

# Unmatched Collector

莱顿收藏创始人托马斯·S·卡普兰博士是一个传奇，也是一个励志的例子。  
作为收藏家，没有家传；作为企业家，也是白手起家，如今建立起全球最大规模的荷兰黄金时期的绘画收藏。  
今年在北京，卡普兰带来了伦勃朗，不仅是他的时代，还有他那个时代中的维米尔、扬·利文斯……

**Dr. Thomas S Kaplan, founder of the Leiden Collection,  
is a legend and an inspirational example.**

**As a collector, no patrimony from the family;  
as entrepreneurs is now setting up the world's largest  
Holland Golden Age Painting Collections.**

**He brought Rembrandt to Beijing this year,  
not only his times, but also Vermeer and Jan Lievens.**

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藏而不群

卡普兰博士和他的伦勃朗收藏

收藏就是这样，往往是在不可能中而拥有。

卡普兰说自己一直都特别坚信运气的力量，而且他觉得我自己也是所认识的人里面运气最好的，如果让他在运气和聪明之间选择，他会选择运气。

卡普兰 1962 年出生于美国纽约，自幼年起就深深痴迷于伦勃朗·范·莱茵的绘画作品，八岁时就曾请求家人带他去阿姆斯特丹，“因为伦勃朗曾经住在那里”。早年在瑞士求学，之后卡普兰在牛津大学度过美好的大学时光，并顺利获得历史系本科、硕士和博士学位。1993 年，卡普兰开始在自然矿产领域进行投资，他起初关注银矿，后来转向铂金矿和碳氢化合物的开发。2003 年，卡普兰 41 岁时与妻子达芙妮一起踏上荷兰艺术品的收藏之旅。

#### 纯属意外的收藏之路

当面对“商人和收藏家哪个身份给他带来的乐趣会更多”这个问题时，卡普兰不假思索的脱口而出：收藏家。他说：“我去经商也是为了可以让自己做自己喜欢的事，那么首当其冲的就是希望去保护野生动物，其次就是收藏。”目前担任纽约 The Electrum Group LLC 集团主席的卡普兰，主要关注自然资源领域，集投资、咨询和资产管理于一体。卡普兰夫妇还是全球野生动物保护的积极倡导者和主要资助者之一，过去十年间在环保方面的投入超过了一亿美元。2006 年，夫妇二人创建 Panthera 基金，为了保护大型濒危猫科动物和他们赖以生存的生态系统。

他原来以为伦勃朗的画都在博物馆里，自己不可能拥有，可是，2006 年他买到了伦勃朗的一幅素描，画上的狮子正是他致力保护的动物。到现在他拥有 11 幅伦勃朗的油画，正在国博展出。要知道，这个备受瞩目的收藏家，他儿时就在父母的带领下到阿姆斯特丹参观伦勃朗故居，从小兴趣变成了自己的事业，机缘巧合中还造就了神话般的收藏传奇，就连莱顿收藏的名字都是以伦勃朗出生地命名的。卡普兰说自己收藏伦勃朗纯属意外，“有一次我在克罗地亚的时候，碰见了伦敦皇家艺术学院的院长，他当时就问我有没有在收藏，然后我说没有，他接着说如果你要收藏的话会收藏什么，我说想收藏伦勃朗的作品，但我又说伦勃朗的作品都在

博物馆里面，估计是没得收藏了。然后他说可能你不知道，其实市面上是有一些伦勃朗的作品，还有与伦勃朗相关画派的作品，虽然不是天天都有，但如果真想做一个系列收藏的话，应该没有太大的问题。”所以从那个时候，卡普兰开始有了收藏的打算了，在接下来的几个月当中，他和太太两个人基本上以平均周一幅画的节奏收藏品。“如果我当时没有去克罗地亚，或者说没有见到这个院长，没有跟他谈话，可能我都不会开始自己的收藏之路。”

收藏就是这样，往往是在不可能中而拥有。卡普兰说自己一直都特别坚信运气的力量，而且他觉得我自己也是所认识的人里面运气最好的，如果让他在运气和聪明之间选择，他会选择运气。“我们之所以可以把莱顿收藏成功，主要的原因是因为我所喜爱的这些作品，伦勃朗当时其实并不是社会上主流大家都喜欢的作品风格和类型，我所认识的代理商很清楚可以从谁手里可以买到这些作品。代理商们也知道市面上并没有太多人愿意去买这些作品，而这对于我来说就是一种幸运。在合适的时候，在合适的地方，又有合适的契机，我达成了一个又一个收藏目标。这些代理商、经销商他们都知道我不是一般意义上的收藏家，我的目标是做一个博物馆级别的收藏，所以他们更愿意去帮忙，有类似画作的讯息也会先通知我，除了好运气，我真不知道还能用什么更好的词来形容。”卡普兰无不感慨的说。

#### 通过展览去传递价值观

收藏，其实与历史、文化息息相关，是对历史与文化的一种态度。往大了说，甚至涉及一个人、一个家族乃至一个国家与其祖先的关系，涉及身份的问题和与一个大的共同体的价值认同。收藏宛若贯通古今的时空隧道，是一种记忆的传承，是对历史的温情与敬意。在如切如磋、如琢如磨的细细品鉴中，感知前人的落笔回肠，感受有关价值观和胸怀的意识形态。





说到这次莱顿收藏在国博做的展览——伦勃朗和他的时代，卡普兰最大的愿望是用“伦勃朗和我们的激情，去创建和拉近人与人之间的联系，而非让人们彼此疏远。同时持续地培养人文主义和它最富有的产物——人与人之间的相互包容和相互尊重。”用他自己的话说：一位“犹太裔美国人”将陈列在“法国”最著名博物馆卢浮宫中的“荷兰”画作带到“中国”、“俄罗斯”和“阿拉伯国家”，去建立一个共通的沟通平台，有什么比这样做更能阐释跨越国界的万物相通呢？

伦勃朗为人所赞叹的是他在描绘光暗对比时的独特技巧，有人说他以黑暗来绘成光明，而他刻画故事时表达感情的能力无人能及，作品充满人道的思想和人文热情。此前，卡普兰在接受媒体采访时反复谈到了黄金荷兰时期的价值观，他认为这种价值观应该被普及。我很好奇便在采访问他原因，他饶有兴趣的为我解释，他说：“简单来说我希望这个价值观可以被广泛的传播，进一步来讲，就是伦勃朗和他身处的黄金时期所传达的价值观，其实是一种体现人道主义的价值观，强调包容，还有互相的尊重。这在荷兰当时的画作都有所体现。伦勃朗是目前为止仍然被大家所传颂的一位艺术家，在历史上他也是非常重要的一位艺术家。他看到的这些东西，可能是其他人没有看到的，而他看到了之后，就通过自己独特的视角发现这种美，发现这种真实，同时还能把这种美与真实通过画作在画布上表现出来。那么这一点，我们认为是非常重要的，因为他当时看到了这些所谓的美是他眼中的美，并不是被大众都能普遍接受的美，但是他不在乎，他还是依然表现出来了。因此从这个角度上来说，他其实就是解放了当时的艺术，也正是因此，伦勃朗的这种价值观，还有他的精神都在影响着之后所有的艺术家，他们在进行创作的时候，发挥自己想象落到实处的的时候，其实都在传承伦勃朗的DNA。”

我接着问卡普兰“为什么这批画作在卢浮宫展出后的首站选了在中国？”他说：“其实我的想法是希望可以让更多的人更加欢迎，更加喜爱伦勃朗的艺术。我不希望大家只是把它简单的当作一个西方的艺术来看，而是希望民众可以把这个艺术当成是具有中国元素的文化去看待。伦勃朗不仅仅是一

个伟大的艺术家，他也是一个跨越时代的艺术家。正是因为他的存在，才给后来的整个的艺术世界，还有整个的世界都带来非常巨大的影响，所以我希望可以让更多的人更多的去接触伦勃朗，还有他带给中国艺术的影响，因此我把他带到中国来，再一次将中国和西方的艺术重新连接起来。在中国，有很多非常了不起的画家，比如曾梵志，就提到过自己受到伦勃朗的影响非常多。还有喜欢戈雅，毕加索的艺术家，他们喜欢的艺术家更是深受伦勃朗的影响。

#### 重回伦勃朗时代

如果有一次机会穿越回伦勃朗生活的时期，你最想做什么？面对突如其来的问题，卡普兰先是愣了一下，然后大约过了半分钟他才作答。他说：“这是一个特别好的问题，因为我一直特别想了解伦勃朗当时到底是什么样的状态，可以激发出他在艺术方面如此伟大的灵感。在当时，伦勃朗确实是一个非常有名的画家，但并不是说他的创作被所有的人接受，因为他所创造出来的这种美，很多情况下是一种主观的美，他往往可以在丑中发现美，所以这个并不是说每一个人都能接受。如果我要是在当时的话，应该会受到他那种比较激进思想的影响，然后开始收藏相关的画作。”在伦勃朗生活的时代，很多在如今人们看来很伟大的画作其实是被一些买主所拒他的，卡普兰说到这里略带不平的口吻说：“我要在当时就把这些画都收回来，就比如说他在晚期的时候为阿姆斯特丹的市政厅做了一幅很大的画，却被市政厅退回，而后这幅画因为实在太大而被伦勃朗自己分割了，如今我们看到的是只保留了三分之二的原作，多么的可惜啊。”

当大多数人称赞卡普兰天才慧眼收藏伦勃朗大量画作的时候，卡普兰却不这么认为。“只有伦勃朗本人才是天才，我现在所持有的这些画作，其实都是暂时为我们的后代去保管，因为这些画作它永远都是属于我们的下一代和再下一代。对于收藏和艺术来说，永远都要怀着敬畏的心去看。另外，我不觉得把自己画买回来这个行为本身非常的高尚，真正高尚的是把画作拿出来跟大家分享，这一点是我对自己的观点。”



莱顿收藏创始人  
托马斯·S·卡普兰博士

**“An Unmatched Collector”**

*Dr. Thomas S. Kaplan, founder of The Leiden Collection, is both a legend and an inspiration. As a collector who started off without any art inheritance from his family, the entrepreneur has established the world’s largest collection of Dutch Golden Age paintings. He brought “Rembrandt and His Time” to Beijing earlier this year – an exhibition that included works by Vermeer and Jan Lievens.*

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*Collectors always manage to acquire what is seemingly impossible to find. Kaplan firmly believes in luck and counts himself as the luckiest person he has ever met. If he were given the choice between having luck or intelligence, he would choose luck.*

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Kaplan was born in New York, USA in 1962. From a very young age, he developed a deep passion for Rembrandt van Rijn and his works. At the age of 8, he asked his family to take him to Amsterdam “because that’s where Rembrandt lived.” He attended high school in Switzerland and graduated from the University of Oxford with bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees. In 1993, Kaplan started investing in natural resources, focusing first on silver mining and later on platinum and hydrocarbons. In 2003, then 41 years old, he embarked on the journey of collecting Dutch artworks, together with his wife Daphne.

*The accidental journey of collecting*

When asked which one of his activities – investing or collecting – brings him more pleasure, Kaplan responds emphatically: “Being a collector, without a shadow of a doubt!” He adds: “I went into business in order to get to a position in which I could pursue the things I enjoy. My first priority is the protection of wild cats, then comes collecting.” As the chairman of the New York-based Electrum Group, Kaplan focuses on natural resources, combining investment, consulting, and asset management. Kaplan and his wife are leading advocates for, and major funders of, global wildlife conservation. Over the past ten years, they have pledged over \$100 million towards environmental protection. In 2006, they set up Panthera – an organization dedicated to the preservation of endangered big cats and their ecosystems.

Kaplan used to believe that all of Rembrandt’s paintings belonged to museums, and that it was impossible to own any of them. Yet in 2006, he managed to acquire a sketch by Rembrandt – which represented the very lion that the American entrepreneur was trying to protect. As of today, Kaplan owns 11 oil paintings by Rembrandt, which were recently on display at the National Museum of China.

This prominent collector was taken to Amsterdam as a child to visit Rembrandt’s home – a “seed” which later led to the creation of a legendary collection. The name “Leiden” here represents a tribute to the birthplace of the master. Kaplan acknowledges that his collecting began purely by accident. “I happened to be on holiday in Croatia when I met Sir Norman

Rosenthal, then the Exhibitions Secretary of the Royal Academy of Arts in London. He asked me if I was a collector, and I said no. He went on to inquire about what I would have been interested in collecting, and I shared my passion for Rembrandt. But I also added that I wouldn't have been able to acquire any of his works given that they were all in museums. He responded that on the contrary, some works by Rembrandt and the Rembrandt School actually remained on the market. Although difficult, Sir Norman acknowledged, it would not be impossible to build a collection." From then on, Kaplan set off on his collecting journey. Over the following months, together with his wife, he would acquire at the average speed of almost one painting per week. "If I hadn't gone to Croatia, met Norman, or chatted with him, perhaps we never would have started our own collection."

Collectors always manage to acquire what is seemingly impossible to find. Kaplan firmly believes in luck and counts himself as the luckiest person he has ever met. If he were given the choice between having luck or intelligence, he would choose luck. "The success of The Leiden Collection has much to do with my own, very personal passion for these paintings. Works by Rembrandt are not really part of the mainstream collectors' taste. My agents know exactly where to acquire these works and realize that only few people are also after them – which is very fortunate for me. My team fully appreciates that I am no ordinary collector. My ultimate goal is to create a collection that can rival that of any museum. Part of the help they provide me with is the sharing of information about any such work that they might come across. I simply cannot find a better word than 'luck' to describe our operations," said Kaplan.

#### *Exhibitions speak volumes about one's sense of value*

Collecting is in fact closely related to history and culture, and speaks volumes about one's attitude towards them. On a larger scale, it can also shed light on the relationship between a person, a family or even a country, and its ancestors. Collecting is first and foremost about one's identity and the identity of a broader community. Creating a tunnel of time and space, linking the ancient and modern eras, it is reminiscent of memory – particularly in the passion and respect that it shows for history. Not unlike polishing and admiring an ancient sculpture, collecting is how one learns the stories of one's ancestors, and study their values and ideology.

Speaking of the exhibition which The Leiden Collection held at the National Museum of China – "Rembrandt and His Time" –, Kaplan declared that his greatest wish was "to use Rembrandt and our passion for his work to build bridges between people, as well as to continue cultivating humanism and its noble offspring – tolerance and mutual respect." In his own words: "a Jewish American bringing Dutch paintings to the most famous French museum – the Louvre – before heading to China, Russia and the Arab world, in order to build greater understanding between cultures. What other plan could better embody the concept of a 'borderless world'?"

Rembrandt is widely praised for his unique skills in depicting the contrast between light and shadow. An art critic once talked about the master's ability to "express light through darkness" and claimed that his talent to portray emotions in stories was unmatched. Works by Rembrandt are full of human spirit and passion. During interviews with the media, Kaplan frequently talks about the significance of the Dutch Golden Age and believes that it is indeed universal. I was curious and asked him why. He explained: "in a nutshell, my hope is that the values that characterize this particular era and are embodied in Dutch paintings – humanism, tolerance and mutual respect – can be spread widely. Rembrandt is a highly renowned artist who remains a

central figure in the history of art. He saw things that other people could not see. He found beauty and truth through a unique perspective and was able to depict them on canvas. I think this is critical. 'Beauty' in his eyes might not have been widely perceived or accepted as such, nevertheless, he still represented it. In doing so at that time, he actually liberated art. As a result, the values of Rembrandt, along with his spirit, continue to be a major influence on artists till this day. When they create something and realize their own imagination, they are actually passing down Rembrandt's DNA."

I then asked: "Why did you choose China as the next stop for these paintings after the Louvre?" He replied: "It is my hope that the Chinese people can get to know more about Rembrandt and his impact on Chinese art. So I brought his works to China in order to reconnect the art of China with that of the West. Many great artists in China, such as Zeng Fanzhi, have admitted that they were very much influenced by Rembrandt. Others count Goya and Picasso as their favorite artists – both of whom were also deeply influenced by Rembrandt. Rembrandt is thus not only a great artist, but one who also transcends time, as his existence greatly influenced the world of art – the whole world, really.

#### *A return to Rembrandt's time*

"If you could go back to the times when Rembrandt lived, what would be the first thing that you would do?" Facing such an unexpected question, Kaplan paused for about half a minute before answering: "This is an excellent question, especially because I always wondered about the kind of psychological state in which Rembrandt was to be so inspired to produce such great artworks. He was celebrated, but not universally accepted. The beauty that he created was very subjective. Indeed, he often found beauty in ugliness, which was sometimes rejected by his clients. Attempting to defend Rembrandt, Kaplan adds: "I hope I would have had the intelligence to have embraced his radicalism and collected all of his works. For example, in his late years, he produced a large painting for the city hall of Amsterdam which was eventually rejected. Due to its large size, Rembrandt had to cut it into segments. What we can see today is just two thirds of it. Tragic!"

When praised for his ingenious idea of collecting works by Rembrandt, Kaplan begged to differ: "Rembrandt is the true genius. I am merely keeping his paintings for future generations, because they actually belong to the next generation and the generations after that. Art collectors should remain humble. Acquiring paintings is not necessarily a noble action – sharing them is what matters. Of course, this is only my opinion."