

9 JOHANNA CROISET VAN DER KOP (The Hague 1861-1943 Utrecht)

Still Life with a Chinese Pot and a Metal Bowl, before 1897

Pen and black ink over pencil, 210 x 344 mm

Very little is known today about the life and work of Johanna 'Jo' Croiset van der Kop. One of five daughters of a wealthy merchant from The Hague, she studied at the local art academy, graduating in 1884. During these years she became friends with the couple Sientje and Hendrik Willem Mesdag, who were about thirty years her senior. Sientje, in particular, guided Johanna's first steps on the path of an artistic career. Together, the women undertook excursions in the Dutch countryside searching for inspiration for their work (see no. 11). Through the Mesdags Johanna also met Barbara van Houten, Sientje's niece and daughter of the minister Samuel van Houten, who introduced her to the art of etching.

The Print Room recently acquired a sketchbook, three etchings and a number of drawings made by Johanna between around 1880 and 1900, which shed valuable light on her almost entirely forgotten oeuvre. Hardly any of her works found their way into Dutch public collections. A rare exception seems to be an etching of a still life with two Japanese bronzes, bought by Sientje and Hendrik Willem Mesdag and still held in the Mesdag Collection (The Hague, inv. no. hwm0021). All the items in the present acquisition come from the artist's estate, thus filling a considerable gap. Her personal style, characterized by the skilful use of fine, linear hatching and strong chiaroscuro, is reminiscent of Barbara van Houten's.

During the eighteen-nineties, Johanna regularly participated in exhibitions in the Netherlands and abroad, where she presented mostly etchings and watercolours. Until 1897, when she married the German actor Max Behrend and moved to Germany, Johanna seems to have been very close to the Mesdags and their niece. At the *Exhibition of Women's Labour* in The Hague in 1898, when Sientje was a member of its selection committee, she received particular praise for an etching representing a clock and a chair in a corner of the Mesdags' house. Two drawings, one in the sketchbook attributed to Johanna and another in a recently acquired sketchbook by the Mesdags (see no. 11), show a clock seemingly identical to the one that decorated a corner of the Mesdags' interior, which must have been the one captured in print by Johanna. These drawings suggest that

Johanna worked in close contact with the older couple, perhaps even sharing drawing supports. The drawing reproduced here seems to confirm this closeness. The pot and the bowl strongly resemble those painted by Sientje in her painting *Still Life with Bronze Pot, Copper Bowl and Vase* (1887, The Mesdag Collection, The Hague, inv. no. hwm0251C). Both objects belonged to the Mesdag couple, and are still held in the Mesdag Collection today.

Despite the physical distance after their marriage, Johanna and her husband maintained warm relations with the Mesdags. The postcard Sientje sent Johanna in 1906, commemorating one of their trips to the Dutch countryside (see fig. p. 87), is touching evidence of this.

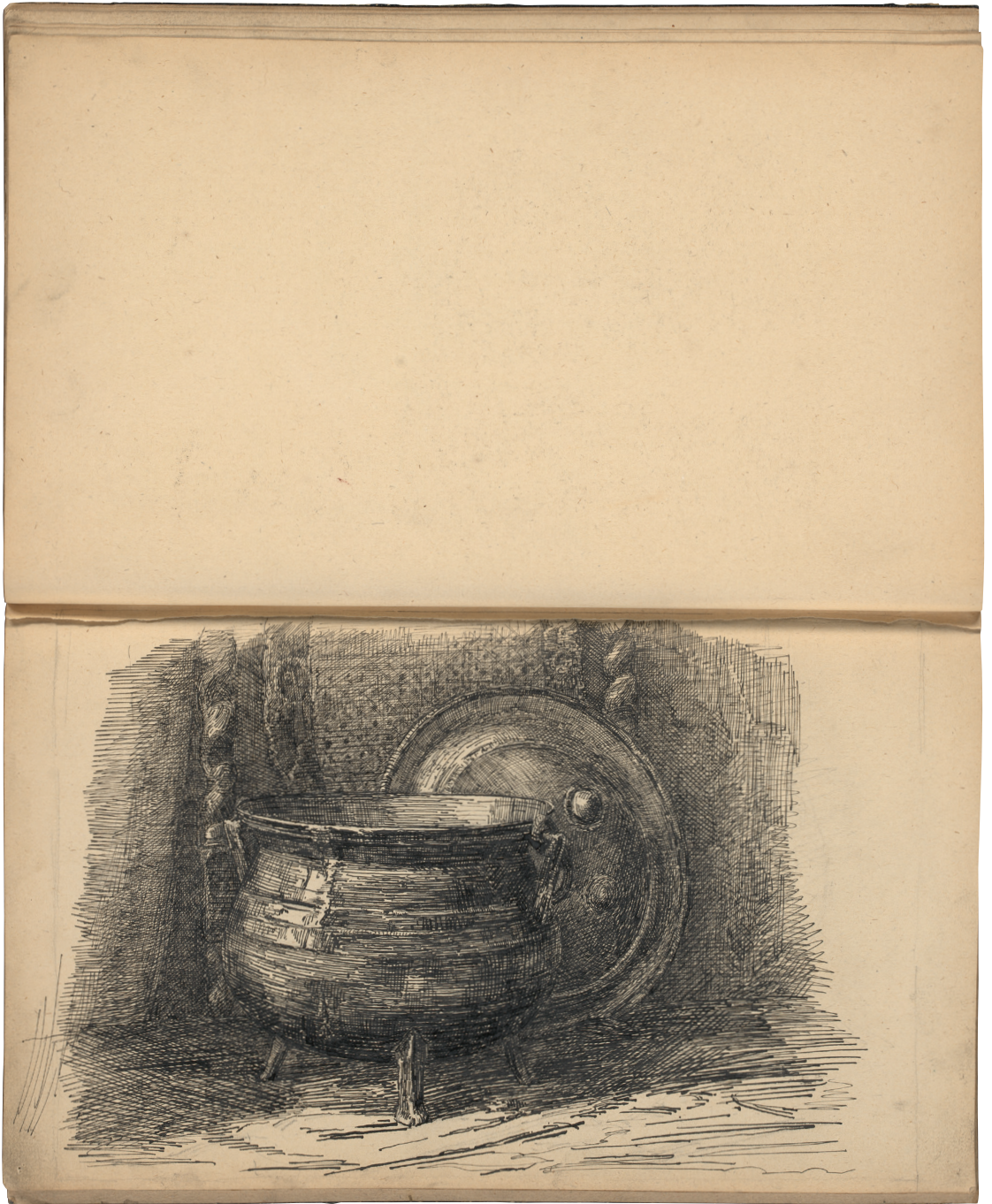
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LITERATURE:

[Anne Gerritsen], 'Portret van een kunstenaarsvriendschap: Een verzameling werken van het echtpaar Mesdag uit de nalatenschap van Johanna Behrend-Croiset van der Kop', website Vendu Rotterdam, [vendurotterdam.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Collectie-Mesdag.pdf](https://www.vendurotterdam.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Collectie-Mesdag.pdf) (consulted 17 August 2022)

PROVENANCE:

Johanna Behrend-Croiset van der Kop and Max Behrend; to their son E.R. Behrend; ...; anonymous sale, Rotterdam (Vendu Notarishuis), 10 December 2020, no. 189, to the museum, purchased with the support of the J.A.J. en M.A. Risseeuw Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds (inv. nos. RP-T-2020-218 to 227 and RP-P-2020-7584 to 7586).



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