

THE FORGOTTEN GENERATION

Modern Dutch Silver 1945–1975

By
Annelies Krekel-Aalberse



In the first years following the Second World War, there was, of course, little demand for silver and certainly little interest in renewing the art of the silversmith. In the years of reconstruction, being economical was all-important and this was a difficult time both for independent silversmiths and silver factories alike.¹ Only when prosperity increased in the nineteen-fifties did the demand for silver also rise. In the beginning, the favorites were mostly classical styles and silverware featuring the modernist designs of the nineteen-thirties.² After a while, factories started to advertise on a large scale and

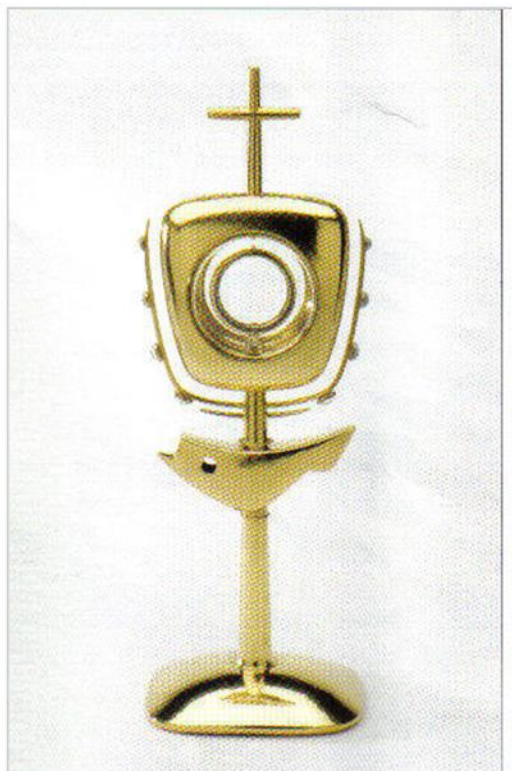


Figure 1: Tray, silver and enamel
Joanna Brom, Utrecht 1960, 18.7 x 14,8 cm
Collection Nederlands Goud-, Zilver- en Klokkenu-
seum, Schoonhoven

**Figure 2: Monstrance, silver-gilt with cabochon ame-
thysts**
Frits Jaritz, Doorn 1960, H: 55 cm
Private collection

placed advertisements in newspapers and magazines for modern designed silver and plate. This was a big success.

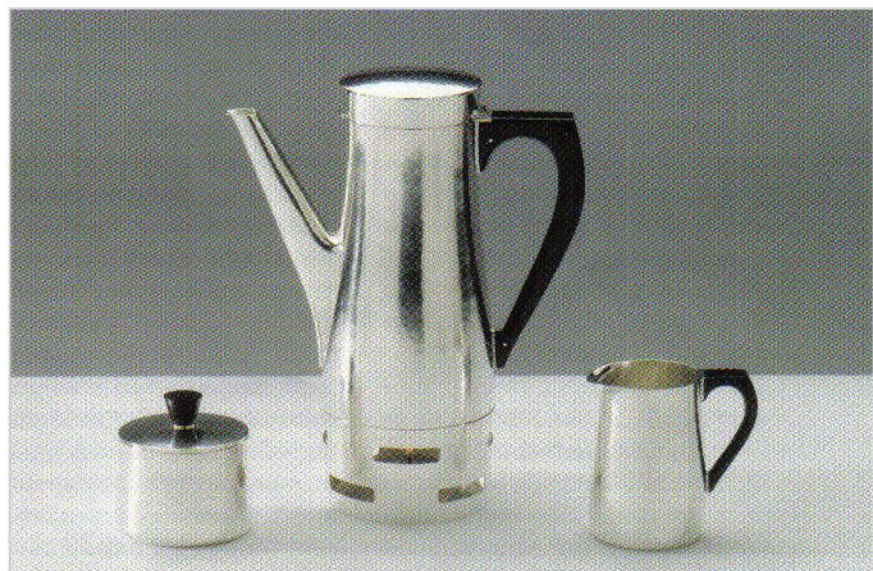
Commissions

Independent silversmiths had no advertising budgets so they had to make do with the publicity for exhibitions held by the regional associations affiliated to the *Centraal Orgaan voor het Scheppend Ambacht* (Central Body for Creative Crafts), an organisation that was founded in 1948. A few galleries also made an effort to exhibit works of a personal nature to those 'who do not know their way to the man who can make something individual, beautiful and personal for them'.³ For example, through the art shop belonging to Ina Broerse in Amsterdam, Chris Steenberghe sold a pretty hand mirror made in 1959.⁴ The

first museum to hold an exhibition at which contemporary silver was also shown was the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague. Several hundred pieces of silver hollowware, medals and flatware were exhibited under the title *Nederlands Zilver 1815-1960*. For the visitors, this was their first introduction to silver from the first half of the 20th century and the work of young designers and silversmiths of the nineteen-fifties.

The *Federatie Goud en Zilver* (Gold and Silver Federation) also attempted to stimulate interest for modern design in the art of the silversmith. The editors of the trade publication *Edelmetaal* (Precious Metal) regularly wrote about new work 'that comes outside the general understanding of silver utensils'. In

Figure 3:
Coffee service,
coffee pot h. 22,5 cm
Bert Kreijen, Kerkrade 1965
Work for master diploma



1952, the Federation committee held a competition for production of a silver dish that 'must demonstrate the artistic and technical ability of the contemporary silversmith'.⁵ The winner of the competition was Archibald Dumbar and the dish was executed by Chris Steenbergen.⁶ The coat of arms of the municipality and the text, in striking modern typography, were engraved by Ch. Berg. The Federation hoped that this example would be followed by others and that mayors would 'add to the municipal treasures'. However, with the exception of mayoral chains of office, essential to newly formed municipalities, this wish went largely unfulfilled.

The State and the provinces also commissioned special gifts. In 1956, to commemorate her eighteenth birthday, the provinces presented Princess Beatrix with a special table lamp on a crystal foot. The way in which silver and crystal are combined here was considered to be extremely modern at the time. H. Brouwer, one of the architects of the provincial government building in Arnhem, opened in 1954, designed new flatware to match its modern interior for the Provincial Government of Gelderland. All 735 pieces, with the exception of the knives,

were manufactured by the Helweg company in Amsterdam.⁷

The business world did not lag far behind and had special silver gifts made to celebrate long-service anniversaries or the opening of a new factory. The new universities of Eindhoven and Rotterdam ordered ceremonial maces from Jan Noyons⁸ and Chris Steenbergen respectively. Cultural events such as the international carillon competition that is held every year in Hilversum were also often a reason to design trophies. The municipality of Hilversum awarded the trophy and the improvisation prize was awarded by the organisers of the Holland Festival.⁹ For these commissions, famous silversmiths such as Archibald Dumbar and Chris Steenbergen were free to show their personal creativity. The biggest commissions for modern silver were the committees of the various church parishes. Thanks to the building of a host of churches on the new, post-war housing estates, there was a large demand for modern church plate. A young generation of silversmiths such as Bob Anink, Kees van Berkel, Fritz Jaritz (Figure 2), Jan Noyons and Eloy Werz, produced chalices, monstrances and pyxes for the Roman Catholic liturgy. But neither was the older generation forgotten.

For example, the silversmith Frans Zwollo Jr. produced a comprehensive dinner service for a church in his home town of Oosterbeek. All of these artists were members of the local branches of the *Scheppend Ambacht*.

For silversmiths and designers, this sort of commission was a great opportunity to make objects in an individual style that had nothing to do with the pre-war modernist design so heavily influenced by the Bauhaus. Angular shapes and geometric ornamentation were replaced by streamlined, sometime asymmetrical, undecorated shapes with flowing lines and rounded angles. This innovative style was influenced by the work of a number of Danish silversmiths¹⁰ and reflects the modern interior design of the time.

Schools of Craftsmanship and Design.

In the Netherlands, there were various opportunities available for training to be a silversmith. The *Vakschool* (Trade School) in Schoonhoven offers the only specialised training in this field.¹¹ The teachers, such as the silversmith Jan

Heerens, were great craftsmen but they were not innovative. In the nineteen-fifties, Anton van Kempen, the managing director of Gerritsen en Van Kempen in Zeist, pleaded in vain for an improvement of the artistic level.¹³ The arrival of a new generation of teachers in the nineteen-sixties such as Ab Wouters, Jur Wibbens and Bert Kreijen¹³ changed all this (Figure 3). Many talented students continued their training in Amsterdam or Arnhem, or abroad. But the opposite also happened. The silversmith Franck Ligtelijn, who had followed an evening course at the *Instituut voor Kunstnijverheidsonderwijs* in Amsterdam, acquired his silversmith diploma in Schoonhoven. Since it was founded, the *Instituut voor Kunstnijverheidsonderwijs* in Amsterdam,¹⁴ referred to in 1966 as 'the cradle of the great', had had a department for metal-working and silversmithing. Under the leadership of the silversmith Jacob J. Jacobs (1885-1965), future silversmiths developed their personal creative gifts and gained a thorough knowledge of all necessary technical skills. They learned to 'design for the sake of the *shape* and to renounce decoration'.¹⁵ In 1949, Jacobs was succeeded by Marinus Zwollo, who had formerly been one of

his students. The silversmiths Archibald Dumbar, Jan Noyons, Chris Steenbergen and Ab Wouters were trained at this institute before the war, while post-war graduates included Franck Ligtelijn, Ton Postma and Gijs Bakker. The latter has now been one of the best-known Dutch designers for several decades. The designer Toos den Hartoogh-Muijsert, who started working for Gerritsen en Van Kempen in Zeist in 1938, also studied drawing at this Institute.

In the 'working and designing in precious metals' department at the *Academie voor Beeldende Kunst en Nijverheid* in Arnhem, the emphasis also lay on developing personal creativity. Artistic and spatial design were just as important as mastering materials, techniques and finishing. Frans Zwollo Jr. was a teacher in the precious metals department up to 1961. His students included Riet Neerincx, Minnie Röder, his son Paul Zwollo and Fons Paanakker. He was succeeded by Franck Ligtelijn.

Between 1970 and 1978, Gijs Bakker, who had been a teacher at the Academy since 1966, tried to introduce new ideas in design and to focus attention on industrially manufactured utensils. Jan Duyndam, who had worked as a silver-

smith in Zeist for Gerritsen en Van Kempen and Van Kempen en Begeer, was appointed assistant in the metalwork workshop to supervise students in the execution of designs.

It was also possible to train as a silversmith at the *Stadsacademie voor Toegepaste Kunsten* in Maastricht. Fons Paanakker concentrated his attention primarily on the sculptural design of church silverware with strong individual elements.¹⁶ One of his students was Fabiola Sormani, the winner of competition for designing a christening spoon that was organised by the Gold and Silver Federation.¹⁷

Factories

The factories too benefited from this good training. Already in 1948, *Edelmetaal* was writing that, before anything else, industry needed people with ideas. If a leading position was to be retained at the technical and artistic level, then gifted silversmiths and designers that were up to date with the requirements of technical production were indispensable.

In the nineteen-fifties, the two biggest factories, the *Zilverfabriek Voorschoten*¹⁸ and Gerritsen en Van Kempen in

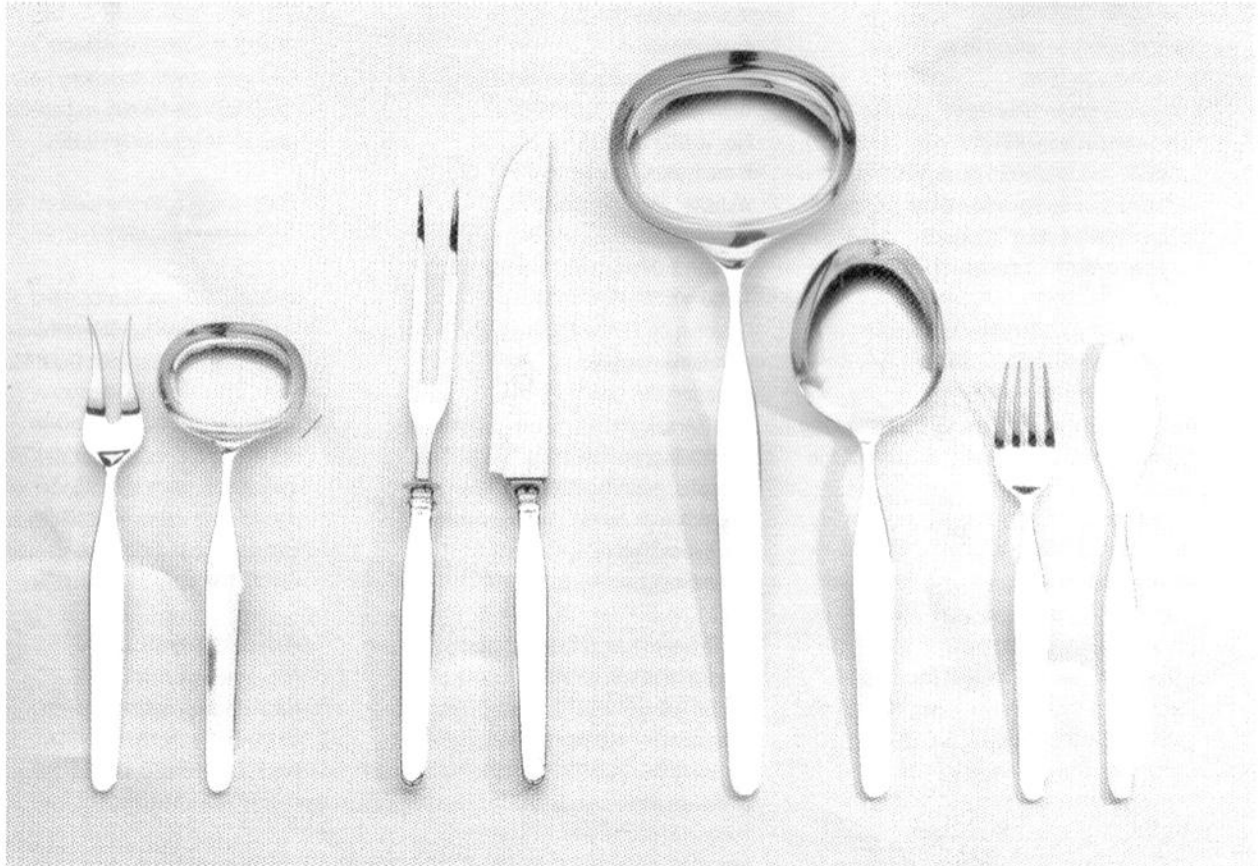


Figure 4:
 The first contemporary flatware model put into
 production 1953
 Design Jan Reyken
 Zilverfabriek Voorshoten 1960
 Shown here various serving and place pieces
 Soup ladle (31 cm)
 Private Collection

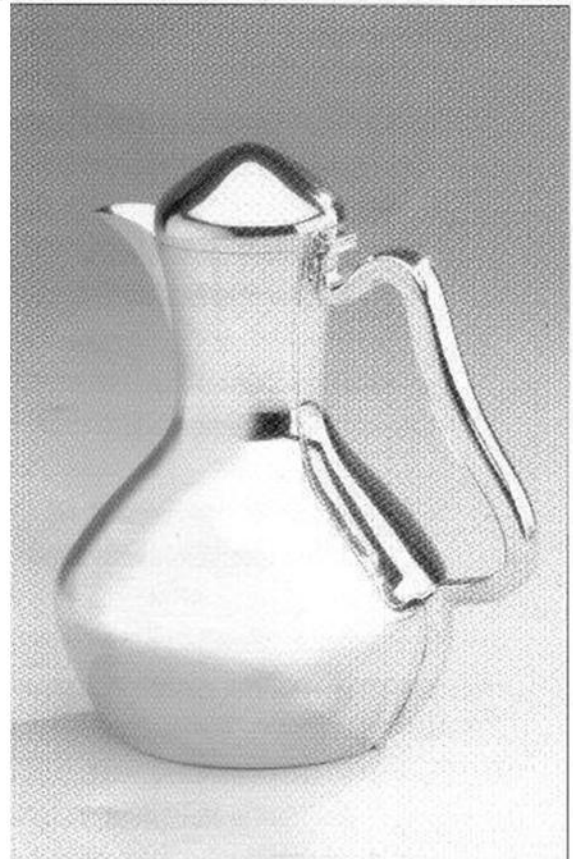


Figure 5
 Ewer, h. 36.5 cm
 Design Kirsten Begeer– Bartrup 1960
 Zilverfabriek Voorshoten
 Collection: Nederlands Goud-, Zilver -en Klokkemuseum

Zeist started production of tableware and flatware in a contemporary style. The flatware had smooth handles with a concave top; the bowls of the spoons were small, shallow and round; the knife had a short blade and the prongs of the fork were also short. A small number of new models were put into production, not because there was too little demand but because it is very expensive to produce a series of steel dies needed to produce all the various parts of the canteen of cutlery. The first contemporary model, which was put into production in 1953, was designed by Jan Reyken. (Figure 4). This contemporary version of the classic fiddle-pattern handles was made in both silver and Zilfa plate.¹⁹ An advertisement in 1954 proudly stated that this modern flatware 'will soon be obtainable on the American market'. The designers working in this factory, Kirsten Begeer- Baatrup, Bas Begeer and Frans Brussche, made designs for large silverware and plate in the modern style (Figure 5). The objects made to her own ideas by the Danish silversmith Kirsten Baatrup are typical of Danish silver of the time. She trained at the Hingelberg company in Aarhus. In the factory of Gerritsen en Van Kem-

pen in Zeist, where Anton E. van Kempen was managing director, the first prototypes of modern cutlery were created in as early as 1947. These were designed by Toos den Hartoogh-Muijsert, but were never put into production. Van Kempen attached great value to modern design and good quality. He had a special department of handcrafted items set up under the leadership of the silversmith and designer Gustav Beran, who was a pupil of the internationally famous architect Josef Hoffmann.²⁰ Here, extremely skilful silversmiths produced unique, one-off items, which frequently constituted the starting point for batch production in a simplified form. At the request of Beran, the management of Van Kempen en Begeer offered Gijs Bakker a job as designer. From 1963 to 1965, he designed various objects and sets of flatware for this company. As far as we know, the candlestick shown here is the only item that was put into production (Figure 6).

Each of the silversmiths and designers mentioned here had his or her own way of contributing to the innovations of post-war silversmithing. They created a new design

vocabulary for silver utensils that fitted the modern era of the nineteen-fifties and sixties. These were the decades that saw the arrival of television, technical achievements such as the sputnik and imposing buildings such as the Euromast in Rotterdam and the Evoluon in Eindhoven.

Times had changed. The demand for silver dropped sharply because it was generally perceived as elitist, impractical and old-fashioned. It was replaced by practical, low-maintenance stainless steel. Moreover, secularization gradually increased, which dried up the flow of commissions for church silver. The silversmiths set a new course and turned to producing jewellery or decorative items in other metals. The focus of training at the academies in Amsterdam, Arnhem and Maastricht changed but at the *Vakschool* in Schoonhoven, the lessons continued unchanged and the craft is still not an extinct *métier*.²¹

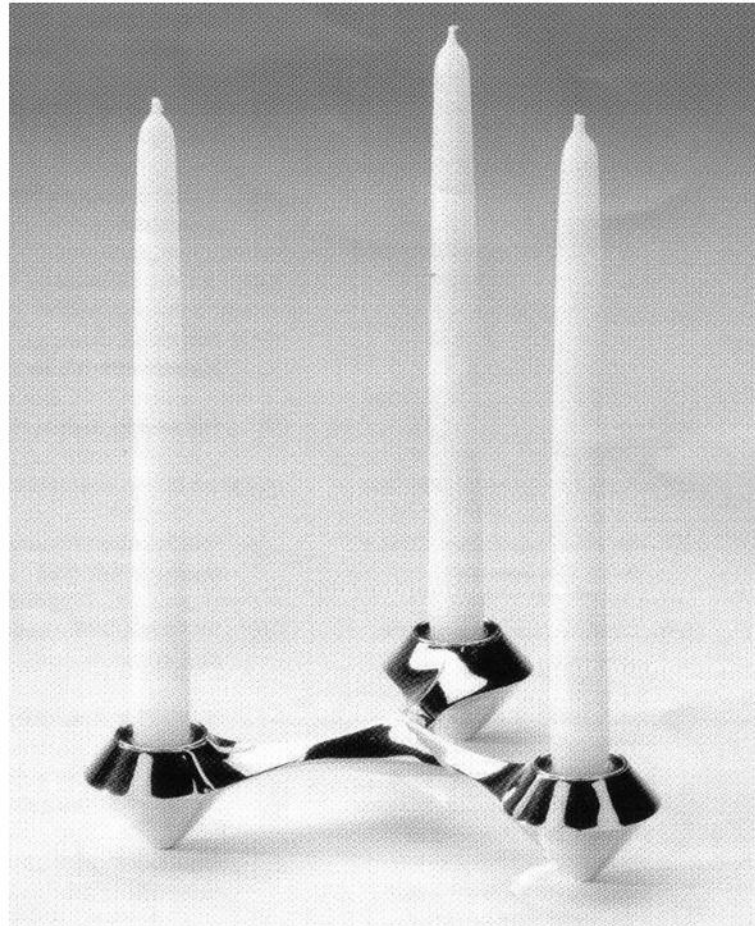


Figure 6
Candelabra, 21,5 x 21,5 cm
Design Gijs Bakker
Keltum silverplate and enamel
Koninklijke van Kempen en Bergen, Zeist/ Voorshoten 1963
Private collection

Zilvermeden

-  Bob Anink, Blaricum/Amsterdam 1933-1986
-  Rudi Arens, Nijmegen 1949-heden
-  Gijs Bakker, Amersfoort/Zeist/
Utrecht/Amersfoort 1964-heden
-  Fons Bemelmans, Maastricht/
Eijsden 1964-2002
-  Hans van Bergen, 's-Gravenhage
1968-1985
-  A. van Berkel, Utrecht 1918-1964
-  Kees van Berkel, Arnhem/Utrecht/
de Bilt 1955-voor 2002
-  Cornelia A. Borst, Bloemendaal
1958-heden
-  Fa. L. ten Brink, Hilversum
1959-1990
-  G.J. de Bruyn, Amsterdam/Leiden/
Leiderdorp/Delft 1972-1999
-  Brom's Edelsmidse CV, Utrecht
1955-1962
-  Jo Buekers, Amsterdam/Velp
1913-1962
-  Archibald Dumbar, Hilversum/
Amsterdam 1939-na 1945
-  Anneliese Grafe-Walck,
's-Gravenhage/Leiden 1936-1966
-  P. & J.W. Heerens, Schoonhoven
1941-1967
-  Fritz Jaritz, Doorn 1958-2006
-  J.B. Klören, Utrecht 1973-1983
-  Ab Kok, Amsterdam/Scheveningen
1946-1979
-  Bert Kreijen, Kerkrade 1966-heden
-  Karel Krol, 's-Gravenhage 1931-1978
-  Anke Kuijpers, Kootstertille/
Boelenslaan 1974-heden

-  Henk de Leeuw den Bouter,
Schoonhoven 1971-heden
-  Franck Ligtelijn, Amsterdam
1960-1969
-  Ellecom (F. Ligtelijn), Ellecom
1968-heden
-  Jan Mantel Amsterdam, 1954-1991
-  W.H. Mulder, Castricum/
Wormerveer/Castricum 1932-1958
-  Riet Neerincx, Arnhem 1965-heden
-  Jan Noijons, Utrecht 1940-1983
-  Fons Paanakker, Arnhem/Groningen/
Maastricht 1942-1985
-  Ton Postma, Amsterdam/Amersfoort
1966-heden
-  Minnie Röder, Arnhem/Doesburg
1964-heden
-  Jan Scherjon, Utrecht 1971-heden
-  Firma Gebr. Seton, Schoonhoven
1956-1976
-  T.P. Schlichting, Amsterdam
1962-1982
-  Fabiola Sormani, Maastricht/
Roosteren 1970-heden
-  Chris Steenberg, Amsterdam
1946-2007
-  Esther Swart-Hudig, Amsterdam
1946-1968
-  Fa. H. Teulings en Zn,
's-Hertogenbosch 1946-1993
-  Nicolaas Thuys, Arnhem/Eelde
1955-1979
-  J.M. de Visscher, Amsterdam
1925-1957
-  Henk Visser, Blesdijke/Lopik/
Schoonhoven 1965-heden
-  Joos van Vlijmen,
Overveen/Heemstede 1959-heden

-  J.J. Vonk, Amsterdam 1948-1976
-  Jur Wibbens, Schoonhoven
1967-2007
-  Ab Wouters, Amsterdam
1937-1985
-  Saskia Zuiderduin, Sneek
1973-heden
-  Frans Zwollo jr, Oosterbeek
1931-1990
-  Marinus Zwollo, Amsterdam/
Amstelveen 1933-1976
-  Paul Zwollo, Oosterbeek 1964-1989

Fabrieken

-  Gerritsen en Van Kempen n.v.,
Zeist 1924-1961
-  Schoonhovensche Zilverfabriek
H. Hooijkaas b.v., Schoonhoven
1946-heden
-  Wed. H. Helweg & Zn., Amsterdam
1948-1965
-  Kon. Ned. Fabr. van Kempen en
Begeer, Zeist & Voorschoten/
Leiden/Zoetermeer, 1961-heden
-  Zilverfabriek Voorschoten,
Voorschoten 1925-1961

Pleet

-    Zilfa pleet, pleetmerk zilverfabriek
Voorschoten
-   90
Hoka pleet, pleetmerk van Hooijkaas
Schoonhoven
-  **KELTUM**
Keltum pleet, pleetmerk van de Koninklijke
Van Kempen en Begeer

Opleidingsinstituten

Instituut voor Kunstnijverheidsonderwijs
(Rietveld academie) - Amsterdam



Desiree Roosendaal,
Amsterdam/Maastricht 1967-1990



Stan Spoorenberg, Amsterdam/
's-Gravenhage 1966-1994



Hans van der Heijden, Haarlem/
Aerdenhout/Bentveld 1962-1992

Academie voor Beeldende Kunsten en
Kunstnijverheid - Arnhem



Antoinette Holleman, Zutphen/
Warnsfeld/Zutphen 1966-heden



Ans Groeneveld-Lukassen, Renkum
1968-1980

Stadsacademie voor Toegepaste Kunsten -
Maastricht



F. Keulemans, Heerlen 1966-heden

Vakschool - Schoonhoven



J. Wollenberg, Utrecht 1968-1976



P. Reen, Amsterdam 1968-1980

Figure 7
Bonbonniere, silver and enamel
Design Henk de Leew den Bouter 1968
Vakschool Schoonhoven
J. Elders (class /silver)
W. M. Brans (class/ enamel)



Endnotes:

1. Annelies Krekel-Aalberse, *Carel J.A. Begeer 1883-1956*, Zwolle 2001, p. 36.
2. 'Fraai werk op de Haagse tentoonstelling' in *Edelmetaal*, 1948 p. 100. Included in the work exhibited was that of L.W. van Kooten, Amsterdam, J. Steltman, Den Haag Gerritsen & Van Kempen, Zeist and the Zilverfabriek Voorschoten.
3. 'Het genoeg van het zelf hebben', in *Het scheppend ambacht int Nederland*, The Hague 1956.
4. Its whereabouts is no longer known. With thanks to Mrs. Go de Graaf in Gorinchem.
5. 'De competitie – een idee en een kans' in *Edelmetaal*, 1952 p.214. The current location of this dish is not known, length. 42 cm, weight. 2500 gr, .
6. For more information about this artist, see: J.R. ter Molen, *Nederlandse pedellenstaven*, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam 1975, J. ter Molen, *Chris Steenbergen, edelsmid*, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam 1985, Marjan Unger, *Chris Steenbergen*, Amsterdam 2000.
7. Barend J. van Benthem, *Twee eeuwen tafelzilver. De Amsterdamse zilversmeden Helweg 1753-1965*, p. 202, 203, 207, Zwolle 1993.
8. For more information about this artist, see: Janjaap Luijt et.al. *Jan Noyons Edelsmid*, Zwolle 2006.
9. With thanks to carillon-ringer Laura Meiling.
10. Such as the designs of the Danish sculptor Henning Koppel (1918-1982) for Georg Jensen in Copenhagen, Svend Weihrauch (1899-1962) for Hingelberg in Aarhus and Karl Gustav Hansen (1914-2002) in Kolding
11. Mieke van Baarsel, *Een eeuw Vakschool*, Schoonhoven 1995.
12. *Edelmetaal* 1953.
13. Trained in Germany at the academies in Münster and Wuppertal and the Hochschule für Gestaltung

in Schwäbisch Gmünd.

14. In 1967, the name was changed to the Rietveld Academie.

15. Chris Steenberghe, 'Problemen der huidige edelsmeedkunst' in: *Edelmetaal*, 1956 p. 266.

16. Information about the training has mainly been taken from articles in *Edelmetaal*, pp.119-128 and H.J. Verwiël, 'Edelsmeden, een moeilijk vak, waar leert men het?' in: *Scheppend Ambacht*, p 103-106, both from 1966.

17. Competition held by the Federation on the occasion of the birth of Prince Willem Alexander.

18. 'Zilverfabriek Voorschoten' was one of the subsidiaries of the Koninklijke Nederlandse Edelmetaal-bedrijven Van Kempen Begeer en Vos.

19. Zilfa plate is the brand name that the 'Zilverfabriek Voorschoten' has used for silver-plated articles since the beginning of the nineteen-thirties.

20. For more information about this artist, see: Annelies Krekel-Aalberse: *Gustav Beran's streamlined silver*, Museumtijdschrift 19, 2002.

21. Gustav Beran, *Edelsmeden een uitstervend métier*, 1972, manuscript Van Kempen en Begeerarchief, Zoetermeer

- Annelies Krekel-Aalberse is an international authority on Art Nouveau and Art Deco and modern silver.
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