

Ede Telcs and his years in the Netherlands

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The Austro-Hungarian sculptor and medallist Ede Telcs (1872–1948) had been working in the Netherlands for almost three years in the early 1920's. During this stay, he produced a substantial number of medals. Undoubtedly, his work influenced some young Dutch medallists and it certainly was known and appreciated by Dutch professionals and collectors of the time. The medals he made in the Netherlands, belong to the Dutch national heritage because of the topics with which they are dealing. In this paper, I am presenting a selection of Telcs' Dutch medals and describing his short stay in that country, but first I will explain what triggered this research.

Telcs' letters

In 2010, the Museum Beelden aan Zee in The Hague acquired forty-four letters written by Telcs in the years between 1930–1948. These were donated by the widow of Dutch sculptor Geurt Brinkgreve, who had received them as a young man (fig. 1). This correspondence presents us with a fascinating insight into the relationship between

the established sculptor, medallist Ede Telcs and young Geurt, the son of his friend Marius Brinkgreve. Thanks to Telcs as a teacher, and above all as an inspirator, Geurt Brinkgreve later became a sculptor and medallist himself. The letters are important for three reasons. They provide us with an interesting picture of Ede Telcs as a teacher, an artist and a human being. They are also evidence of the warm friendship between Telcs and the Brinkgreve family. This friendship began during his stay in the Netherlands and lasted till the end of his life. In the following lines an image of Telcs' activities in this period is presented, together with an impression of his character as an artist as evidenced by his letters.

In the years after World War I, Hungary went through a difficult period. Artists found little employment and so Telcs looked for possibilities elsewhere. Director Carel Begeer of the factory of silver works Royal Begeer in Utrecht, invited Telcs in 1920 to relocate and work in the Netherlands (fig. 2). Telcs arrived in Utrecht on the 11th



Fig 1. Letters by Ede Telcs to Geurt Brinkgreve, 1930–1948
The Hague, Museum Beelden aan Zee
Photo: Wim de Boer



Fig 2. Royal Begeer factory of silver works, Utrecht, early 1920's



Fig 3. Ede Telcs with Marius Brinkgreve and his sons Henk and Geurt, Bunnik, 1924

of May 1920. The factory's medal department was at that time directed by Marius Brinkgreve. The latter became good friends with Telcs, as both men shared an admiration and passion for Greco-Roman art. Telcs often visited the Brinkgreve's at their home in Bunnik, just outside the city of Utrecht, and he felt comfortable with the family (fig. 3). He developed a warm connection with the children, at that moment three sons, of which three year old Geurt was the second. After his return to Budapest, Telcs kept contact with the family till the end of his life by correspondence,

as well as by visiting them and inviting them to Budapest, especially the two sons Geurt and Willem, to work in his studio.

In 1930 Telcs wrote his first letter in Dutch to Geurt, who was then 13 years old and a pupil of the *gymnasium* – highest level of secondary education – in Leiden. His father Marius admired Telcs as an artist and wished for his son to become a sculptor as well. He asked Telcs to keep in touch with Geurt by sending him letters and to



Fig 4. *Child between the tulips*, 1920
Ede Telcs
Bronze, 61 x 50 mm
Amsterdam, Nationale Numismatische Collectie,
inv. nr. 1932-0032

Fig 5. *Birth of Jacob Vos*, 1921
Ede Telcs
Bronze, 170 x 140 mm
Amsterdam, Nationale Numismatische Collectie, inv. nr. 1994-3574





Fig 6. Royal Begeer factory of silver works, 1921

Ede Telcs

Bronze, 41 mm

Amsterdam, Nationale Numismatische Collectie, inv. nr. 1993-2370

stimulate him as much as possible to reach this aim. After three years, the dream of father Marius came true: Geurt became a student of the Royal Academy of Arts in The Hague in the department of sculpture. From now on Telcs coached Geurt regularly during all of his study. At the hand of the photographs, sent from the Netherlands, Telcs gave his comments, corrections and advice – always with full dedicated attention. Telcs was a serious and strict teacher, expecting discipline and obedience from his pupil.

Ede Telcs was a great representative of classicism in art and was strongly opposed to modern styles introduced in Europe after the World War I. In his letters, he repeatedly opined that only the art of the ancient world has eternal value and will survive as the highest human achievement. Over the years, his disappointment grew as the changes in art continued, and he was unable to accept this in any way. The letters show Telcs' strong character: faithful, honest, open minded and full of attention for the world and the people around him. He was extremely dedicated to his friends and pupils. He dedicated time and energy to writing letters, giving the best of what he had: his artistic skills, and his enormous experience and knowledge in

this field. His friendship was pure and unselfish. His last letter to Geurt (dating from the 8th of June 1948, a month before his death) is heartbreaking, as he expresses deep disappointment in the world: *Unsere Welt ist jetzt ein Zerrspiegel*.

Medals and other work in the Netherlands

In his Dutch period – in 1920–1922 and some months in 1924 – Ede Telcs made numerous medals that honoured prominent Dutch persons and institutions. A selection of his most important works, grouped thematically, follows here.

His first 'Dutch' medal was made quite soon after his arrival in Utrecht, without commission. The image of a child between tulips, raising his arms for joy and the Holy Spirit shining from above, is the symbol of a new life, not only in the nature but also for the artist himself (fig. 4). The staff of the Royal Begeer factory much appreciated this work and used it on the occasions of birth or baptism of their own children (fig. 5).



Fig 7. Society of Committees for Fuel Distribution, 1921

Ede Telcs / Eduard Hüttel

Bronze, 60 mm

Amsterdam, Nationale Numismatische Collectie, inv. nr. 1921-0045



Fig 8. Rotterdam mayor A. R. Zimmerman retired, 1923

Ede Telcs

Bronze, 98 mm

Amsterdam, Nationale Numismatische Collectie, inv. nr. 1924-0037



Fig 9. *Henk Brinkgreve 6 years old*, 1921
Ede Telcs
Bronze, 193 mm
The Hague, Museum Beelden aan Zee, inv. nr. M-8264
Photo: Wim de Boer



Fig 11. *Award medal for sports*, 1921
Ede Telcs
Bronze, 60 mm
Amsterdam, Nationale Numismatische Collectie, inv. nr. 1931-0145



Fig 10. *Aaltje Noordewier*, 1921
Ede Telcs
Bronze, 175 x 250 mm
Amsterdam, Nationale Numismatische Collectie, inv. nr. PE-14633

Carel Begeer was happy with Telcs' first medal and soon commissioned two more, one for the Begeer factory and one for the Begeer shops. The first one was widely admired because of the classical beauty of the symbolic design with a putto that is striking a medal (fig. 6). The factory used this medal many times for different occasions

with different inscriptions, mostly in combination with the reverse by another medallist.

Soon other commissions by Dutch industrial companies followed. In 1921, four reliefs in bronze were made: *50 years Gilissen & Co*, *Dutch Society of Flour Companies*, *Westzanen & Laan* and *The Fire Insurance Company in Haarlem*. With these commissions, Telcs established his name as an important medallist in the Netherlands.

At the same time Dutch authorities commissioned two medals: *Society of Committees for Fuel Distribution* (1921) (fig. 7) and *250 years of siege of the city of Groningen* (1922). The first was made together with Dutch medallist Eduard Hüttel. We do not know if the artists were in fact working together on the design. Probably each separately made a model of one side and the factory combined the two in one medal.

There were also official commissions commemorating prominent persons. The medals *David Croll, 25 years director of shipyard company* (1922) and *Rotterdam mayor A. R. Zimmerman retired* (1923) (fig. 8), are examples of such commissions.

Commissions followed also from private persons, for example the portraits of *Henk Brinkgreve* (1921) (fig. 9) and of *Florentine von Weiler* (1922), children of Royal Begeer managers, Marius Brinkgreve and Arnold von Weiler. The medal of the famous Dutch soprano *Aaltje Noordewier*, whom Telcs admired, was commissioned in 1921 (fig. 10), followed by her marble bust in 1924.

Ede Telcs also designed several award medals for different occasions, as for music contests (1920), theatre and sports (1921) (fig. 11) and bread bakery (1921). These medals were usually one-sided, the reverse was left empty in



Fig 12. *Music contest* (dedicated to G. B. Crommelin 25 years the chairmen of the Bach Society in Haarlem), 1920/1924
Ede Telcs
Bronze, 60 mm
Amsterdam, Nationale Numismatische Collectie, inv. nr. 1924-0059

order to add an inscription (fig. 12). In all those works the artistic virtuosity of the figures becomes visible.

During his stay in the Netherlands, Telcs cooperated willingly with other Dutch medallists. He admired especially Jacob Jan van Goor, who was Royal Begeer's chief engraver. Both artists shared the love for the classical style and Telcs considered Van Goor as his teacher and friend. Together they made two medals, *Japan prince Hirohito visits the Netherlands* (1921) and *Dutch exhibition in Copenhagen* (1922) (fig. 13). In the first case Van Goor designed the portrait of the prince and Telcs the two figures on the reverse, in the second case Telcs made the obverse and Van Goor the other side.

Long after Telcs had left the Netherlands, his work continued to be used by the Begeer factory at different occasions and in different combinations, since at that time such work was not protected by copyright. For example, his first 'Dutch' medal (1920, fig. 4) was reproduced on the occasion of Princess Beatrix's birth in 1938. Now a legend was added and the Holy Spirit replaced by a crown,



Fig 13. *Dutch exhibition in Copenhagen*, 1922
Ede Telcs / Jacob Jan van Goor
Bronze, 80 mm
Amsterdam, Nationale Numismatische Collectie, inv. nr. 1924-0016

combined with a new reverse by Marinus Kutterink. The latter was of a younger generation and obviously inspired by Telcs. Kutterink created yet another medal for the same occasion. It shows a new design, rather resembling the earlier one by Telcs (fig. 14).

While in the Netherlands, Telcs concentrated largely on making medals, yet he also produced some sculptures such as the statue of 17th century silversmith Adam van Vianen. This model for a big sculpture was meant to decorate the factory's shop in The Hague. Because of financial problems the full-sized sculpture was never realized.

As was already mentioned, Ede Telcs made several works that belong to the Dutch national heritage. His medals are now the silent witness of his short presence in the Netherlands. His work was known in the Dutch medal-world at that time and was undoubtedly stimulating for some of the Dutch medallists. We mentioned already the work of Marinus Kutterink, but also the medals of Geurt Brinkgreve, who considered himself the pupil of



Fig 14. *Birth of crown Princess Beatrix*, 1938
Marinus Kutterink
Bronze, 60 mm
The Hague, Museum Beelden aan Zee, inv. nr. M-8501
Photo: Wim de Boer





Fig 15. *Self-portrait*, 1931

Ede Telcs

Bronze, 99 x 99 mm

The Hague, Museum Beelden aan Zee, inv. nr. M-8499

Photo: Wim de Boer

Telcs, show the influence of Telcs in the way they deal the passion and love for the classical way of thinking and making medals (fig. 15).

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