

Ralph Leopold von Klemperer Edler von Klemenau

Ralph Leopold (1884–1956) was the youngest son of the Dresden banker Gustav von Klemperer Edler von Klemenau (1852–1926) and his wife Charlotte (1857–1934), née Engelmann. He studied chemistry at Dresden and Jena from 1904 to 1910, in which year he received his doctorate from Dresden Technical University (Technische Hochschule Dresden). Between 1910 and 1913 he worked as an engineer at the Škoda plant in Pilsen (Plzeň), Bohemia, and from 1913 to 1914 was director-general of the Škoda works in Vienna.

In 1913 Ralph Leopold married the Berlin-born Lili Huldshinsky (1893–1979), youngest daughter of the mining entrepreneur, industrial magnate, patron of the arts and important art collector Oskar Huldshinsky (1846–1931). Lili herself painted, making miniature portrait of family members. It can only be speculated whether the couple's shared passion for art was fired more by Lili or by Ralph Leopold under the influence of their respective fathers Oskar and Gustav, and it is likewise not absolutely clear whether they themselves built up collections of their own. However, they both certainly grew up surrounded by art in their family homes and we do know that they inherited Gustav von Klemperer's collection of miniatures and were the owners of paintings, precious items of furniture and Chinese objets d'art.

Between 1919 and 1920 the couple moved into a villa at 86 Wiener Strasse, Dresden, along with their three children (Hubert Ralph (1914–1999), Friedrich Oskar (1917–2010) and Ida Charlotte (1919–2015)). In 1923 they had a fourth child, Marie (1923–2012). The villa survived the Second World War and is still standing in a slightly adapted form. Both Ralph Leopold and his brother Victor settled down with their families not far from their parents, who lived at 25 Wiener Strasse. By contrast, the second son Herbert Otto (1878–1951) settled with his wife Frieda (1881–1945, née Kuffner) and their four children in Berlin, which became the sphere of his many activities.

Ralph Leopold served in the Austrian army from 1914 to 1918. With the foundation of the state of Czechoslovakia in 1919 a new board of directors was appointed at the Škoda works and the General Directorate moved from Vienna to Prague. These changes led to Ralph Leopold taking up a new field of activity as managing director of the Dresden cardboard packaging company 'AG für Cartonnagen-Industrie' from 1919 to 1936. Industry in Dresden had flourished before the First World War, and the city was known as a manufacturing centre for, among other products, chocolate, cigarettes, cameras, typewriters and sewing machines. The 'AG für Cartonnagen-Industrie' was one these new companies, with a wide range of products including cardboard boxes, paper cores, hat boxes, chocolate boxes, envelopes, quill cases, paper cornets, paper bags and many more.

Between 1920 and 1936 Ralph Leopold sat on the supervisory boards of various commercial and industrial organizations, and was a board member of the metalware industry association 'Reichsbund der Metallwarenindustrie' and member of the main committee of the industrial federation 'Reichsverband der Deutschen Industrie'. In 1926 he was a co-founder of the Dresden Rotary Club, where antisemitic tendencies began to make themselves felt even before 1933. In October 1935 he was called upon to resign and was finally expelled from the club in 1936.

In January 1936, his eldest son Hubert Ralph (1914–1999) emigrated to South Africa, where he invited his parents to visit him. In May 1937, on account of the increasingly threatening political situation in Germany and at his son's urging, Ralph Leopold, his wife Lili and their three children left their home town of Dresden and went into exile in South Africa. Initially holding only visitors' visas, they settled in the town of Margate in the province of Natal and were later granted immigrant visas. In order to give his family financial security, the now 53-year-old Ralph Leopold repositioned himself professionally, acquiring the firm 'The Standard Yoke & Timber Mills Ltd' in

Pietermaritzburg. In order to finance this new departure and support his family, he sold part of the collection of miniatures he had inherited from his father. From 1939 onwards, Ralph Leopold was chairman and managing director of the timber mills

Ralph Leopold died on 25 April 1956 in Pietermaritzburg (South Africa). In January 1948 his son Hubert Ralph had entered the family firm. After his father's death, Hubert Ralph became chairman of the board and co-managing director along with his brother Friedrich Oskar. Hubert Ralph occupied this position until the end of August 1984, when his family sold the firm and he went into retirement.

Lili von Klemperer, née Huldchinsky

Lili (1893–1979) was born on 2 October 1893 in the suburb of Wannsee in the present-day south-west Berlin district of Steglitz–Zehlendorf. The youngest daughter of Oscar Huldchinsky (1846–1931) and his wife Ida, Lili grew up in a very wealthy household. Her father was a powerful mining entrepreneur and industrial magnate, a patron of the arts and an important art collector; her mother was the daughter of the Viennese wholesaler, banker and British consul Salomon Brandeis-Weikersheim (1813–1877). Although nothing in particular is known about Lili's youth, it can be assumed that she was given a thorough education in accordance with her social station.

In 1911, Ralph Leopold had taken a holiday with his brother Victor (1876–1943) and Victor's wife Sophie (1887–1976) at Noordwijk, a Dutch seaside resort internationally famous for around 150 years. Here it was that he met Lili. After overcoming difficulties in obtaining Oscar Huldchinsky's consent to their engagement, they finally married in 1913. In his memoirs, Victor described Ralph Leopold and Lili's union as 'particularly happy'. The couple were blessed with four children: Hubert Ralph (1914–1999), Friedrich Oskar (1917–2010), Ida Charlotte (1919–2015) and Marie (1923–2012).

In 1937 the family went into exile in South Africa. This period was a challenge for Lili no less than for the others. Although the Standard Yoke & Timber Mills Ltd. started as a small firm, the 1940s saw the Pietermaritzburg enterprise grow into an enterprise of considerable size and capacity. As the sons Hubert Ralph and Friedrich Oskar spent the first years performing military service, Lili took entire responsibility for the accounts in addition to her domestic duties. Later, when Victor's health went into decline, the two families were mutually supportive. After Victor's death in March 1943, his wife Sophie received permission to move from Southern Rhodesia to South Africa, where she lived near Lili in Pietermaritzburg until 1976.

Lili von Klemperer died on 9 August 1979 in Pietermaritzburg (South Africa).

Literature

The research project 'The Reconstruction of the Porcelain Collection of the Dresden Banker Gustav von Klemperer (1852–1926)' was carried out from November 2019 to August 2021 at the Porcelain Collection of the Dresden State Art Collections and its results were published in digital form. The project's findings are presented on a separate website of the State Art Collections, enhanced with a wealth of pictorial material: <https://porzellansammlung.skd.museum/forschung/porzellansammlung-gustav-von-klemperer/>

Five authors contributed to the success of the project with scholarly essays, which give full information concerning the archival and literary sources consulted and used.

Furthermore, these essays are published online in both German and English:

Andreas Graul

Die Bankiers Gustav und Victor von Klemperer

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/artdok.00007288>

The Bankers Gustav and Victor von Klemperer

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/artdok.00007294>

Michaela Howse

Die Kunst der goldenen Reparatur: Eine persönliche Sicht darauf,
was es bedeutet, in der Restitutions- und Gedenkkultur Gerechtigkeit zu üben

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/artdok.00007295>

The Art of Golden Repair: A Personal View on the Unique Work of Justice
in Restitution and Remembrance Culture

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/artdok.00007289>

Kathrin Iselt

Die Dresdner Villen der Familie von Klemperer

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The Dresden Villas of the von Klemperer Family

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/artdok.00007296>

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SAMMLUNG – RAUB – VERLUST – RESTITUTION – SCHENKUNG.

Die Porzellansammlung Gustav von Klemperers

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COLLECTED – EXPROPRIATED – LOST – RESTITUTED – GIFTED:

The Gustav von Klemperer Porcelain Collection

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Sabine Rudolph

Die Entziehung der Porzellansammlung Gustav von Klemperers

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The Expropriation of the Gustav von Klemperer Porcelain Collection

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