond, 'The elk antler from the funerary chapel of Louis the Pious in Metz', in *Burlington Magazine*, vol. CLV, no. 1323, June 2013, pp. 372-380.

³⁹ Kieslinger I, op. cit. p. 80.

⁴⁰ H. Reinhardt, 'Het borstbeeld van de Heilige Thekla', in *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum*, Vol. 6 nr 1 (1958) pp.10-16.



1. *Prince Alexander Petrovich Basilevsky among his collection*, by V.P. Veretshchagin. 1870. Watercolour, 57 by 77.5 cm. (State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg; inv. no.45878).

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Fig 1. V.P. Veretshchagin, *Prince Alexander Petrovich Basilevsky among his collection*, 1870. Watercolour, 57 x 77.5 cm. State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg. Inv. nr 45878. We see the Elk's antler on the right, and a reliquary bust on the floor to the left. The palace was on the avenue formerly known as 'Avenue Roy de Rome', by Rue Pauquet.

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3. From the Great Gatchina Palace, which was the Czar's favourite family residence: four bird-shaped Meissen figurines, including two *Seagulls* (BK-17499-A+B) and two *Eurasian Bitterns* (*Botaurus stellaris*), (BK-17498-A+B). Lost in the 1940 London Blitz were these additional items: a pair of 'early Dresden' (= Meissen) *Parrots* on trees plus another Meissen pair of *Bitterns*.⁴¹

⁴¹ Nationaal Archief, 2.08.42, 430, letter dated 8 August 1939 from Chenue, London to Ms Mannheimer.

4. From the Kremlin fortress in Moscow. For Mannheimer it was the source of nine objects, mostly 16th Century, some of them silver.⁴² The Rijksmuseum has these objects: an extravagant *Nautilus* (BK-1958-44); a *Beer Jug* in silver, partly gilt (BK-17003); *Glass Beaker*, framed in silver (BK-17134); a *Festive Dish* (in German: *Prunkschale*) in crystal, on a foot (BK-17132); furthermore a *Goblet with Lid* (BK-17128); a *Flagon* in crystal on a low foot (BK-17120).

Lost in the 1940 London Blitz, was a large golden *Tankard* by Jamnitzer; a *Serving Dish* (*'Deckelpokal'*) with a tree trunk and a nude young boy, made by Ludwig Krug in Nurnberg.⁴³ The Rijksmuseum does however own the most famous object by Jamnitzer, bought from Rothschild in Frankfurt.

5. Antoniev Monastery / St Anthony Convent in Novgorod.

For Mannheimer it was the source of a *Gospel Book* front cover, Christ crucified, between Mary and John (BK-17204). The Nazi inventory however lists *two* books and a fancy *Pyx* in the shape of a dove (a pyx is used by the Roman Catholic Church, usually a simple small round container to carry the Holy Host communion wafer). This one is not identical to the before-mentioned one (BK-17205).

6. Stieglitz museum, now Applied Art Museum, St Petersburg was the source of three *Tobacco Rubbing Graters* in boxwood, used for grating snuff tobacco.⁴⁴ (BK-16993; BK-16994; BK-16995).

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Annex 1: Art traders active in buying soviet art objects

⁴² Heuß 2000, p. 206 writes; "... A total of nine objects, mostly from the 16th Century, came in his possession. Among them a Nautilus shell///bowl in the form of an ostrich made of gilded silver, manufactured in 1600 by the Breslauer artist J. Hiller, as well as a gold-plated silver 'berger' of the Nuremberg goldsmith Martin Rehlein dating from the second half of the 16th Century." In German: "...insgesamt neun Objekte, meist aus dem 16. Jahrhundert, in seinen Besitz über. Darunter befanden sich eine Nautiluschale in form eines Straußes aus vergoldetem Silber, die der Breslauer Künstler J. Hiller um 1600 gefertigt hatte, ebenso ein vergoldeter Silberberger des Nürnberger Goldschmieds Martin Rehlein aus der zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts." Source in note 18: Bundesarchiv Koblenz, B. 323/41-42.

When googling V&A + Rehlein for the 'South Kensington' cup, this is considered to be Rehlein's masterpiece.

⁴³ Nationaal Archief, 2.08.42, 430, letter dated 8 August 1939 from Chenue, London to Ms Mannheimer.

⁴⁴ In German: *Tabak-Reiben*.

Mentioned above were the art firms Van Diemen, Matthiesen and Colnaghi.

Another art trader active in Russia was Stepan M. Mussuri who obtained the right in 1929 to buy objects (with the exception of museum quality treasures) from private clients, whom he paid well and on the spot.⁴⁵

On behalf of the Nazis, the main buyers in Russia were the French trader Etienne Nicolas and the chief buyer for the planned Linz Führermuseum project, Karl Haberstock. It is clear that Mannheimer, being anti-Nazi, kept his distance.

From 1928 on huge sales were organized in the west, bypassing the main foreign intermediaries listed above. Flooding of western markets with Russian treasure caused a dramatic drop in prices and the volume was therefore cranked up. In 1928 the Hermitage yielded 859 works of art and the next year 17.335 works of art.⁴⁶ Part of these may have come from outside sources and were processed by Hermitage staff. In a sly way the Hermitage staff selected second-rate and third-rate objects originally from the Hermitage, leaving their excellent works of art untouched. The hasty selection process often took just 20-30 seconds per item shown. In a backlash, buyers in the West protested at the low quality of the works of art offered. They wanted masterworks.⁴⁷ Those museum staff members in Russia failing to cooperate were arrested and punished.

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R.C. Williams, *Russian Art and American Money, 1900-40*, Harvard University Press, 1980

⁴⁵ Solomacha, p. 103.

⁴⁶ Solomacha, p. 51.

⁴⁷ Solomacha, p. 52.