

Dikran Garabed Kelekian

1868–1951

Dealer and Collector of Islamic, Chinese, and Modern Art



Dikran Kelekian New York Magazasi

Dikran G. Kelekian was born in Kayseri (Caesaria), Turkey, the son of an Armenian banker. After studying ancient Near Eastern history at Robert College in Constantinople (now Istanbul), he moved to Paris to continue his studies. Kelekian opened an art and antiquarian business first in Paris in 1891 and then in Constantinople the following year with his brother, Kevork Kelekian. In 1893 he traveled to the United States as

the commissioner of the Persian Pavilion at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. That same year Kelekian opened a gallery called *Le Musée de Bosphore*, situated at 303 (later 390) Fifth Avenue in New York City. He also ran galleries in London and Cairo, where he sold ancient Egyptian and Coptic art.

In 1902 the shah of Persia elevated Kelekian to the title of khan and appointed him the Persian counsel in New York. (His gallery served as the Persian consulate.) Kelekian served as a jury member for the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900 and was the general commissar of the Persian Empire at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, the world's fair held in St. Louis, Missouri, four years later. Kelekian eventually became an American citizen. His addresses included 10 rue Rossini and 2 Place Vendôme in Paris and 598 Madison Avenue in New York.

Over the decades objects from his collections were featured in numerous international exhibitions in Paris, Munich, London, and New York. His clients included collectors Henry Walters, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., H. O. and Louisine Havemeyer, Isabella Stewart Gardner, and Charles Lang Freer, as well as museums around the world. Kelekian collected and promoted the artwork of his friends Mary Cassatt, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Milton Avery, Marsden Hartley, and other contemporary artists.

Kelekian died after falling from the twenty-first floor of New York's St. Moritz Hotel. His son, Charles Dikran Kelekian (1900–1982), assumed management of the New York business.

Literature

Wellesley Reid Davis, *Notes on Le Musée de Bosphore* (New York, 1898).

Writings by Kelekian:

The Potteries of Persia, Being a Brief History of the Art of Ceramics in the Near East (Paris, 1909).

The Kelekian Collection of Persian and Analogous Potteries, 1885–1910 (Paris, 1910).

The Kelekian Collection of Ancient Chinese Potteries, as described by John Getz (Chicago, 1917).

Catalog of an exhibition of Persian and Indian miniature paintings forming the private collection of Dikran Khan Kelekian (New York, 1933).

A. Cooney Frelinghuysen, et al., *Splendid Legacy: The Havemeyer Collection* (New York, 1993).

Meyer Berger, "Kelekian Plunges 21 Floors to Death: Authority on Near East Was Friend of Collectors and Artists for 50 Years," *New York Times* (January 31, 1951).

"Bank to Administer Art Expert's Estate," *New York Times* (February 3, 1951).

M. Jenkins-Madina, "Collecting the 'Orient' at the Met: Early Tastemakers in America," *Ars Orientalis* 30 (2000), pp. 73–76, 84–85.

Marian Shreve Simpson, "'A Gallant Era': Henry Walters, Islamic Art and the Kelekian Connection," *Journal of the Walters Art Museum* 59 (2001), pp. 103–14.

"Buried Finds: Textile Collectors in Egypt," Metropolitan Museum of Art website; see <http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2012/buried-finds/dikran-kelekian>

"Coptic Art, Dikran Kelekian, and Milton Avery," Metropolitan Museum of Art website; see <http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2014/coptic-art>

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