

Preface by Topny Oost in the book "Henri Cassiers 1858-1944")

When at the end of 1992 mister Olaf Klijn suggested to organise an exhibition together with us in 1994 around Henri Cassiers, who by then passed away 50 years earlier, we did not hesitate for a moment.

Like many others we knew the striking posters for the well known shipping company Red Star Line made by the somewhat fallen into oblivion artist. The Museum Vleeshuis holds an exceptional collection of these posters.

However, Mr. Klijn explained us by showing the picture postcards with Dutch scenes he was publishing that Cassiers often visited the Netherlands. A number of connoisseurs in Holland admire the colourful and picturesque images of farmers and fishermen in the regions of Zeeuws Vlaanderen and that around the former Zuiderzee now called the IJsselmeer.

Once we started further research we found ourselves in an avalanche. Although museums do not hold very many works in their collections, an ever growing group individuals informed us of their possessions related to Henri Cassiers. Both in Holland and Belgium we were warmly welcomed by the enthusiastic collectors and were surprised by the variety of artistic creations.

To our regret however we were obliged to limit ourselves when organising the exhibitions and the production of this book. We decided to concentrate on the aspects from the career of Henri Cassiers which were less known before. For instance we choose his work as a graphic artist and watercolour painter, mostly owned by privat individuals. Also we researched in depth the creations of his posters. Only a few antique book connoisseurs knew about the very special illustrations Cassiers made for many books. More light was shed on his designs for printed matters such as menu cards, telegrams, school posters, picture postcards, calendars, etc.

Unfortunately we could not research themes such as his relation with the sea and architecture, the private correspondence and other documents from and about the artist, a complete oeuvre catalogue and his influence on other artists and that of other artists on himself.

Still we hope we succeeded in bringing the admiration for the person Henri Cassiers and for his work as shown by so many privat collectors to a wider audience.

The exhibitions and this book can be seen as a first glance on the versatility and artistic quality of this productive artist. All collaborators of this book wish that their efforts will be the start for further research.

Fifty yeras after the death of Henri Cassiers this is the best we could have given him.

Tony Oost.