

# Artisjok 2 (Artichoke 2)

In 1898 some eighty of Colenbrander's carpet designs were on display in an exhibition at the Museum of Applied Art in Haarlem. *Artisjok 2* was one of the designs exhibited, thus establishing it as one of Colenbrander's earlier carpet designs, and it was well received. One exhibition review praised the "richness of [its] middle field," and referred to Colenbrander as "genial."<sup>1</sup> The same review also described the designs *Artisjok 1* and *Artisjok 2* as "the most perfect and typical Colenbrander [designs]."<sup>2</sup>

Karel Sluyterman published an article in 1905 that was similarly full of praise for *Artisjok 2*:

A cozy carpet hangs on the first wall of the entrance, in olive-green only, in the middle of which is a single decoration in natural wool, gleaming like ivory.

Although very imperfectly illuminated in an unfavorable vertical position — a floor rug is, after all, supposed to lie flat on the floor — this rug seems to us to have a very particular charm: only two colors; an ornament that at first glance seems so capricious and yet carefully composed, well balanced, a master must have made it....it can be nothing else but a Colenbrander in all of its very personal originality.

Something so distinctive, so individual, we are not surprised that it does not have a catalog number but instead a name: *Artichoke*. But do we see a small number following the word *artichoke*?<sup>3</sup>

Sluyterman's article goes on to describe in greater detail the significance of the numerical suffix in the design's name: "Here, for example, is the carpet that we so greatly admire: *Artichoke 2*, a palette of two colors, over there we see a drawing, *Artichoke 4*, in which we recognize the contours of the first design but in another combination of colors: that is to say, in palette 4, with no less than four colors: white or gray, blue, red, and light blue are to be seen."<sup>4</sup>

Beyond receiving critical acclaim, *Artisjok 2* appears to have been Colenbrander's most popular design. More surviving carpets by far were made from the *Artisjok 2* design than from any of his other designs. None of the surviving *Artisjok 2* carpets are identical, as the design on each carpet is different to a greater or lesser degree from the designs on the other carpets.

A representative *Artisjok 2* carpet was published in Sluyterman's article;<sup>5</sup> see Figure 76. As detailed elsewhere,<sup>6</sup> variants of the design were created either by eliminating some of the design's motifs or by duplicating motifs. These modifications of the design were made along horizontal and vertical axes in the design, and allowed the design to be made in a wide variety of sizes. The design on each size of carpet was necessarily different to some extent from those of carpets in other sizes.

Although the original *Artisjok 2* design was never published and no longer exists, the archives of the Koninklijke Vereenigde Tapijtfabrieken (Royal United Carpet Factories, KVT) contain several renderings of the design, one of which is shown in Figure 77. These renderings were presumably created by the factories making Colenbrander carpets, and were based on *Artisjok 2* carpets. Each knot in a carpet was drawn in the corresponding square of a sheet of point paper. These "reverse engineered" designs were then used to produce

1. R. W. P. de Vries Jr., "Tentoonstelling van oorspronkelijke tapijtteekeningen van Th. A. C. Colenbrander, in het Museum voor Kunstnijverheid te Haarlem," *De Groene Amsterdammer* (1 May 1898).

The original text:  
"....den rijkdom von het middenvak."  
"...de geniale ontwerper.."

2. Ibid.

The original text:  
"...de meest volmaakte en typeerende Colenbranders.."

3. Theodorus Karel Lodewijk Sluyterman, "Over tapytkunst en een nederlandsche tapijtfabriek," *Elsvier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift* 15, pt. 29 (Jan-June 1905): 302.

The original text:

"Een mollig tapijt, enkel in olijfgroen, waarop in het ivoorachtig glanzend wit van de natuurlijke wol, slechts één enkele middenversiering, hangt tegen den eersten wand van den ingang.

"Hoewel zeer onvolkomen verlicht in een ongunstige vertikale positie, — een vloertapijt toch hoort te liggen, vlak, op den vloer — treft ons dit kleed als van een zéér bijzondere bekooring: die twee kleuren slechts; dat op het eerste gezicht zoo grillig maar toch zoo wèloverwogen ornament, goed gebalanceerd, het moet van een meester zijn . . . het kan niet anders of dit is een Colenbrander in al diens zeer persoonlijke oorspronkelijkheid.

"Iets zóó aparts, zóó individueels, het verwondert ons niet dat het geen catalogusnummer maar een naam draagt: Artisjok. Toch zien wij een klein cijfer achter het woord artisjok staan?"

4. Sluyterman, "Tapytkunst," 303.

The original text:

"Hier heeft bijvoorbeeld het tapijt, dat wij zoozeer bewonderden: Artisjok 2, een palet van twee kleuren, ginds zien wij een teekening: Artisjok 4, waarin wij wèl de contouren van het eerste ontwerp terugvinden maar in een andere combinatie van kleuren: palet 4 dus, dat niet minder dan vier kleuren: wit of grijs, blauw, rood en licht-blauw te zien geeft."

5. Sluyterman, "Tapytkunst," inserted between pages 300 and 301.

6. Richard Mills, "Axes of Construction: An Analysis of Dutch Art Nouveau Carpet Designs by T. A. C. Colenbrander," *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 10, no. 2 (Spring-Summer 2003): 74-75.