

Lugt's Répertoire online

Frits Lugt

Leiden and New York: IDC Publishers, 2003. Available by subscription at:

<http://www.idcpublishers.info/lugt>. \$199.99 per year; €187.00 per year

Frits Lugt (1884-1970), art collector, scholar and compiler of the invaluable *Répertoire des catalogues de ventes publiques*,¹ began his career in 1901 at the Amsterdam auction house Frederik Muller. During his 14-year tenure there he compiled auction catalogues for art collections offered for sale by the firm. After leaving Muller in 1915, Lugt began working on his *Les Marques de collections de dessins & d'estampes*.² By then he had amassed a notable collection of sales catalogues which formed the basis of the *Répertoire*. He later donated the collection to the Rijksbureau for Kunsthistorische Documentatie (RKD).

Originally published in four volumes between 1938 and 1987, the print version of the *Répertoire* has been unavailable, except through antiquarian book dealers, for many years. The first volume was printed in an edition of only 300 copies and subsequent volumes also had small print runs. Niels von Holst described the newly published volume one in a review in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*:

All other historical works withstanding, Lugt's inventory of sales can seriously be considered the most important resource for finding or clarifying the origin of a given work of art or gaining a quick overview of the development of art collections and the art trade in a certain country or time period

[Translation provided by Antje Bogart.]³

Lugt listed over 100,000 art auction catalogues from European and American libraries. Catalogues were arranged in chronological order and each entry provided the Lugt number, date and place of sale, the collector's name, types of objects included in the sale (viz. paintings, prints, objets d'art), number of lots, auctioneer or auction house, symbols of holding libraries and notes on annotations to the catalogue.

In January 2003, IDC Publishers, in collaboration with the RKD, issued the electronic version of Lugt's first volume, covering the years 1600-1825. In May 2003 volume two

(1826-1860) was added, followed by volume three (1861-1900) in September 2003. (The publisher does not plan to offer volume four online.)

The electronic version includes citations to the art auction catalogues included in the print version as well as newly discovered catalogues and corrections to the original volumes. As of February 2004, nearly 60,000 records were included in the database. It can be searched in either English or French by Lugt number, date of sale, place of sale, provenance, auction house, content of sale and library holdings. Indexes for place of sale, provenance, auction house and contents include a 'browse list' option, which is especially useful for variant spellings of place names and collectors' names and language differences. Boolean searching using 'and' or 'or' is functional for all of the search fields and results can be refined by combining indexed fields. The searching structure is intuitive, making it easy to comprehend and use. However a general word index would have been a desirable additional search option.



Fig. 1a. Sample record.

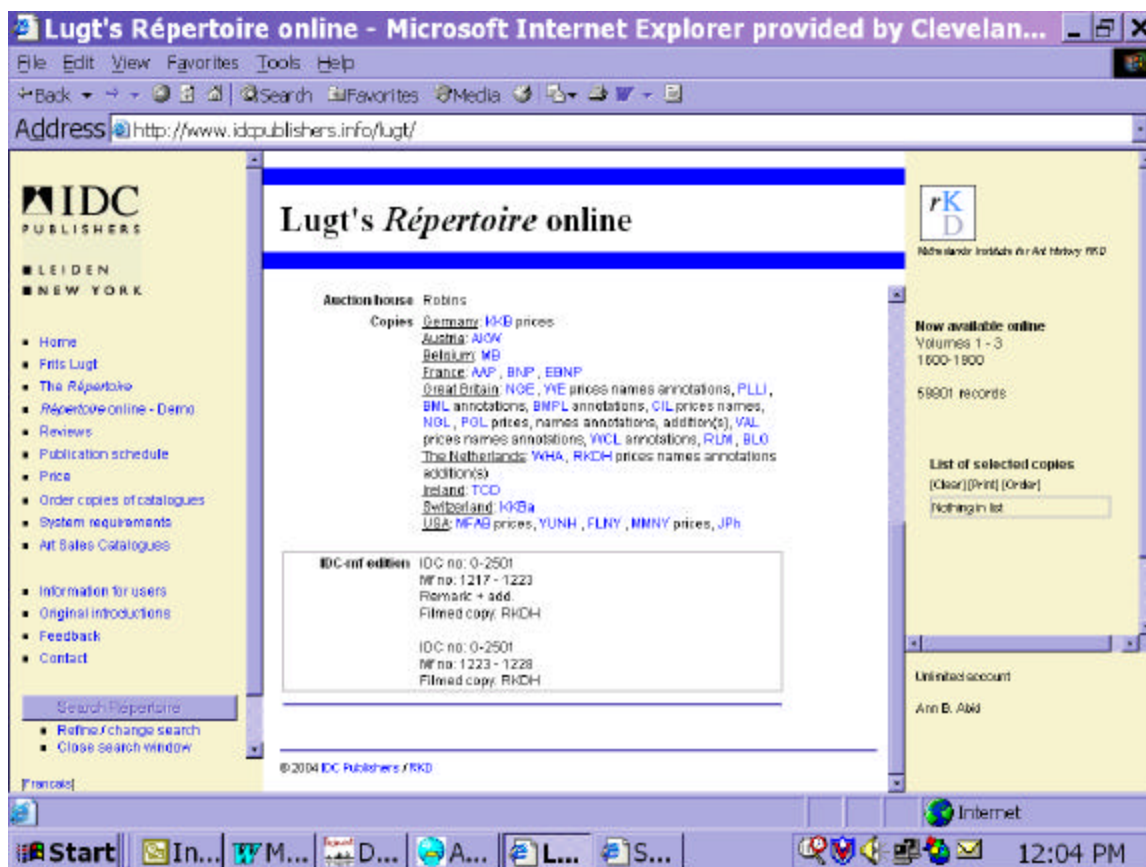


Fig. 1 b. Sample record, cont.

Search results include all the fields in the printed volumes plus references to Getty Provenance Index identification numbers (if available) and related catalogues and print or microfiche reprint editions (see figures 1a and 1b).

Date-of-sale searches can be done by year, month and day. One can search for a range of years or a single year, a range of months or a single month and a range of dates or a specific date. Advanced searching by date is a bit confusing until the user realizes that the search format used is year/day/month (yyyymmdd), entered numerically. Formats are printed at the bottom of each search screen for year, month and date searches, as shown in figure 2.



Fig. 2. Date-search screen.

The 'search help' link allows the user to access brief but clear explanations of language notes, search options and search results. Users should note that when searching by place of sale, the English version of the database uses Library of Congress name authorities, while the French version follows Lugt's original place names. Other idiosyncrasies of the database, such as the fact that provenance information has not been translated into English, are also explained in this section.

An added feature of *Lugt's Répertoire online* is the 'Libraries database' of major art libraries with significant auction catalogue holdings. It allows searching by library name, abbreviation (the Lugt symbol for holding libraries), place and country. The latter three options offer browse lists. Although auction catalogue holdings are not provided, directory information (name of institution, address, telephone and fax numbers and website address) is. When libraries have added holdings for art auction catalogues to their online catalogs, the website link is an invaluable searching tool. It would be useful, however, if all the addresses listed linked directly to library catalogs instead of to general institutional web pages. To determine which libraries own a specific auction catalogue, the 'Libraries database' should be used in conjunction with the Research Libraries Group's SCIPIO (Sales Catalog Index Project Input Online), a union catalog database of bibliographic records for art and rare book sales catalogues from the late 16th century to the present. Only 12 of the 21 SCIPIO participants are included in the Lugt 'Library database'.

IDC Publishers began reproducing art sales catalogues on microfiche in 1987. To date, catalogues included in the first three volumes of the printed *Lugt Répertoire* have been reproduced in four series covering 1600 to 1900. Reprint copies of art sales catalogues that IDC has produced on microfiche (*Art Sales Catalogues 1600-1900*)⁴ can be ordered electronically through *Lugt's Répertoire online*. A price quotation (including postage and handling) will be sent electronically, followed by an invoice. The price of reprints up to 100 pages is 30 euros. Reprints over 100 pages are 0.30 euros per page and microfiche copies are billed at 10 euros per fiche with a minimum order amount of 100 euros plus a handling charge of five percent, with a minimum of 25 euros.

Lugt's Répertoire online is an impressive achievement, a welcome addition to the auction catalogue literature, and far easier to search than the printed volumes. Its search protocols are easy to understand and search results are clearly labeled. Online help screens can be accessed quickly and provide concise explanations to frequently asked questions about the database. The ability to order reprint copies of the catalogues is sure to be appreciated by art librarians and scholars who lack access to large collections of auction materials or IDC's *Art Sales Catalogues 1600-1900* microfiche collection. This versatile, reasonably-priced electronic version will enable many libraries to end their search for the expensive and hard-to-find print volumes.

References

1. Lugt, Frits. *Répertoire des catalogues de ventes publiques: intéressant l'art ou la curiosité, tableaux, dessins, estampes, miniatures, sculptures, bronzes, émaux, vitraux, tapisseries, céramiques, objets d'art, meubles, antiquités, monnaies médailles, camées, intailles, armes, instruments, curiosités naturelles, etc.* 3 vols. La Haye: M. Nijhoff, 1938-1964. Vol.4: Paris: Fondation Custodia, 1987.
2. Lugt, Frits. *Les marques de collections de dessins & d'estampes; marques estampillées et écrites de collections particulières et publiques. Marques de marchands, de monteurs et d'imprimeurs. Cachets de vente d'artistes décédés. Marques de graveurs apposées après le tirage des planches. Timbres d'édition. Etc. Avec des notices historiques sur les collectionneurs, les collections, les ventes, les marchands et éditeurs, etc.* Amsterdam: Vereenigde drukkerijen, 1921.

3. Holst, Niels von. 'Répertoire des catalogues de ventes publiques, I. 1600-1825.'

Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte vol.8 1939 p.221-223.

4. Lugt, Frits. *Répertoire des catalogues de ventes publiques. Art Sales catalogues 1600-1900* [microfiche]. Zug, Switzerland: IDC, 1986- .

Louis V. Adrean

Associate Librarian for Public Services

Ingalls Library

The Cleveland Museum of Art

11150 East Boulevard

Cleveland, OH 44106

USA