

## Rijksmuseum receives collection of sinologist Robert van Gulik



Lion seal, appr. 1950. Donation of the Robert H, van Gulik Estate.

The Rijksmuseum has received a special collection of works by Robert van Gulik from his family. Robert van Gulik (1910-1967) was a sinologist and diplomat in China and Japan, and was recognized as a Chinese literate (civil servant scholar). The donation includes 54 objects, including a unique collection of Chinese seals, a 13-meter scroll with seal prints, two calligraphies and a painting. Particularly special are the 50 seals, some of which he cut himself. These are of exceptional quality and form a bridge between the Netherlands and Chinese culture. Examples of Chinese seal cutting are rare in Dutch museum collections.

*Thomas van Gulik on behalf of the Van Gulik family: A unique collection of Chinese seals and seal prints on a 13 meter long scroll with calligraphies and paintings form a personal document of time with high symbolic value. The Chinese collection of the Rijksmuseum is the perfect place for this mutual cultural object.*

*Ching-Ling Wang, Curator of Chinese Art, Rijksmuseum: This donation is more than an addition: it changes the view that exists in the West of Chinese art. It shows that a Dutch person can also contribute at the highest level to the high-quality Chinese literary culture and art.*

### Donation

Seal cutting is one of the four great arts in China, next to calligraphy, poetry and painting. Robert van Gulik had a great talent for cutting seals. The family donates its entire collection of fifty copies and a unique accompanying scroll carrying his seal prints. Between 1928 and 1966, Van Gulik collected the prints of his seals and those of befriended Chinese literati and artists on this scroll. In some cases they added a calligraphy with a personal dedication or a

painting. This has resulted in a unique time document that, together with the prints, also shows the essence of literary art: Yaji, the elegant coming together. Common among literature was the coming together and thereby the appreciation and exchange of each other's works of art.

Van Gulik was a gifted calligrapher in which his talent for poetry was also expressed. The Rijksmuseum has received two of his calligraphies, with prints of his personal seals. The family also donated a scroll painting by Luo Mu (1622-1706) from the late 17th to early 18th century from his extensive art collection. Luo Mu was a Jiangxi-born painter, poet and prose writer. He was well known for his landscapes, especially mountains, and for what later would be called the JiangXi school.

### **Robert van Gulik**

Robert van Gulik (1910-1967) entered the diplomatic service after studying sinology and held various posts in China and Japan. There he joined Chinese literary and art circles representing the embodiment of the Chinese ideal of the civil servant scholar by practicing calligraphy, playing the classical Chinese musical instrument Qin, and creating and collecting art. Today he is the only European person recognized as a literate in China. Robert van Gulik was also known as a scientist with many publications to his name, from horse culture in Tibet to Chinese scroll paintings; his interests were wide-ranging. Robert van Gulik had a great influence on sinology, Chinese art history and contemporary Chinese culture. He is best known to the general public as the author of the world famous Judge Dee series of crime novels.

### **KVVAK Symposium Robert van Gulik**

The KVVAK (Royal Society of Asian Art in the Netherlands) is organizing an online symposium about Robert van Gulik on April 9 and 10th. The symposium will discuss the recent donation to the Rijksmuseum, the influence and many talents of Van Gulik and how his work lives on today. The program includes a lecture by former director of Museum Volkenkunde, em. Prof. Willem van Gulik.

Currently there are two exhibitions about Robert van Gulik in the Netherlands. Video tours will be organized during the KVVAK symposium on April 10 of the exhibitions in the Rijksmuseum's Asian Pavilion and the China Cultural Center in The Hague. The full program can be found on [kvvak.nl](http://kvvak.nl). Access to the symposium is free.

### **Indispensable support**

The Rijksmuseum is hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic. More than ever, it is clear that the Rijksmuseum cannot do without its patrons. Government subsidies, contributions from the business community and funds, gifts, legacies and Friends are and will remain essential for the Rijksmuseum.



Robert van Gulik with his crystal Lion seal that reads in Chinese characters: "Pictures and books of Gao Luopei (Robert van Gulik) from Holland". Collection RH van Gulik Estate.