



Editorial

In 2013, private benefactors of the Rijksmuseum established the Decorative Art Fund, a designated fund within the Rijksmuseum Fonds, to allow the museum to acquire drawings connected with the decorative arts. The Rijksmuseum has one of the finest collections of European decorative arts in the world, as well as celebrated holdings of engravings of ornament and all kinds of decorative arts. These served as inspiration for artists and craftsmen creating interiors, furniture, works in silver and gold, ceramics and the like. The essential link between the two, drawings made by those artists and craftsmen in preparation for the execution of works of art, is largely missing. This is due mainly to the fact that the Netherlands never had a flourishing independent museum for the decorative arts, of the kind that was established elsewhere during the second half of the nineteenth century. Both in Europe and in America the foremost public collections of drawings for the decorative arts were formed by those museums.

Thanks to the support of many individuals, more than four hundred drawings of this kind have been acquired over the past three years. The focus is entirely on depictions of actual works of art; pure ornament and architecture are largely excluded. As is apparent from a number of articles and the notes on the acquisitions presented in this issue, it is not easy to determine the precise function of individual drawings. Presumably, relatively few actual designs for specific works of art have survived, as these tended to perish during the process of execution. But artists also drew proposals to be presented to patrons, made drawings in preparation for engravings, designed objects to be depicted in paintings, copied prints and drawings and recorded existing works of art, both for study purposes and as a means of selling them. One of the purposes of the collection now being assembled in the Rijksmuseum is to gain a deeper insight into the various functions these drawings were made to perform.

Reinier Baarsen