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5年购藏重建伦勃朗“朋友圈”

特约撰稿 真真 北京报道

西方有着相对成熟的家族收藏体系,尤其在欧洲,很多家族的收藏历史达到百年以上。文艺复兴时期的美第奇家族、创建整个欧洲金融和银行现代化制度的罗斯柴尔德家族、卢浮宫最大的经纪人威尔逊斯坦家族等,数代人通过艺术赞助和购藏的方式,建立了一个庞大的收藏帝国,不仅收藏范围广泛,更多时候还保持着一定的神秘性。近期,高调登陆中国的17世纪荷兰黄金时代藏家托马斯·S·卡普兰为我们打开了收藏的另一扇窗。

2003年,美国矿业主卡普兰在伦敦买入一幅小号的椭圆形画作,几个月后,该画被正式认定为格里特·德奥所作。此后,卡普兰夫妇开始了17世纪荷兰黄金时代作品的购藏,短短五年时间,已经买入约250幅作品,成为目前拥有十七世纪荷兰艺术画作数量最多、最重要的私人收藏之一。

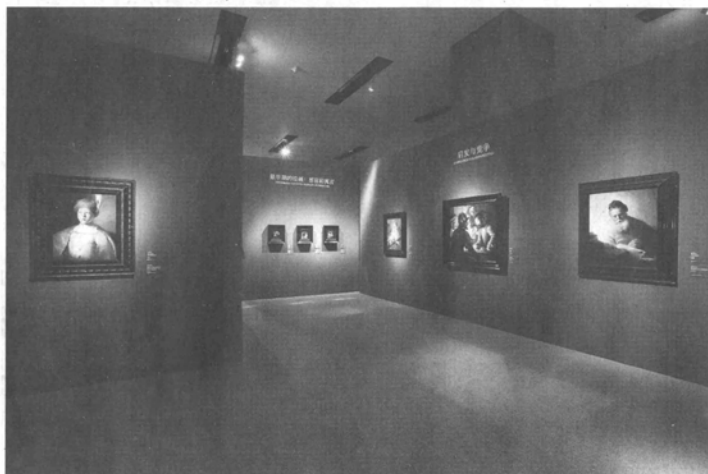
结束法国卢浮宫的巡展,6月17日,“伦勃朗和他的时代:美国莱顿收藏藏品展”在中国国家博物馆开幕,逾七十幅古典大师作品抵达北京,除了十余幅伦勃朗油画,还包括天才艺术家维米尔的一张作品。佳士得古典大师专家介绍,目前可在市面流通的维米尔作品仅有两张。

以艺术圣地之名

以家族的名字命名,似乎成为西方收藏的一种传统,而卡普兰将其收藏命名为“莱顿收藏”。莱顿位于阿姆斯特丹西南方向15公里处,伦勃朗诞生于此地,他的多名弟子也曾经在莱顿学习并创作,其中包括格里特·德奥——伦勃朗第一位,也是最具影响力的门生,他还是莱顿“精细绘画”学派的创立者。

此次带到国博的画作,从伦勃朗标志性的《书房中的女神密涅瓦》,到极富故事性的《身披金丝斗篷的女孩》,几乎涵盖了莱顿收藏的重要藏品。作为此次的一大亮点,维米尔的油画《坐在维金纳琴旁的少女》与目前收藏于卢浮宫的《织花边的少女》创作于同一帆布上,属于维米尔成熟风格作品。同时抵达北京的,还有伦勃朗在莱顿的同期好友扬·利文斯的四幅佳作,格里特·德奥的九幅重要级画作,与伦勃朗同时代最耀眼的艺术家之一扬·斯强的大幅经典杰作,肖像画大师弗朗斯·哈尔斯的珍贵铜板肖像画,以及《金翅雀》作者、伦勃朗的学生卡尔·法布里蒂乌斯目前仅存的两幅私人收藏的十三幅画作之一的《夏里与天使》。

莱顿收藏现任管理人劳拉·耶格尔专攻十七世纪荷兰和佛兰德艺术,她是此次莱顿收藏全球巡展北京站的策展人。劳拉将展览以黄金时代的三大主题进行划分:肖像画、历史画、风俗画,毫无疑问,展览以伦勃朗的作品打头阵。一面红色的墙上,挂着伦勃朗“感官的寓言”系列其中的三张作品。劳拉介绍,这个系列共有五张作品,此前发现了三张,



“伦勃朗和他的时代”展览现场。

图 中国国家博物馆

卡普兰2016年买人的《嗅觉的寓言》是第四张。

这张仅有二十厘米高的木板油画,还有一个颇具玩味的流通故事。2015年,这张作品在美国新泽西州一个匿名拍卖会上以650美元起拍,最初认定为由19世纪无名艺术家创作。巴黎一家画廊以100万美元竞得该画作,经过修复,却惊喜发现了伦勃朗的亲笔签名。随后,这幅画进入了莱顿收藏。

精准快的收藏方式

收藏,本应是几代人共同构建的事业。“中外收藏家最大的区别是文化层次不同,外国收藏的历史比较长,中国的中断过。”资深艺术顾问石建邦说。中国经历了文化断代后,家族收藏已经销声匿迹,而在国外,即便经历了两次战争,这项传统仍在延续。相对于“前辈”,收藏至今不过14年的卡普兰夫妇,则是年轻的主力军,他们一反“前辈”细水长流的收藏方式,通过精准的购藏,得以快速晋级顶级藏家行列。

“2003年至2008年的五年间,我们每周都会购入一张画作。”卡普兰说。在这五年近乎疯狂的购藏期内,有时卡普兰上午刚买了一幅画,下午又买一张。经纪人们一度怕他买得如此迅速,终有一天会反悔“买得太多”,可是这种情况至今没有发生。

相对于卡普兰大步流星式的收藏方式,传统家族收藏遵循的准则依然是小步慢走,外加神秘。

号称全球最神秘家族的罗斯柴尔

德家族也是17世纪荷兰艺术品的大藏家,2015年年底,该家族定价1.6亿欧元(约合11.4亿元人民币)出售两张伦勃朗的肖像画,面对这样的高价,荷兰国立博物馆与法国卢浮宫上演了惊天合作,两方筹款共同买下了作品,这两幅传说中的伦勃朗作品终于得以重见天日。至今也没有人说得清这个家族到底有多少财富,有哪些艺术作品。该家族从1830年起与世界各国的艺术家交往甚密,从此以它的众多收藏而享誉艺术界,并借此建立了极大威望,但是他们却很少公开自己的藏品。罗斯柴尔德家族有一条购藏的共识:“我们应该总是买最好的东西,而不要在意价格”,因为“最好的东西”只会增值。该家族对于黄金时代作品的钟爱,多半与资产配置有关。无界艺术创始人杨好主攻欧洲大师研究与鉴赏,她对于西方古典大师的作品颇有研究,“荷兰黄金时代的作品绝对保值。”

毫无疑问,黄金时代作品成为卡普兰夫妇的首选,既是源于儿时看到伦勃朗作品的悸动,也是出于“保值”的诱惑。通过六位专家和艺术顾问担任“寻宝猎人”,卡普兰夫妇已经收藏了五十余位荷兰黄金时代画家的作品,这些艺术家有着千丝万缕的联系,有的是师徒,有的是朋友。如果以伦勃朗为中心,通过这250件收藏,已经可以构建一个荷兰黄金时代关于伦勃朗的“朋友圈”。

专业化收藏

聘请专业的人做专业的事,这或

许是中外收藏方式中最大的不同。“中国收藏家不相信经纪人和中间人,购买行为大多依据个人的判断,当然其中也有‘倒爷’的心理作祟;老外有艺术顾问,支付给艺术顾问的佣金也是一个保障,如果买错了,顾问要负责的。这正是契约精神。”石建邦说。

卡普兰用两个词形容他和“寻宝猎人”之间的关系:忠诚和信任,这正是莱顿收藏得以迅速建立的重要原因。莱顿收藏有包括劳拉在内的四位员工,分别负责管理、登记、协调、文献编辑等工作。在随本次展览印刷的画册中,可以清晰看到莱顿收藏对于每件作品的分析及解读,尤其对于收藏界最为看重流传有序问题有着清晰的著录。

西方不乏收藏古典大师作品的藏家,但是大多数处于潜水状态,像卡普兰此次一样高调巡展的屈指可数。卡普兰解释:“希望让观众更好地了解艺术,我们的藏品需要分享。”自创立之初,莱顿收藏便创建了唯一一家可供借古典大师画作的“借展图书馆”,至今已向欧洲、美国和日本的主流博物馆匿名提供艺术作品借展支持多达170余次。卡普兰仅在纽约曼哈顿大道开设了一间专属展厅,大多数作品购藏直接借展至美术馆展出,很多作品连他本人也难得有机会一见。

此次通过全球巡展,莱顿收藏第一次作为一个整体概念在公众面前呈现。除了那些艺术佳作,卡普兰所建立的莱顿收藏模式似乎也可以为中国藏家提供一种不同的收藏方式。

“5 years to collect and recreate Rembrandt’s ‘Circle of Friends’”

In the West, collecting as a family has become quite sophisticated – especially in Europe, where a significant number of families have a history of collecting for hundreds of years. The Medicis during the Renaissance, the Rothschilds who created the entire modern financial and banking system in Europe, and the Wildensteins who were the largest dealer for Le Louvre Museum, have all built their respective collections through generations of art sponsorship and acquisition. Their collections are often characterized not only by their breadth, but also their secrecy. Recently, the high-profile arrival of 17th century Dutch Golden Age collectors, Thomas S. Kaplan and Daphne Recanati Kaplan, has introduced an entirely new model.

In 2003, Kaplan, an American mining investor, bought a small oval painting in London. A few months later, the piece was officially attributed to Gerrit Dou. Ever since, the Kaplans have been acquiring works by 17th century Dutch Golden Age artists. In just 5 years, they purchased over 250 paintings and rapidly became the largest and most important private collectors of 17th century Dutch painting masterpieces.

Shortly after the conclusion of The Leiden Collection’s debut at the Louvre, the show “Rembrandt and His Time: an Exhibition by the American Leiden Collection” was launched at the National Museum of China on 17 June. Some 70 of the classical masterpieces arrived in Beijing, including 11 works by Rembrandt and 1 piece by the genius Vermeer. According to a Christie’s classical paintings expert, there are only two works by Vermeer in private hands.

Named after a holy place of art

It is a tradition in the West to name a collection after one’s family name. Yet Thomas Kaplan named his collection The Leiden Collection. Leiden is a small town some 15 kilometers southwest of Amsterdam and the birthplace of Rembrandt. Many of his followers studied in Leiden, including Gerrit Dou – the first and most influential student of Rembrandt who is also the founder of the “Fijnschilders”.

From the iconic masterpiece *Minerva in Her study* to the storytelling *Young Girl in a Gold-Trimmed Cloak*, the paintings displayed in the National Museum of China include nearly all of the most important works from The Leiden Collection. Another highlight of the exhibition is *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* by Vermeer, which was painted on a piece of cloth from the same batch as *The Lacemaker* in the Louvre. These two paintings were produced during Vermeer’s later years. In addition, the Beijing show includes four masterpieces by Jan Lievens, who was Rembrandt’s friend in their Leiden studio; nine major works by Gerrit Dou; six paintings by Rembrandt’s most dazzling contemporary, Jan Steen; precious copper portraits by portrait master Frans Hals; and *Hagar and the Angel* by Rembrandt’s student Carel Fabritius, who also painted *The Goldfinch*. Out of 13 works by Fabritius, *Hagar and the Angel* is currently the only privately owned one.

Lara Yaeger-Crasselt, Curator of The Leiden Collection, specializes in 17th century Dutch and Flemish art. She is also the curator of the Beijing “stop” on The Leiden Collection’s international tour. Lara divided the show into three major themes of the Golden Age: portraits, historical paintings, and genre paintings. Understandably so, the exhibition begins with Rembrandt’s works. Three paintings from Rembrandt’s “Senses” series hang on the red wall. According to Lara, it is believed that there are a total of five pieces in this series (though one remains lost) and three belong to The Leiden Collection – among which is *Unconscious Patient (Allegory of Smell)*, bought by Kaplan in 2016.

The story behind this oil on panel, 20-centimeters painting is quite intriguing. In 2015, it was auctioned in New Jersey at a starting price of only 500 dollars and catalogued as “unknown artist from the 19th century”. A gallery in Paris won the bid for 1 million dollars. The painting was acquired by The Leiden Collection shortly thereafter. To their surprise, Rembrandt’s signature was discovered during the restoration process.

Steady, precise, and rapid collecting

Collections tend to be built over generations. “The biggest difference between Chinese and foreign collectors has to do with the very culture of collecting. There is a long history of collecting abroad, while in China it was interrupted,” said Shi Jian Bang, a senior art consultant. China experienced a cultural decline during which family collections disappeared, while in Western countries, despite two wars, the tradition endured. After only five years, the Kaplans had become a force in the collecting world. Unlike their more cautious predecessors, they built their collection in a steady, but also precise and rapid, fashion – which quickly placed them amongst the world’s leading collectors.

“During the five years between 2003 and 2008, we acquired on average one painting per week,” Kaplan shared. During these five “hectic” years, they would at times purchase one piece in the morning and one in the afternoon. Dealers grew concerned that they might one day regret such a spending spree, but they never did. Compared with the vigorous style of the Kaplans, traditional family collections tend to follow a much slower – and indeed secretive – path.

Known as the world’s most guarded family, the Rothschild family also happens to be a significant collector of seventeenth century Dutch art. At the end of 2015, the family priced two portraits by Rembrandt for sale at 160 million euros (about 1.14 billion yuan). Faced with such a high amount, the Rijksmuseum and the Louvre staged a stunning cooperation agreement, raising enough funds to buy both works. These legendary paintings were finally brought to light. To this day, it is unclear how wealthy the Rothschilds are and how many masterpieces they possess. Since 1830, the family has developed close relationships with artists from all over the world and developed numerous collections. However, such prestigious collections were rarely made accessible to the public. As a matter of policy, the Rothschild family “always buys the very best, irrespective of price” – the logic being that “the best” would only increase in value. The family’s interest in the Golden Age, therefore, mostly has to do with asset allocation.

Yang Hao, founder of the Boundless Art Collection, specializes in the appreciation for and research of paintings by European Old Masters. According to her, who has a deep knowledge of Western classical masters, “works from the Dutch Golden Age will never depreciate in value.”

Works from that particular artistic era were also the first choice of the Kaplans – both because of Thomas’ passion for them since a young age, and their ability to hold value over time. With the support of six experts and art consultants, the Kaplans have already assembled works from over fifty Dutch Golden Age artists. These artists are all connected in one way or another – whether as teachers, students, or friends. With Rembrandt at the center, these 250 pieces or so have somehow recreated the Dutch master’s “circle of friends” from the Golden Age.

Professional collecting

Working closely with art professionals towards assembling a collection may be what differentiates Western collectors from Chinese ones. “Chinese collectors don’t believe in dealers and intermediaries. They mostly purchase based on personal judgment, which also lends itself more easily to a “profit-making” approach. Westerners would typically hire an art expert, and the commission they would pay would represent a sort of guarantee. The consultant would then be accountable if he or she were to buy the wrong piece. This ultimately comes down to the spirit of the contract,” says Shi Jian Bang.

Kaplan would describe his relationship with these “treasure hunters” with two words: loyalty and trust, which is precisely how The Leiden Collection was able to establish itself and grow so quickly. In addition to Lara, there are four members on The Leiden Collection staff, each responsible for management, registration, coordination, and documentation. In the prints of this exhibition, one can appreciate the analysis and interpretation of each work provided by The Leiden Collection, including very clear records about the most important issue in the collecting world – namely, provenance.

There is no shortage of Western collectors of classical masterpieces, but most of them remain anonymous. Very few are as high-profile as Kaplan. He explained: “To help the general public understand and appreciate art, collections have to be shared.” Since its establishment, The Leiden Collection has become the only private “Lending Library” of classical masterpieces. It has loaned art works to major museums in Europe, the United States, and Japan on some 170 occasions and always anonymously. Kaplan only owns one dedicated gallery on Madison Avenue in New York. Most of his collected works are loaned to various institutions. He himself has even hardly seen some of them.

This international tour represents the first time that The Leiden Collection is introduced as a single entity before the public. In addition to providing the Chinese people with an opportunity to enjoy these masterpieces, perhaps the collecting model established by the Kaplans will also prove a source of inspiration for local collectors.