

Strand 2. Art Nouveau and Politics in the Dawn of Globalisation

Batik – How Emancipation of Dutch Housewives in the Dutch East Indies and “Back Home” Influenced *Art Nouveau Design in Europe*

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Abstract

Dutch women in the Dutch East Indies were the first to industrialize Batik production. They loved batik fabrics, had access to technical know-how and to money. Bored with their needle point and cross stitch, they learned to produce batik (a technique of wax-resist dyeing applied to cloth) and designed prints reminiscent of ‘home’. Their ‘Batik Belanda’ was produced on a larger scale and exported to The Netherlands. From 1890, the technique was picked up by Dutch decorative artists like Lion Cachet, Dijsselhof and Thorn Prikker. After 1900, Lebeau became the most prominent Batik artist. Also Belgian artists got interested in Batik technique. Van de Velde was the first foreign artist who was inspired by the Batiks he saw in The Netherlands. Though he probably made little or no Batiks himself, he taught the technique at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Weimar. The Dutch introduced Batik to the rest of the world at the 1900 Exhibition Universelle in Paris.

Keywords: Batik, Batik Belanda, Dutch East Indies, Textile, Lion Cachet, Art Nouveau, Emancipation, Nieuwe Kunst, Parchment, Lebeau

Life in the Dutch East Indies

In 1596 the first Dutch expedition arrived at the East Indies to access spices directly from Asia. When a 400% profit was made on its return, other Dutch expeditions soon followed. Recognizing the potential of the East Indies trade, the Dutch government merged the competing companies into the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie or VOC).¹

Between 1602 and 1799 the VOC represented Dutch power in the East Indies. Personnel were mostly men, who kept female slaves and concubines. Sometimes, these situations developed into a marriage. Then, the woman's freedom had to be bought and she had to be baptized and given a Christian name. The VOC prohibited that these men who were married to native women (and started families) returned to the Netherlands. After the demise of the company and the establishment of direct rule by the Kingdom of The Netherlands, such interracial relationships continued and a Eurasian society emerged. Sons of Eurasian families were often sent to The Netherlands to study (like Jan Toorop) and tended to remain there. Daughters stayed in the colonies and often married high-ranking VOC officers, giving rise to the Eurasian elite.²

For a brief period, from 1811, the British gained control over the East Indies, until Dutch control was restored in 1816.³ In 1817 Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles (1781-1826), who had been Lieutenant-Governor of Java during the short British rule, published the standard work 'History of Java'. In this book Batik is mentioned for the first time in Europe.⁴

When in 1869 the Suez-canal was opened, traveling from The Netherlands to the Dutch East Indies became a lot less dangerous as the journey was shortened from 6-9 months to 4-6 weeks. Women could now accompany their men to the East Indies and the Dutch population in the colony doubled in only a few years time. At that time, it was customary for European women to wear heavy hoop skirts that were tight at the waist; a fashion that quickly turned out to be unsuitable for the climate in the Dutch East Indies. Dutch women soon learned to

¹ < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_East_Indies > Consulted on 09/05/2018

² Frans LEIDELMEIJER: "Crossing Cultures: The Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies", in *Modern Dutch Design*, The Wolfsonian – Florida International University (Miami Beach), 2016, p. 38-51: 40-41.

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Fendall_Jr. > Consulted 10/05/2018.

⁴ < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_History_of_Java > Consulted on 09/05/2018.

dress like Indonesian women; in sarong and kabaja (length of fabric wrapped around the waist and a white blouse). Inside the home, wearing a sarong kabaja became common. However, on formal occasions they still preferred Western heavy skirts with narrowed waistlines.⁵

Fig. 1

The indigenous motifs and colours of traditional sarongs were too gloomy for the Dutch ladies though. They preferred fresh, clear colours and Western motifs like flowers, birds and butterflies. So the Dutch ladies commissioned batik ateliers to prepare sarongs with ‘Western’ colours and motifs reminiscent of ‘home’.⁶ When the Javanese batik ateliers did not anticipate quickly enough to the fast growing demand for batiks with more Western motifs, women who first ordered sarongs at Javanese ateliers started to produce their own. First these Dutch and Eurasian ladies were apprenticed to Javanese crafts women to learn the craft of batik. But slowly these ‘hobbies’ grew into small batik ateliers. Run by Dutch/Eurasian women but relying on Javanese batik artisans. This is how Batik Belanda (Dutch Batik) emerged: a mix of traditional batik technique and Western colors and motifs, adapted to the taste of a new target group.

There was one more reason why so many new ateliers run by Dutch women emerged: boredom.⁷ Dutch and Eurasian women were not allowed to work and looked for hobbies other than cross stitch and needle point. As they were allowed to work from home on behalf of their husbands, a batik atelier was a suitable solution. Besides that, it offered widows some financial security.

The Dutch and Eurasian ladies had the advantage of speaking both languages, knowing their way around in both societies and they had access to the finances to start a workshop. They combined their knowledge of European taste with the Javanese craftsmanship of the batik artisans and gave the batik industry an enormous boost in the period between 1880 and 1940.⁸ In order not to lose their Javanese artisans to other batik ateliers, high allowance were often paid to a batik worker on top of her first wage. This amount had to be paid back when the

⁵ < <https://www.modemuze.nl/blog/batik-belanda> > Consulted on 09/05/2018.

⁶ < <http://asaloesoel.igv.nl/johanna-christina-caspersz-geboren-burgemeestre/> > Consulted on 10-5-2018.

⁷ < <https://www.modemuze.nl/blog/batik-belanda> > Consulted on 09/05/2018.

⁸ < <https://www.indisch3.nl/2012/07/11/design-in-batik-museum-nusantara/> > Consulted on 10-5-2018.

woman wanted to stop or transfer to another atelier. Materials were usually supplied by Arab and Chinese traders.

Batik Belanda

In 1840, Carolina Josephina von Franquemont (1819-1867) was the first Eurasian woman to start a batik atelier (Batik Prankemon). She designed Javanese as well as European batiks and is considered by many to be the 'mother of Batik Belanda'.

Traditional Javanese batiks are made with the natural colours *soga* brown and indigo blue; the motifs origin from India and are often geometrical. Batiks from the Northern coast of Java are famous for their *mengkudu* red colour. In this area, most batik ateliers were run by Indo-Chinese ladies whose sarongs had a different layout than the original Javanese ones. Batik Belanda usually followed that Indo-Chinese lay-out of the sarongs from Northern Java. Contrary to traditional Javanese batiks, less geometric motifs were used and new motifs and colours were introduced. Carolina von Franquemont was not only inspired by Dutch fashion magazines that arrived by boat; she also got inspiration from flower arrangements. Her new motifs included flowers, bouquets, flower baskets, birds, butterflies, insects and other animals. At first these new motifs were combined with Javanese geometrical patterns, but later on her Batik Belanda displayed *only* Western motifs. Von Franquemont's designs were soon followed by other ateliers. The most famous designs she introduced with Batik Belanda were those of the fairytales Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella and Little Red Riding Hood; tales, unknown until then in the East-Indies.

New colours introduced with Batik Belanda were red, light blue, green, yellow and orange. First, these new colours were used in combination with traditional colours. Later, those traditional colours gradually disappeared from Batik Belanda. The same happened with the traditional geometric motifs.

During the heydays of Batik Belanda, dozens of ateliers emerged of which a few became really famous throughout the whole archipelago. Well-known names were Catharina Carolina van Oosterom (1811-1878, Batik Panastroman), Lien Metzelaar (ca. 1855-1930)⁹ and Eliza

⁹ Rudolf G. SMEND & Donald HARPER, *Batik, traditional textiles of Indonesia: from the Rudolf Smend & Donald Harper*

Charlotte van Zuylen (1863-1946, Batik Pansellen). A.J.F. Jans (ca. 1850 - ca. 1920)¹⁰ is the only well-known lady with a Batik Belanda compound of which both parents were Dutch.¹¹ Besides sarongs, Jans designed folding screens, tablecloths and cushion covers for the colonial household, which would also find their way to consumers in The Netherlands.

Catharina van Oosterom was famous for her blue-green and yellow-brown colours that were very hard to reproduce. She kept her colour recipes a secret. Eliza van Zuylen was famous for her motifs and they were copied quite a lot by other ateliers. To protect her business, she started signing her sarongs. When Jugendstil was 'en vogue' between 1890 and 1910, Van Zuylen created sarongs with Jugendstil designs as well. Her inspiration came from Dutch fashion magazines, postcards, poetry- album pictures, wallpaper and printed fabrics she received from The Netherlands.¹² Van Zuylen's modern designs were immediately popular.

It was quite difficult to set up a batik workshop without the help of third parties. Mrs. Franquemont received her materials (cotton, wax, wax-pens (cantings) and colouring-agents) from Arabic and Chinese traders who supplied the traditional workshops as well. In exchange, these traders got to buy her batiks once they were finished at special prices, of which the costs for the materials were already deducted. The batiks would then be sold in big cities, such as Semarang, Yogyakarta and Batavia. But they were exported to Singapore and The Netherlands as well.¹³

Batiks also ended up in The Netherlands when Dutch families returned after a few years in the Dutch East-Indies, or when they were sent as a gift to relatives 'back home'. But most importantly, they were collected by people who truly appreciated them for their esthetic qualities. Some Dutch ladies who stayed in the Dutch East Indies at the end of the nineteenth century, spent large amounts of money on batik of superior quality. They considered these pieces of cloth to be valuable collector's items to be handed down from mother to daughter.¹⁴

¹⁰ Rudolf G. SMEND & Donald HARPER, *Batik...*, p. 14.

¹¹ Louise RAHARDJO: "Batik Belanda, Vrouwen aan het hoofd in Nederlands-Indië", *Kostuum*, 2013, p. 38-53.

¹² M.J. de RAADT-APELL, *De batikkerij Van Zuylen te Pekalongan*, Zutphen, Uitgeverij Terra, 1980, p. 35.

¹³ Louise RAHARDJO: "Batik...", *Kostuum*, 2013, p. 38-53: 41

¹⁴ Mechteld de BOIS (ed.): *C.A. Lion Cachet 1864-1945* (exhibition catalogue, Drents Museum Assen and Museum Boymans-14 van Beuningen Rotterdam, 1994, Museum, Assen, 1994, p. 29.

Original vs imitation Batiks

In the mean time, the colony had become the most important export market for the Dutch cotton industry. As the cotton industry was one of the pillars of the Kings plans for modernizing Dutch industry and trade, this sector was industrialized with priority. Printing techniques developed steadily with the increasing knowledge of chemistry, which was extremely important to cotton printers. Besides dyed and printed fabrics, the Dutch also exported excellent quality white cotton to the Dutch East Indies.

During the brief period that Java was in British hands (between 1811 and 1816), it was the Englishman Thomas Stamford Raffles who had come up with the idea of printing ‘native’ batik patterns on machine-woven cloth to be exported and sold in Java. Even when shipping was figured into the cost, the efficiency of modern printing techniques made it economical to produce and export these fabrics.¹⁵ The English also exported a high-quality, tightly woven white cloth. This soon replaced Javanese handwoven textiles. The smoother, mill-made textiles from Europe made drawing more detailed designs in wax possible, and the motifs began to change accordingly.

After the Dutch had reclaimed power over Java, they followed the English example and continued the exporting of printed imitation batik to Java. At first, they used cotton from the United States. But as the American Civil War prohibited this in the 1860s, the modernization of cotton production in the Netherlands was forced to accelerate. Halfway through the century, a large part of the imitation batiks destined for the Indies, as well as ‘common’ fabrics for domestic use, could be produced entirely by steam-powered printing machines. The main textile printers in the Netherlands making imitation batiks for export to Java were: Prévinaire and Thomas Wilson (bought by Prévinaire in 1870, and after 1875 called Haarlemse Katoen Maatschappij) in Haarlem, De Heijder in Leiden, Kralingsche Katoenmaatschappij near Rotterdam and Van Vlissingen & Co (later called Vlisco) in Helmond.

¹⁵ Mienke Simon THOMAS: “Modern Industry, Modern Ornament”, in *Modern Dutch Design*, The Wolfsonian – Florida

Exporting printed fabric to the Indies was a complicated matter though, as the market was not driven by changing fashions, but rather by all sorts of different regional, social and ethical traditions. With this in mind, the first scientific study of batiks was executed by S.C.I.W. van Musschenbroek (1827- 1883), a civil servant in the Dutch East-Indies. In his book 'Iets over de Inlandsche wijze van katoen- verven (roodverven, bruinverven, blauwverven enz.) op Midden-Java, en over de daarbij gebruikte grondstoffen' he described the technique extensively, stressing the quality of the native colouring agents.¹⁶ Van Musschenbroek donated a large number of samples from his study to the Colonial Museum in Haarlem which had opened to the public in 1871.¹⁷ Interesting to note is, that these 86 patterns form the oldest methodical collection in The Netherlands, and were most likely collected for Van Musschenbroek between 1864 and 1866 by the Eurasian lady Mrs. van Vuurden-Winter.¹⁸

Collectors, Museums and Exhibitions

Another early and important collector was Elie van Rijckvorsel (1845-1928) from Rotterdam, who made a voyage to the Dutch East Indies for study purposes between 1873 and 1878. When Van Rijckvorsel came home with a large collection of weapons, clothing and valuable textiles and batiks, he exhibited everything on the upperfloor of the Yachtclub building at Willemskade (where the Ethnographic Museum of Rotterdam would be founded in 1883). From this first exhibited collection, around 1880, a 'Memorandum of Dutch East Indian weapons, clothes, etc.' was published, most likely compiled by Van Rijckvorsel himself, although the name of the author is not mentioned in the publication.¹⁹ In 1883, his collection of batiks, brought together purely out of interest and admiration, formed the core of the East Indies Textiles Collection that was presented at the International Colonial and Export Exhibition in Amsterdam. Subsequently, his collection was donated to the Ethnographic

¹⁶ S.C.I.W. van MUSSCHENBROEK, *Iets over de Inlandsche wijze van katoen-verven (roodverven, bruinverven, blauwverven enz.) op Midden-Java, en over de daarbij gebruikte grondstoffen*, Leiden, E.J. Brill 1877.

¹⁷ Mienke Simon THOMAS: "Modern ...", 60.

¹⁸ Gerret P. ROUFFAER: "Over Indische Batik-kunst, vooral die op Java", *Bulletin van het Koloniaal Museum te Haarlem*, 23, 1900, p. 1-51: 26.

¹⁹ < https://maken.wikiwijs.nl/46710#!page_679271 > Consulted 11/05/2018.

Museum in Rotterdam²⁰ where in 1902 a special exhibition was organized for which Gerret Pieter Rouffaer (1860-1928) made the catalog.²¹

The third important collector was Daniël David Veth (1850-1885). Veth gathered a large number of objects in the Dutch East Indies (between 1877 and 1879) for the 1883 International Colonial and Export Exhibition in Amsterdam. He was responsible for arranging and cataloguing the Dutch colonial pavilion. On one wall he draped Batik sarongs and slings for visitors to admire.²² The exhibition was a great success and served as a model for colonial sections of the international exhibitions that would follow in Brussels and Paris. After the exhibition closed, the batik fabrics were divided among the ethnographic museums in the Netherlands.²³ 23

The oldest Ethnographic museum in the Netherlands was founded in Leiden in 1837. After the museum received a large donation of batik samples from Dr. Groneman in 1907, G.P. Rouffaer & H.H. Juynboll (director of the museum) published the standard work 'De Batik-kunst in Nederlandsch-Indië en haar Geschiedenis' (Batik-Art in the Dutch East-Indies and its History) in 1914.

In 1838, the Amsterdam Zoo and Ethnographic Museum were founded by the Royal Zoological Society 'Natura Artis Magistra' (NAM). The Society focused on science in general and on a presentation of the Dutch colonial territories in particular. Therefore, not only live exotic animals were collected, but also many other zoological materials (skeletons and preparations), minerals and ethnographic objects. Its collection was gathered by individuals, including government officials from the Dutch colonies, missionaries, agents and travelers, but also by companies and scientific societies. There were artifacts made by indigenous populations as well as models of Dutch factories at Java.²⁴

And in 1864, a Colonial Museum was founded by Frederik Willem van Eeden (1829-1901), secretary of the Dutch Society for the Promotion of Industry (Nederlandsche Maatschappij ter

²⁰ Mienke Simon THOMAS: "Modern...", 62.

²¹ L.J. PIETERS: "Dr Elie van Rijckevorsel, 1845-1928, patriciër en meteoroloog", *Rotterdams Jaarboekje*, 9de reeks, 2de jaargang, 1984, p. 287-309: 296.

²² P.C. MOLHUYSEN, P.J. BLOK, L. KNAPPERT (red.): *Nieuwe Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek - vijfde deel*, Leiden, Sijthoff, 1921, p. 1016.

²³ Frans LEIDELMEIJER: "Crossing..." 43-44.

²⁴ < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnographic_Museum_Artis > Consulted 11/05/2018.

bevoording van Nijverheid). The Society had decided that a collection should be started for a museum about the Dutch overseas territories and Van Eeden was asked to do so. A collection, part of which is still in the museum's stockrooms, was started in the attic of his home in Haarlem. When Van Eeden spread the news of his search, many Dutch families donated their collections of objects from the Dutch East Indies to Van Eeden. And it was not long before a building was required to house all those objects.

The ground floor of 'Paviljoen Welgelegen' in Haarlem was used for this purpose. Here, in 1871, the world's first Colonial Museum opened its doors.²⁵

All these nineteenth-century ethnographic museums set out to give an impression of the socio-cultural situation of traditional societies in the Dutch East Indies, of the economic possibilities and administrative problems there, or (as in Haarlem) of the possibilities for exploitation of the products and natural resources. Within this a 'canon' developed in relation to the Indonesian arts and crafts, focusing on wickerwork, batik, copper work, wood carving and goldsmith's work. In line with the Arts and Crafts Movement, this applied artistry was increasingly placed in an artistic-aesthetic framework.

In addition to the museums, the colonial and trade exhibitions that were organized turned out to be important centers of artistic interaction. At these exhibitions Dutch and East-Indian products would be displayed next to each other and examined for usage as well as aesthetic value. Batik was first introduced in Arnhem, in 1879, at the National and Colonial Industrial Exhibition. The next major exhibit, the International Colonial and Export Exhibition, took place in Amsterdam, in 1883. But maybe most important in regards to batik was the 1898 National Exhibition of Womens Labor in The Hague. During this exhibition a lot of batik was sold and that success led to the founding of the East and West Society and its boutique 'Boeatan'. Batik was explicitly presented as a product by and for women: catalogues argued that authentic batik (made with a canting) in Java was exclusively practiced by women and Dutch women in particular were addressed as critical consumers. On the other hand, East and West warned against bad taste and imitation. Batik Belanda was labeled 'corrupted' batik. Driven by commercial motives, these entrepreneurs would produce anything consumers

²⁵ < <https://www.tropenmuseum.nl/en/themes/history-tropenmuseum> > Consulted 11/05/2018.

wanted. Criticism of the Eurasian producers of Batik Belanda sometimes had a racist undertone.²⁶

Batik was also presented at colonial pavilions at the world exhibitions in Paris (1889), Chicago (1893), Paris (1900) and Brussels (1910). The Dutch display at the world exhibition in Paris (1900) showed the results of the Dutch New Art in which the influence of art from the colony was omnipresent.

Fig. 2

Appreciation for the achievements of the Industrial Revolution turned to aversion In 1851, the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations at London's Crystal Palace was initiated by Prince Albert as a celebration of modern industrial technology and design. Goal of the exhibition was, to show advancement and modernity. But in reality, the Royal Commission of the Great Exhibition and Prince Albert strongly condemned the fact that all exhibiting countries still historicized. Prince Albert called for measures to get education in design and (educational) collections for museums off the ground.

And where those measures were implemented in the UK immediately, it took until 1877 before something changed in The Netherlands. The International Exhibition of Applied Art took place at the Palace of Folk Industry. The exhibited 'new style' however, could still not stand the test of criticism and was described as 'sad' in the jury reports. A turning point in terms of quality and the growth of a National identity was still not visible. But a positive result of the jury's conclusions was that the government finally understood the need for setting up drawing and arts schools.²⁷

In 1896, Jan Hessels de Groot and his sister Jacoba published a manual 'Driehoeken bij ontwerpen van ornament voor zelfstudie en voor scholen' (Triangles in Ornamental Design for Self-Study and for Schools) that became very influential. The manual was inspired by the theosophical conviction that the cosmos is founded on geometric principles. Schools for

²⁶ Berteke WAALDIJK & Susan LEGÊNE: "Vernieuwing van de beeldende kunsten in een koloniale context", in Rosemarie BUIKEMA, Maaïke MEIJER: *Cultuur en migratie in Nederland. Kunsten in beweging 1900-1980*, Den Haag, Sdu Uitgevers, 2003, p. 19-37: 19.

²⁷ C. PEETERS: "bookreview of T.M. Eliëns: Kunst, nijverheid, kunstnijverheid. De nationale nijverheidstentoon-stellingen als spiegel van de Nederlandse kunstnijverheid in de negentiende eeuw." *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review*, 110 (4), 1995, p. 599-601.

applied arts would provide a basic training in the analysis of nature, stylized and symmetrically reduced to basic 2D forms.²⁸

During that same period, more interesting developments took place that would eventually lead to the New Art of 1900. In England, the Arts and Crafts movement of William Morris (1834-1896) and Walter Crane (1845-1915) arose as a rebellion against cheap and ugly mass-produced items that were a result of the industrial revolution. The movement developed first and most fully in the British Isles, as the industrial revolution started there, but it later also spread to the rest of Europe and North America. According to William Morris, the world of simplicity, beauty and craftsmanship was destroyed by industrialization and mechanization. In 1892, Walter Crane published 'The Claim of Decorative Art' in which he argued that “we must turn our artists into craftsmen, and our craftsmen into artists.”²⁹ When Crane’s book was translated in Dutch by Jan Veth in 1894, Dutch artists and craftsmen also began to oppose the outcome of the industrial revolution; the initial excitement about machine-made products was waning. This trend resulted in the appreciation and revival of handmade objects. Some artist even interpreted the ideal of the Arts and Crafts movement, that every national culture should develop its own national style, saying the crafts from the Dutch East-Indies should form one of the constituent elements of what would become the Dutch national style.³⁰

As a consequence, the admiration modern (textile) factories had enjoyed for decades, turned into aversion. One of the critics of machine-printed imitation batiks was F.W. van Eeden, the founder of the Colonial Museum. In 1879 he also became the director of the very first Museum of Industrial Arts in The Netherlands. Van Eeden had followed the art industries in England for twenty years and most of its important critics as well. He was the first to introduce Javanese Batik as a full-fledged art product, worthy of being collected. He was also the one who asked the rhetorical question “who should be called the barbarians?” referring to original artistic batik vs our machine printed imitations.

²⁸ Silvia BARISIONE: “Modern Dutch Design: Currents and Tensions”, in *Modern Dutch Design*, The Wolfsonian – Florida International University (Miami Beach), 2016, p. 7-23: 9.

²⁹ Walter CRANE, *The Claims of Decorative Art*, London, Lawrence & Bullen, 1892, p. 187.

³⁰ Berteke WAALDIJK & Susan LEGÈNE: “Vernieuwing...”, 21.

Hoping that Dutch crafts could learn from the Javanese batik industry, Van Eeden made the laboratory of his museum available for wax and color experiments.³¹

The Javanese people also began to turn away from the Dutch imitation batik, as they had developed a process to work much faster, with so-called ‘tjaps’ (block printing the wax on the fabric). Their preference for Dutch white cotton as a basis remained, so in the end the Dutch still made a lot of money of the local East Indies production of batik.³²

In 1899, the liberal Dutch lawyer Van Deventer published an essay which claimed that the Colonial Government had a moral responsibility to return the wealth that the Dutch had received from the East-Indies to the indigenous population. The Netherlands owed the people of the East-Indies a ‘debt of honour’. In 1901, the Queen formally declared a benevolent ‘Ethical Policy’ which was aimed at bringing progress and prosperity to the peoples of the Dutch East-Indies. The Ethical Policy promoted efforts to improve the fate of ordinary people through irrigation programs, the introduction of banking services for the native population, and subsidies for native industries and handicrafts. And thus, the appreciation of Javanese batiks became part of the Ethical Policy.

Art Nouveau Batiks in The Netherlands and beyond

It is a well-known story that in 1891, teacher Bernard Willem (Ben) Wierink (1856-1939) went to the Amsterdam Zoo with a group of students, to draw animals. Because Wierink greatly admired non- western art, the class visited the ethnographic museum at the zoo as well. And this is where one of his students, Carel Adolph Lion Cachet (1864-1945) was captured by the art of batik. Wierink explained to his students how batik was produced and even told them how the wax would have to be prepared. At home, Lion Cachet immediately started experimenting on his bed sheets. He was the first Dutch artist to adopt the batik technique, though he applied the technique to create Art

Nouveau designs rather than Javanese designs. After 1906, Lion Cachet’s focus moved to designing interiors for Dutch passenger ships in Art Nouveau style.³³

³¹ Berteke WAALDIJK & Susan LEGÊNE: “Vernieuwing...”, 19.

³² Mechteld de BOIS (ed.): *C.A. Lion Cachet...*, p. 29.

³³ < <http://www.kunstbus.nl/design/carel+lion-cachet.html> > Consulted on 27/05/2018.

The batik experiments of Dutch artists like Lion Cachet would have been far more difficult to pursue without the help of the previously mentioned textile printing factories, which offered active support.

This support ranged from large indigo dying containers of the Haarlem printer that Lion Cachet and Dijsselhof were allowed to use for their wall coverings, to making the hard-to-obtain raw material sulfolene available for producing Turkish red dye, to providing access - at the Colonial Museum – to test results the factories themselves had collected. From 1895, Lion Cachet started to experiment with batik on parchment, as this was something he could do at his own atelier.

Artists were not very familiar with problems of chemistry, and the lack of proper dyes was at first a great obstacle to the spreading of batik in The Netherlands. Help came from the manager of the Division of Chemistry of the Colonial Museum in Haarlem, who was in the position to solve the problem of developing non-fading dyes.³⁴

As a supporter of the ideas of William Morris and Walter Crane, Gerrit Willem Dijsselhof (1866-1924) dedicated himself to honest craftsmanship. He followed his friend Lion Cachet, and started to batik large pieces of linen in 1892 that would serve as wall coverings. A fine example is the so-called Dijsselhof Room which was originally designed for the home of Dr. Willem van Hoorn. Dijsselhof worked on this project for several years together with needle artist Maria Wilhelmina Verena (Willy) Keuchenius (1865-1960), who was born in Modjokerto. Their collaboration must have felt very rewarding as they got married in 1898. Yet, even though she must have contributed a great deal to the project, she never received much credit for her work.

Fig. 3

In 1897 Art Dealer E.J. van Wisselingh & Co. set up atelier workshops in Amsterdam for Lion Cachet, Dijsselhof and Theo Nieuwenhuis (1866-1951), who had picked-up the wax

³⁴ Theo NEUHUYS: “The Batik”, *Keramic Studio*, May 1907, p. 20-24: 21.

resist technique in 1893. Together with bookseller Scheltema & Holkema they produced luxury books, portfolio stands and bookcases for wealthy Dutch clients.³⁵

That same year, painter Johan Thorn Prikker (1868-1932) started experimenting with batik as he could not live off his paintings alone. He did not work in the traditional way with a canting, but with a brush, which allowed him to work faster. Prikker sold batik tablecloths, cushions, tea cozies and curtains through the Arts & Crafts Gallery, the first establishment in The Netherlands to sell applied as well as visual arts. His friend Jan Toorop (1858-1928) had introduced him to the Belgian art group Les XX back in 1890 and this is where he must have met Henry van de Velde (1863-1957) with whom he has collaborated a great deal.

Van de Velde was keen on batik design and the use of industrial batik was wide-spread in his family. His wife and daughters can be seen on numerous photos wearing batik dresses, and also the interiors he designed for Hohenhof and for the Chemnitz Tennis Club, were decorated with Dutch imitation batiks. As he recognized the artistic potential of imitation batik, he was able to introduce Javanese aesthetics into the everyday life of the social elite of Germany. At the same time he taught the traditional batik technique (hand drawn with a canting) at the Weimar Kunstgewerbeschule. According to Van de Velde, his most talented student at Weimar was Erica von Scheel. Following his recommendation, Von Scheel moved to Paris in 1909 to work for famous fashion designer Paul Poiret where she created a series of exclusive batik wear. Batik provided Van de Velde with the opportunity to create ‘pure form’ based on the strength of an abstract line, in response to the historical styles of the nineteenth century.³⁶

Christiaan (Chris) Lebeau (1878-1945) was introduced to batik by Lion Cachet, but only started to batik in the late 1890s. He developed the ‘Haarlem Technique’ after spending time at the laboratories of the Colonial Museum with H.A.J. Baanders (1876-1953). Baanders had been given the opportunity to spend 6 months doing batik tests, and distributed the results among interested artists via a brochure financed by the Netherlands Company for Promotion

³⁵ Marian Hester GROOT: “Another Perspective: Women in Dutch Decorative Art and Design”, in *Modern Dutch Design*, The Wolfsonian – Florida International University (Miami Beach), 2016, p. 25-37: 30.

³⁶ Maria WRONSKA-FRIEND: “Oriental Fascination: Henry van de Velde and Javanese Batik”, in Thomas FÖHL and Antje NEUMANN (Ed.): *Interior Design and Decorative Arts*, Klassik Stiftung Weimar, 2014, p. 369-395.

of Industry. The Haarlem technique was similar to the Javanese technique, but developed dye and wax resist formulas based on materials available in the Netherlands.³⁷ Lebeau was an adept of the theosophical beliefs and his mathematically designs in turn influenced Eliza van Zuylen, who designed her famous Batik Belanda for Dutch, Eurasian and Chinese ladies back in the Dutch East Indies.

In 1898, the earlier mentioned Arts and Crafts Gallery opened in The Hague and quickly became the premiere establishment of Dutch Art Nouveau decorative arts. The same year Agathe Wegerif- Gravestein (1867-1944), wife of the gallery's financial backer, established the Arts and Crafts batik workshop in the town of Apeldoorn. Wegerif often wore batik dresses, which provided her with a reputation for exoticism. Within two years over two dozen Dutch women were employed in her batik workshop and some of their products were exhibited in Paris at the 1900 Universal Exhibition, including textile furnishings for the Dutch pavilion.³⁸

Fig. 4

In May 1901, batik was introduced in The International Studio, with an article about the Arts and Crafts Gallery and 'its' batik workshop. In 1902, Wegerif's work was exhibited at the first International Exposition of Modern Decorative Arts in Turin. Though her batik work spread throughout Europe, and was praised by female critics, as one of the few female artists in the Art Nouveau movement her creations were taken less seriously by male critics. They frequently condemned her work as too expressive and lacking a rational, that is, Dutch, approach. In 'Bulletin van het Koloniaal Museum te Haarlem' of May 1900 Baanders actually accused Wegerif of being too commercial, her employees to lack the love for what they make and consequently their products to look cheap.³⁹

The last female artist worth mentioning is batik artist Bertha Bake (1880-1957) who took batik lessons with Lebeau in Haarlem from 1906. Her batik work is very close to the original Javanese method, in which the designs were applied to a loose fabric (not stretched on a

³⁷ Abby LILLETHUN: "Janesque Effects: Appropriation of Batik and Its Transformations in Modern Textiles", *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings*, 2004, p. 34-43.

³⁸ < <http://www.kunstbus.nl/design/carel+lion-cachet.html> > Consulted on 27/05/2018.

³⁹ Herman A.J. BAANDERS: "Over de Toepassing de Batik-kunst in Nederland", *Bulletin van het Koloniaal Museum te Haarlem*, 23, 1900, p. 52-62: 61.

frame) with a free hand. Bake reached a high degree of perfection because she concentrated exclusively on batik. Even though she designed, among other things, lampshades, bookbindings, room and fire screens, wall and chimney rugs, scarves, tea cosies and table runners, she was not a full-time artist. Bake was also a batik teacher.

One of the earliest opportunities for Americans to observe batik was in 1893, at the Chicago World's Fair. Yet the presence of Javanese batik artisans did not initiate the spread of batik practice in America. Instead, the first directions for batik that were picked up arrived in America in 1907, through Dutch batik artist Theo Neuhuys (1878-1921). Neuhuys, who began to batik under Lion Cachet and then worked with Chris Lebeau (1878-1945), authored a two-part article in *Keramic Studio*, a magazine edited and co-founded by Adelaide Alsop Robineau that served Arts and Crafts artisans and art educators. Neuhuys introduced the Haarlem Technique.

Two years after Neuhuys' articles, Charles E. Pellew's batik directions appeared in *The Craftsman*, published by Gustave Stickley, the acknowledged leader of the American Arts and Crafts movement. Pellew, an English-American chemist knowledgeable about dyes, taught dyeing and fabric decorating techniques including batik, at Teachers College, Columbia University, in Manhattan. He also exhibited his works with the National Association of Craftsmen. After completing their education at Teachers College, many women who studied textile design with Pellew then passed on their batik skills in teaching jobs across the nation.

Pieter Mijer immigrated from The Netherlands to America 1909. Exposure to batik in Java, the traditional center of batik art, and in Holland, the hub of Western batik interpretations, provided Mijer with a perfect mix of exotic authenticity and modern authority. Mijer advertised his batik skills in Arts and Crafts publications and participated in exhibitions. In 1919, Mijer published 'Batiks and How to Make Them', the most popular batik manual of the era. The foundation of popular batik practice established by Neuhuys, Pellew, and Priestman based in the Arts and Crafts infrastructure across the nation, served as a springboard for Mijer's role as the leading batik authority in America, which was critical in batik

developments in Greenwich Village and in the continued spread of batik in America after 1919.⁴⁰

Conclusion

In the Dutch East-Indies, women played a key-roll in spreading the love for batik art; both as makers and as collectors. And even though the first few artists experimenting with batik in The Netherlands were men, again women were responsible for propagating batik on a larger scale. Often, male critics maligned their work, or didn't even recognize it at all. But women were actually the ones setting-up workshops, organizing exhibitions, opening galleries and educating the next generation. Due to the mediating role of women both in the East-Indies as well as in Europe, batik eminently contributed to the Art Nouveau movement.

Another influence in the spreading of batik practice in America was the publication of a manual devoted entirely to batik by Dutch immigrant Mabel Tuke Priestman. Priestman wrote for *Artistic Homes* (1910) and advocated Arts and Crafts ideals for home decorating. In 1907, the same year that Neuhuys' batik instructions appeared, Priestman reviewed the work of Agethe Wegerif-Gravestein and her batik studio in Apeldoorn.

⁴⁰ Abby LILLETHUN: "Javanesque ...", 34-43.

Curriculum Vitae

Olga HARMSEN
Independent Scholar

- Modern Japanese Studies at the Erasmus University, Rotterdam (1989-1992)
- Worked more than 20 years in sales & marketing/communication for Japanese companies based in NL
- From 2012 studying Art Nouveau as Independent Scholar
- Started Blog About Art Nouveau. Main goal to create more awareness of Art Nouveau, and Dutch Art Nouveau in particular
- 2014: became Board Member of Historical Ass. Dordrecht
- 2015: publication in Art Deco Magazine 12, Publicatie Kunstconsult
- 2016: opened Maison l'Art Nouveau which specializes in Art Nouveau interior design. I help home owners to decorate their Art Nouveau house in style with imported wallpapers, rugs, tiles, fabrics etc.
- 2017: studied 'Art Nouveau & Jugendstil' at the 'Vrije Academie' (and discovered they were using my photos in their classes!)
- Since 2017 I give lectures about Art Nouveau
- Since 2017 guest-blogger about Art Nouveau at erfgoedvoordeel.nl
- 2017: launched educational App 'Art Nouveau walk in Dordrecht' to teach people the characteristics of Dutch Art Nouveau