

# Elisabeth's Legacy

Less than two years after the Andriesses escaped to New York City, Hugo Andriessie died on June 12, 1942. The single newspaper obituary announcing his death was in stark contrast to the once highly publicized life of this prominent Dutch-Belgian Jewish philanthropist. His gravestone at the Beth Olam Cemetery in Long Island, N.Y., honors his highest ranks and decorations: Knight of the Order of the Dutch Lion, Grand Officer in the Order of Leopold II., Member of the Central Israelite Consistory of Belgium.

Hugo Andriessie's sole heir was his wife Elisabeth, who lived in hotels in New York, first at the Drake Hotel on Park Avenue and later at Hotel Stanhope on Fifth Avenue. Everything that Hugo and Elisabeth had left in Brussels was lost: their house was occupied by the German occupation authorities, their art and textile collection was looted from the museum by the Devisenschutzkommando Belgien and then transferred to the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR) headquarters in Paris at the Jeu de Paume museum. From there, selected looted objects from the Andriessie collection were acquired by Hermann Goering. Additional furniture, paintings, antiques and books were confiscated in the Möbel-Aktion, the campaign of the ERR to loot furniture, books, and musical instruments in Belgium, France and the Netherlands.

When the war finished, Elisabeth Andriessie knew nothing of the whereabouts of her private belongings. She began a decade-long campaign to get her property returned, as documented in letters from Elisabeth Andriessie now in the Archives of the Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels.

The staff of the Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire assisted Elisabeth's efforts to find her collection, working closely with the Belgian Office de Récupération Économique (O.R.E.), responsible for locating looted objects. The Chief Conservator, Henri Lavachery wrote on August 3, 1945: "Rest assured that everything necessary will be done to ensure that you regain possession of the collections that you and your dear husband have assembled with such taste and patience." In July 1945, Elisabeth was informed by the staff of the Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire that the valise containing her jewelry had not been discovered by the Devisenschutzkommando Belgien and was safely stored, waiting to be returned. Elisabeth replied "...As to the jewels found in the valise... I am most grateful for the trouble you are taking to find our collections - It is so important for my future..." The O.R.E. cooperation with the art recovery unit of the Allied Forces resulted in the identification of some objects from the Andriessie collection.

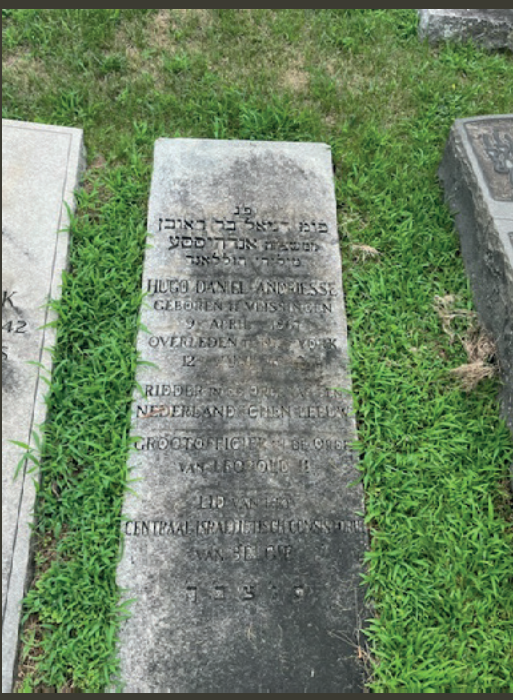
On June 24, 1946, Henri Lavachery informed Elisabeth Andriessie that 20 of her stolen artworks had been located. She replied and thanked him on July 19, 1945 [sic, 1946]: "...apart from all the memories attached to this collection, it is of great significance to me after the death of my husband..." She returned to Brussels six weeks later in August and September 1946, living in a hotel due to the poor condition of her former home. The recovery of her objects was ongoing, with identification taking place at the Munich Collecting Point. In May 1947, the O.R.E. confirmed that the recovered artworks had been brought back to Belgium, where they were deposited in the Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire. Elisabeth Andriessie returned to Brussels for a second

time from May through October 1948. Upon her arrival on May 30, 1948, she wrote to Mademoiselle Paul of the museum: "...Here I am - to my great joy - back in Brussels - happy to find myself here - to see my friends again - to see the paintings that have been retrieved..."

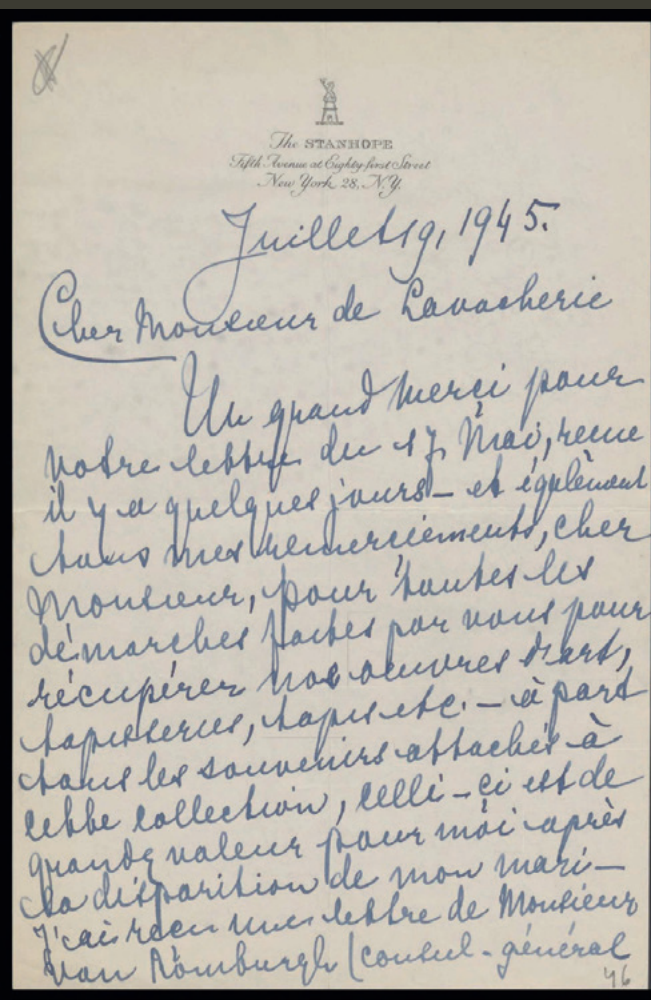
On her second stay in Brussels, Elisabeth Andriessie donated the tapestry *Winter*, as well as donating 4.000 francs for the support of needy staff members at the Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire. The Chief Conservator, Henri Lavachery expressed appreciation for the donation in a letter dated June 8, 1948: "I would like to thank you most sincerely for the payment of the sum of 4,000 frs. that you have just entrusted to me. I am delighted to see your name attached to such a high philanthropic gesture within our Museums. Thanks to your generosity, I will be able, on various occasions, to assist members of our small staff who may be affected by illness, a work-related accident, or even the death of a family member..."

Although many of the objects from the Andriessie collection were recovered, some still remain missing.

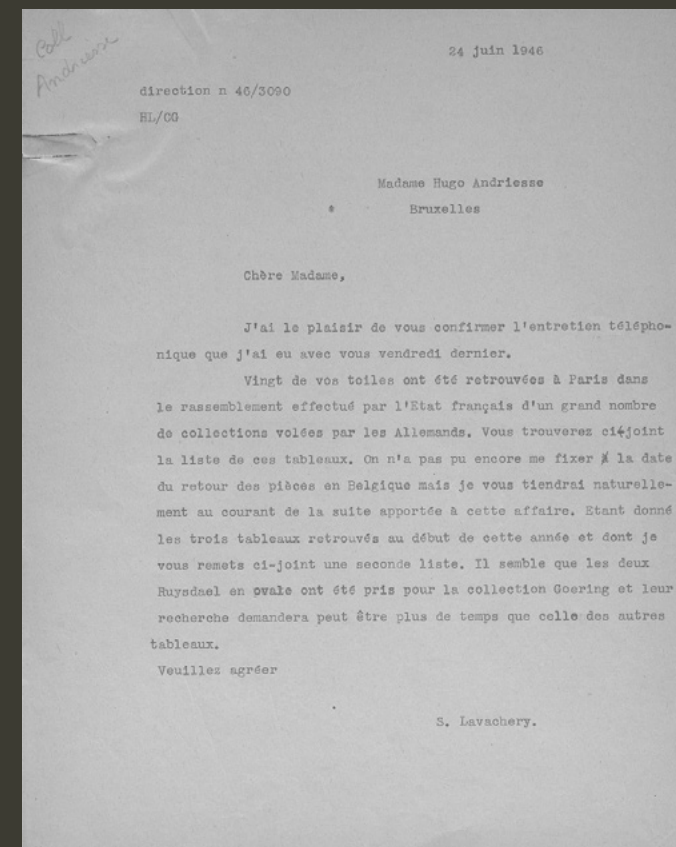
Elisabeth Andriessie died on March 1, 1963. In her last will she wrote: "I direct that a suitable upright standing headstone of simple character be erected over my grave on which there shall be stated simply my name, birthplace, date of birth, and date of death..." Today, it is not possible to identify her gravestone. The photograph shows you the section where her grave is supposedly located, however, the gravestones have fallen and the text can no longer be read. Elisabeth's grave is located close to the burial site of Hugo Andriessie.



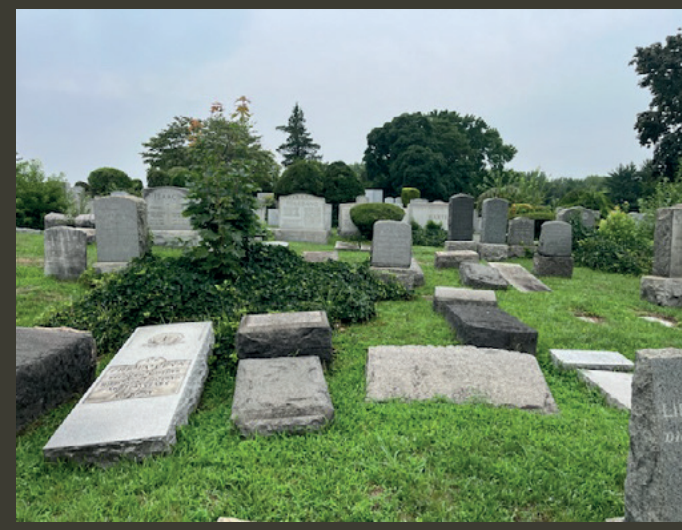
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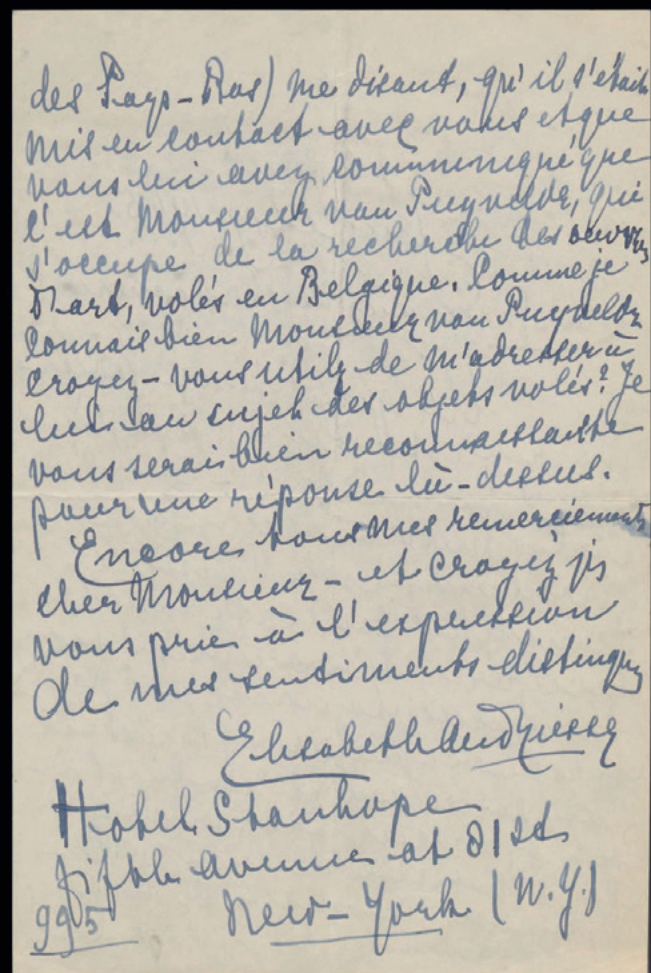
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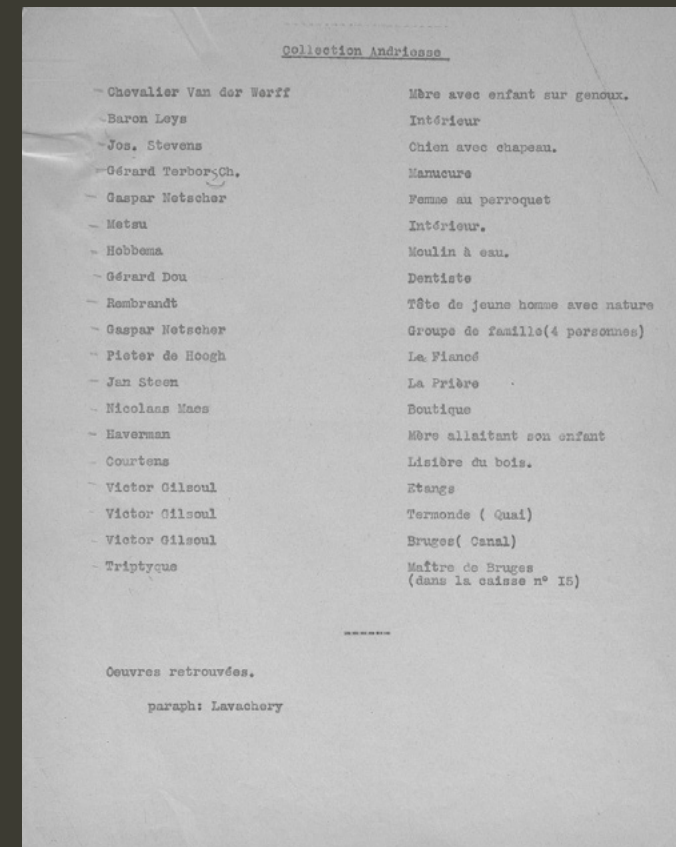
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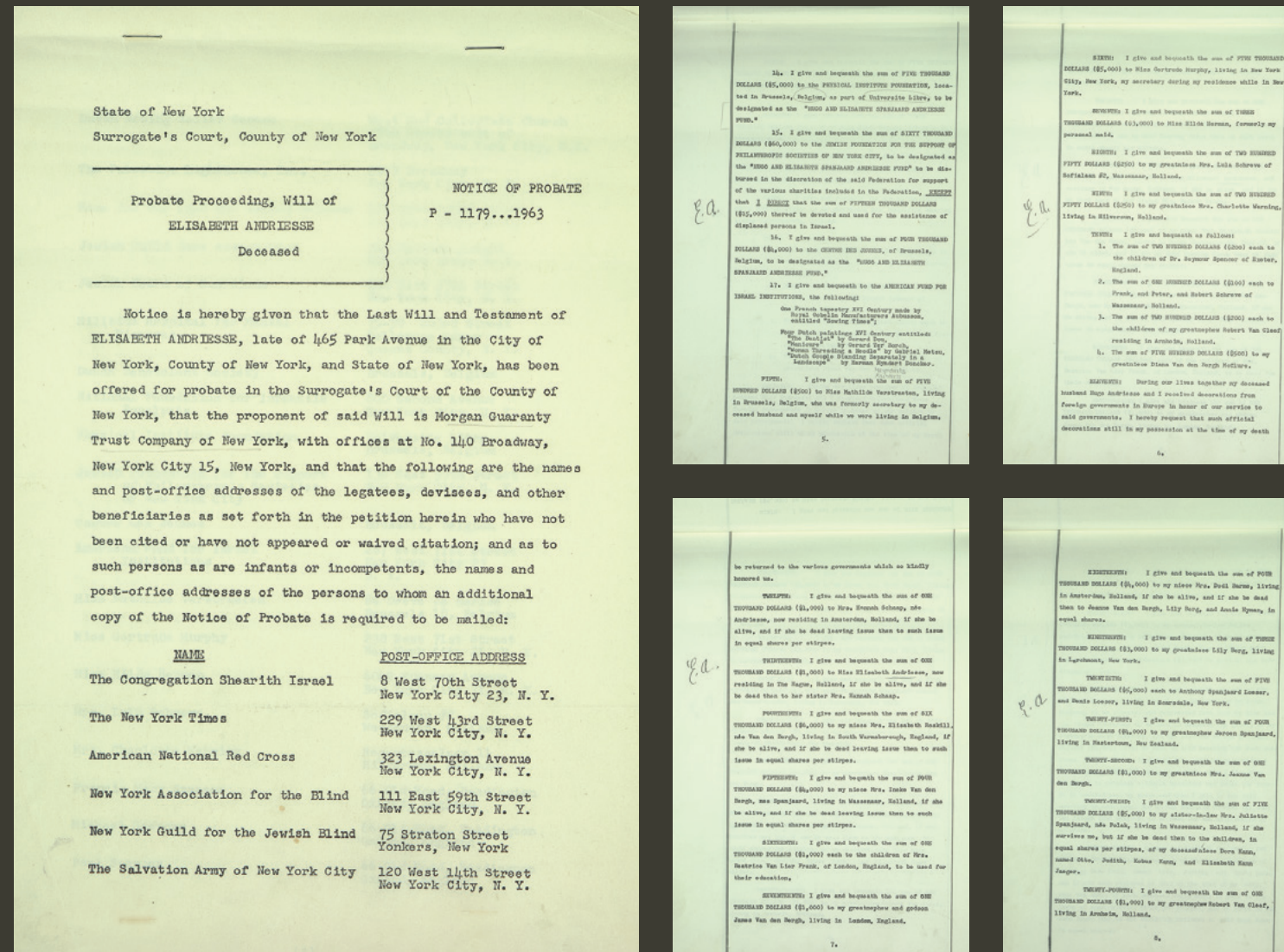
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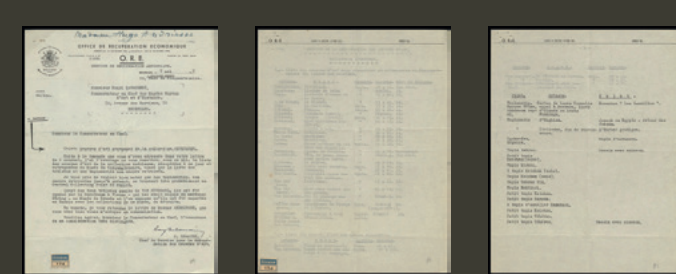
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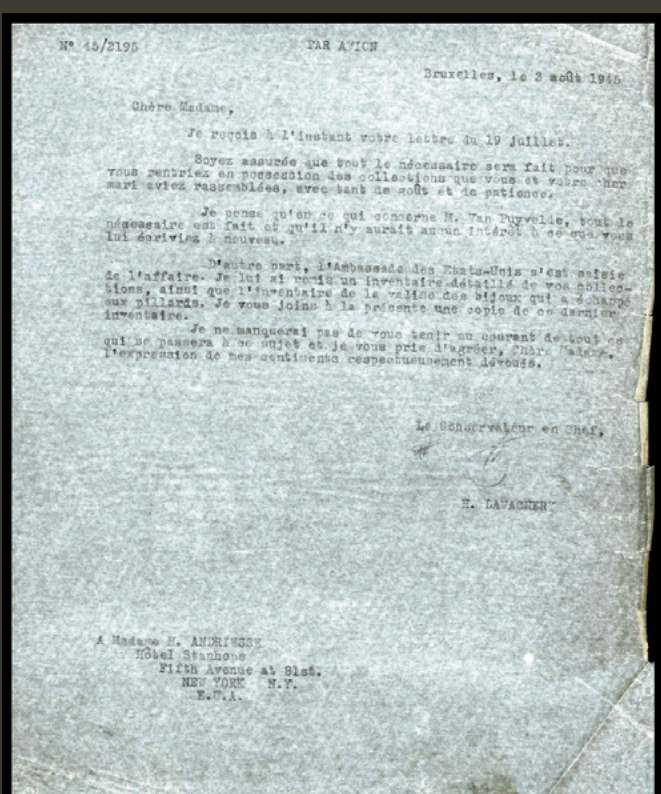
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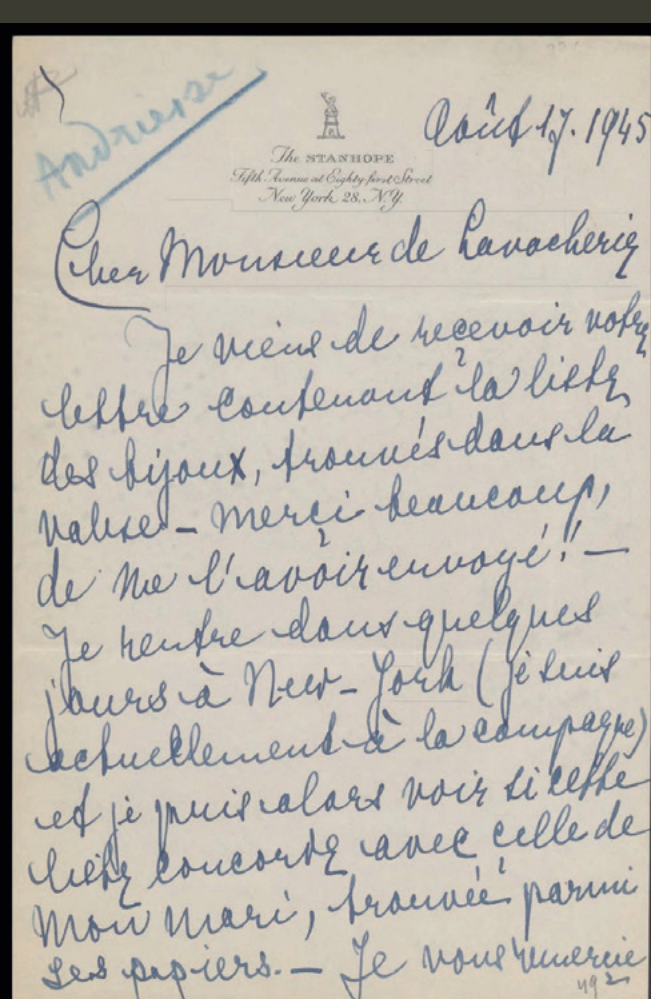
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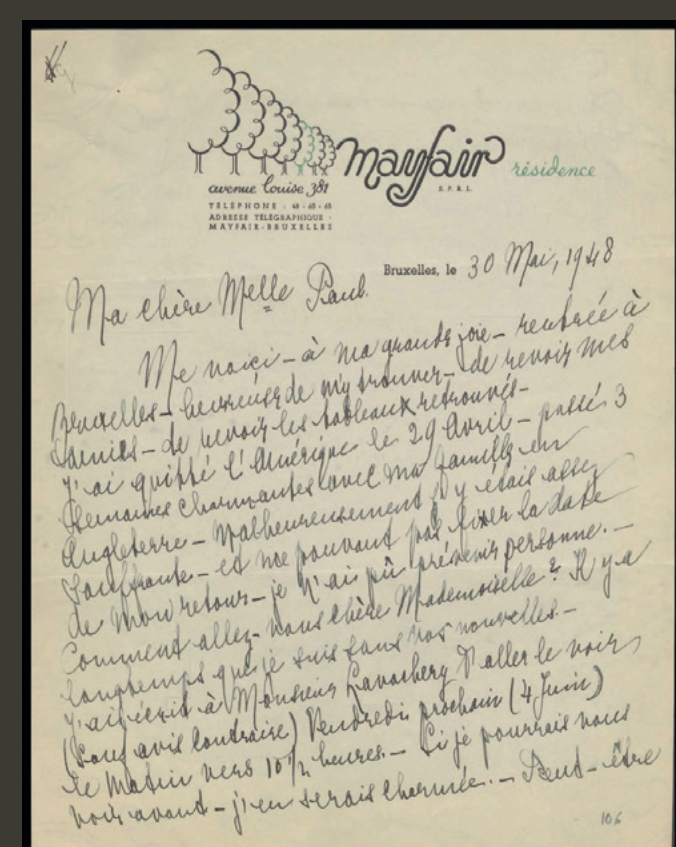
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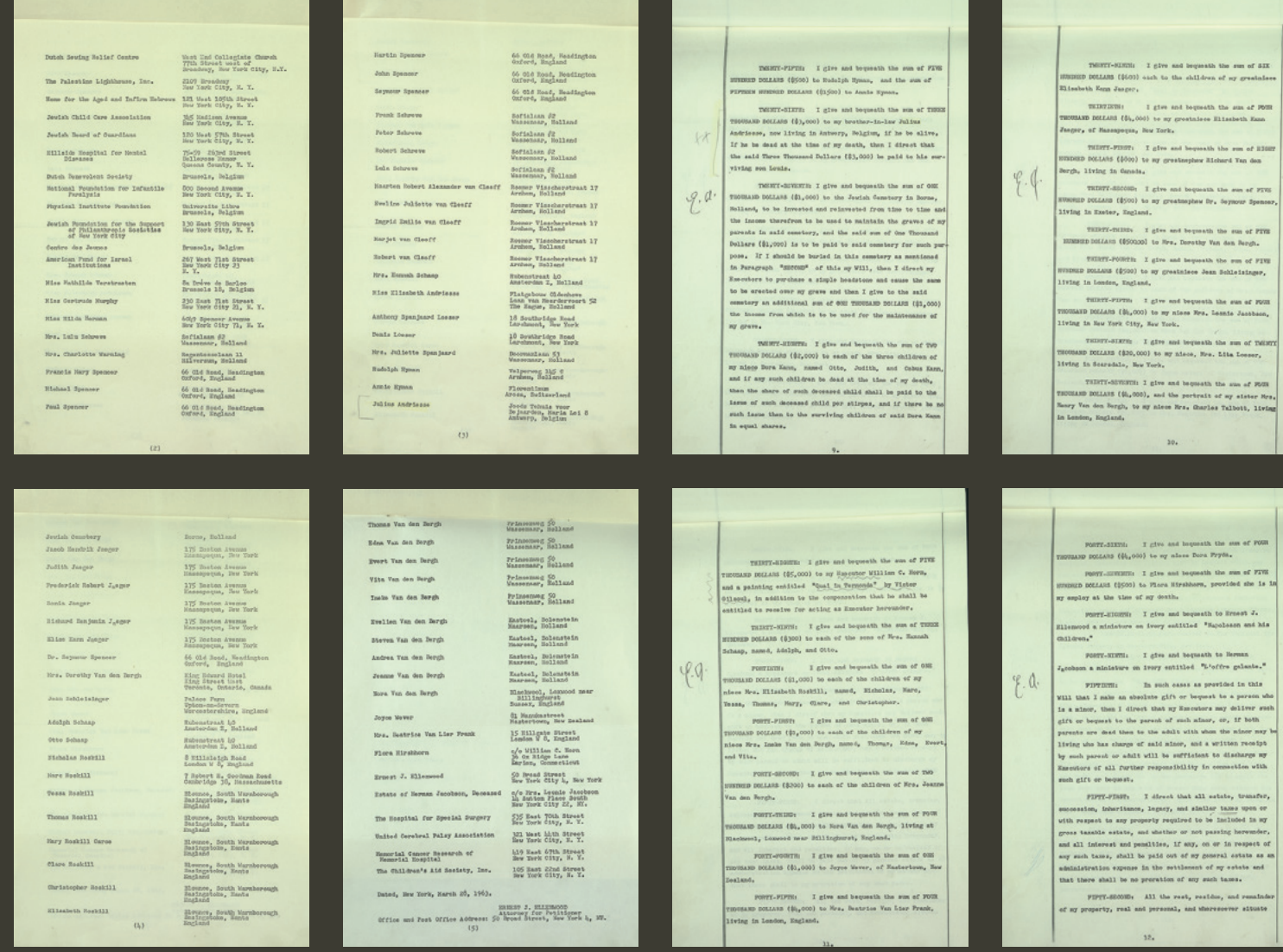
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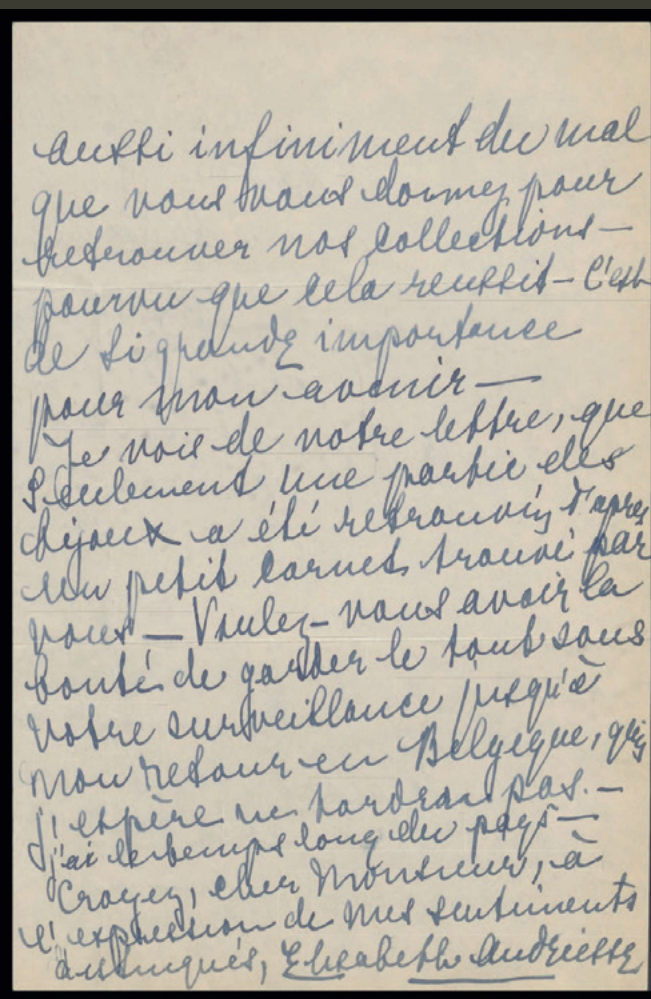
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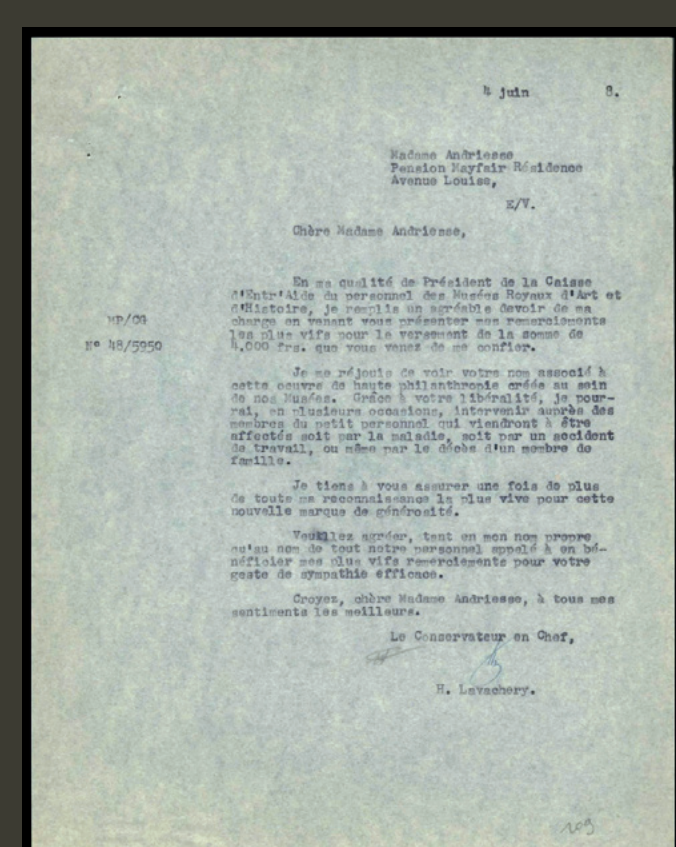
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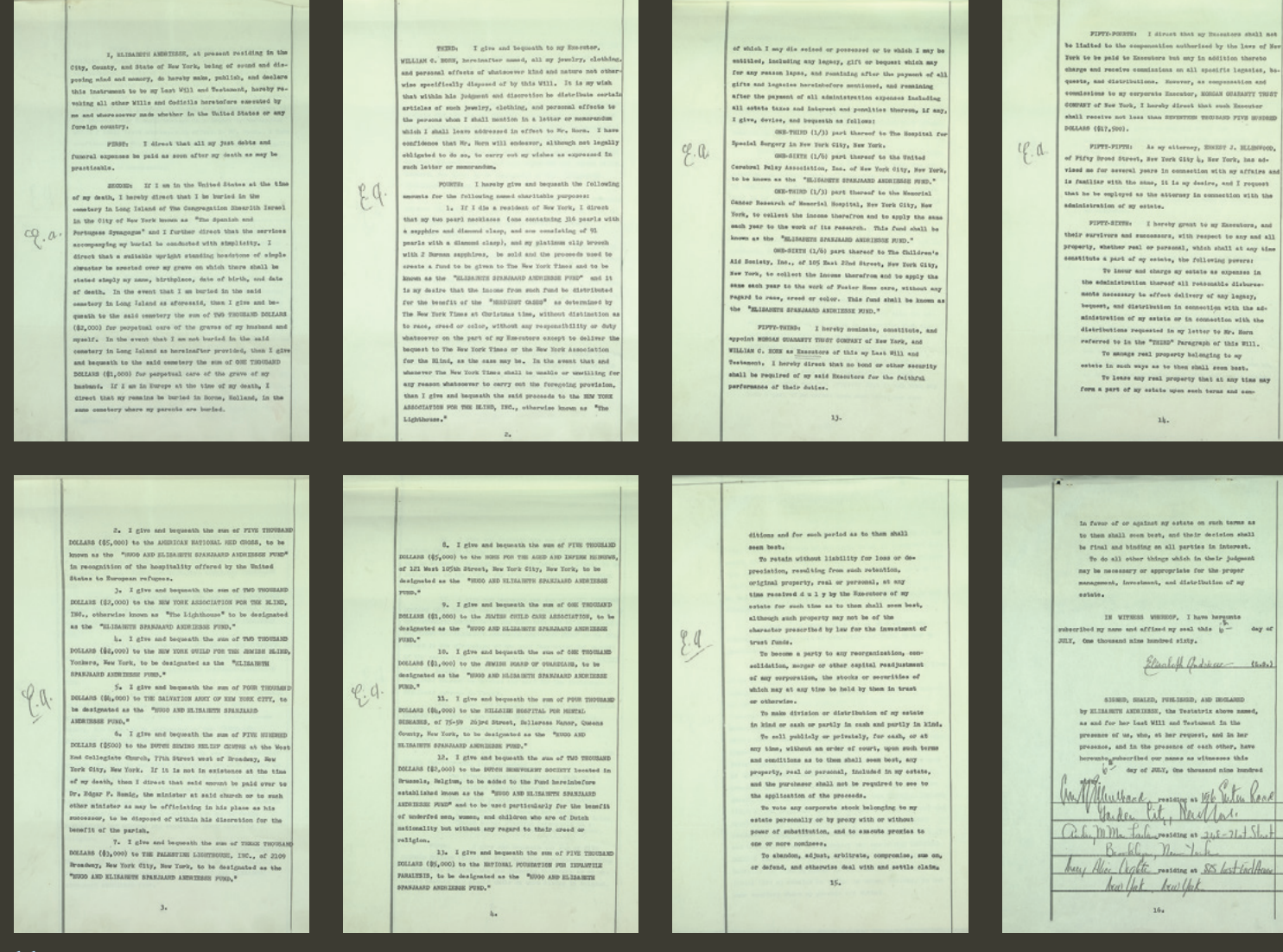
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01 — Grave of Hugo Daniel Andriessie at Beth Olam Cemetery, New York City, JDCRP.

02 — Reference to Hugo Daniel Andriessie's death in *Amigoe die Curacao*: weekblad voor de Curacaosche eilanden, July 7, 1942, Delpher.

03 — Letter by Chief Conservator Henri Lavachery to Elisabeth Andriessie confirming the assistance of the museum in recovering her looted art collection, dated August 3, 1945, Archives des Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire.

04 — Letter by Elisabeth Andriessie to Henri Lavachery, dated July 19, 1945, [sic, 1946] on the discovery of her jewelry collection, Archives des Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire.

05 — Letter from Elisabeth Andriessie to Henri Lavachery, dated August 17, 1945, [sic, 1946] on the discovery of her jewelry collection, Archives des Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire.

06 — Letter by Henri Lavachery to Elisabeth Andriessie, dated June 24, 1946, informing her about the recovery of 20 of her paintings, Rijksarchief in België, BE-A0510 / 695.

07 — Letter by the Office de Récupération Économique (O.R.E.), Service De La Récupération des Œuvres d'Art to Henri Lavachery, May 7, 1947, on the return of the recovered artworks of the Andriessie Collection, Archives des Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire.

08 — Letter by Elisabeth Andriessie to Mademoiselle Paul, May 30, 1948, Archives des Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire.

09 — Letter by Henri Lavachery to Elisabeth Andriessie, dated June 4, 1948, thanking for her donation, Archives des Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire.

10 — Possible site of grave of Elisabeth Jacoba Andriessie, née Spanjaard at Beth Olam Cemetery, Queens, New York City, JDCRP.

11 — Last will of Elisabeth Jacoba Andriessie, née Spanjaard, written on July 6, 1960, Kazerne Dossin - Fonds Andriessie-van der Wijk family.