**Adrianus Johannes (‘Arie’/‘Harry’) Jansen, 1863– 1943 [Draft 5]**

‘Arie’ Jansen was a Dutch ship-portrait painter who was born in Gouda on 20 April 1863 as second and only surviving child of Pieter Jansen (b. 1837, d. before 1925), at that time a ‘dyer’s assistant’ and his wife Johanna Maria (née Snelleman, b. 1833). Both were Roman Catholics from Gouda and married there in 1860. Their first child, Magdalena, born in October 1861, died in January 1863 shortly before Jansen’s birth. Another six followed to March 1876 but all became early infant deaths, the oldest not reaching three. Jansen’s mother appears to have died before 1885, by which time his father had remarried to Johanna Mulkes (b. 1841).

Jansen moved to Rotterdam by early December 1884, where his father and stepmother joined him before September 1885 and remained until returning to Gouda in February 1886. They apparently did so to help him start running a café and bar at Westerkade 17 on the Nieuwe Maas waterfront, for which his father first applied for an alcohol licence in September 1885 but Jansen for its renewal in April 1886. He had by then married in Rotterdam, on 6 January 1886, to Hendrika Christina Gentrop (1864–1928) when he was 22 and she 21. Their daughter Johanna Maria was born on 30 December 1886 and a son, Pieter Johannes Everardus, on 24 August 1888: the latter died aged three on 31 December 1891.

The Westerkade café, with a garden in front and sometimes referred to as the Café Jansen in press mentions of the 1890s, was almost adjacent to the Rotterdam offices of the British Great Eastern Railway Company, whose North Sea ferries docked opposite on the quay. The Jansens continued to live there and run it until no later than June 1903, possibly only late 1902. It was probably a fairly prosperous period for them and they appear to have had a series of maidservants helping domestically and in the café. In March 1899 they employed an experienced 19-year-old called Aplonia Zevernbergen (b. Ridderkerk, 6 February 1880) who remained as live-in help to early January 1901. That Hendrika then advertised – possibly in haste – for a temporary replacement, may suggest Aplonia had left suddenly. The last reference to Jansen as various descriptions of licensee is as a ‘beer-house keeper’ in 1903 but by April that year they had apparently ceased living at the café and moved to Hillelaan 44. This is shown by a press advertisement that Jansen placed to sell a racing bicycle, part of evidence of his keen involvement in athletics and cycling at this period. In June 1899 he was elected Second Secretary of the Dutch Athletics Association (*Nederlandsche Athletiek Bond*) and by August was First Secretary of the Rotterdam Athletics Association as well (*Rotterdamsche Athletiek Vereeniging*): in December 1900 he became First Secretary of the Netherlands Cycling Federation (*Nederlandsche Wieler Bond*), probably continuing until very early in 1906.

By that time the Jansen marriage was breaking up, though as Roman Catholics they never divorced. Whether Jansen had a generally wandering eye is uncertain but he had clearly formed an earlier relationship with the Westerkade maidservant, Aplonia Zevenbergen, which may explain her departure in 1901. In March or April 1906 he left his wife and daughter and moved to Antwerp. Aplonia followed in June, probably unofficially; then, after brief returns to Rotterdam, perhaps to formalize documentation, she also became a registered Antwerp resident in February 1909, soon living with him at Belgestraat 4. Hendrika Jansen remained with their daughter Johanna in Rotterdam, where the latter married Arnhem-born Christianus Hendrikus Jacobus Siep on 4 March 1914. Their son Johannes was born on 4 August that year and in February 1915 Hendrika left the van Waerschustraat (where she had remained after her husband’s departure) to live with them.

In late August 1914, on Germany’s First World War invasion of Belgium, Jansen and Aplonia returned to the northern part of Rotterdam for ten years, living in rented rooms at four addresses within walking distance of the River Maas quays, of which the last (by early 1925) was Rubensstraat 41. In June that year they moved back to Antwerp, their Belgian residence files thereafter recording them as a cohabiting (‘adulterous’) couple. Their first home was a room at St Elizabethstraat 46 and sometime before 1934 they moved to Franckenstraat 4, comprising an upper room with an attic above and their own furnishings.

As an artist Jansen appears to have begun as a self-taught amateur. Probably from about 1890, when already running his Westerkade café, he began painting ship-portraits of the Great Eastern Railway Company ferries and other vessels berthing on the Nieuwe Maas and found a market for them among the seamen and other shipping people who comprised his main clientele. While the last official reference to him as a licensee was in 1903, ‘artist painter’(*kunstschilder*) succeeded this on his Rotterdam family registration record (*Gezinskaart*) at some undated point before his move to Antwerp in 1906. Unless he also received payment for his athletic secretarial duties from 1899, he presumably lived largely as a professional ship-portraitist from about 1903 on and may have been active for as long as about 50 years overall. His surviving ship-portraits are widely distributed: the 27 examples in UK public collections (excluding doubtful attributions) range in date from 1903 to 1933 and testify to the British clientele that he originally found for them.

He generally painted in oils, depicting the Great Eastern Railway passenger and cargo steamers and others running to Rotterdam, Antwerp and the Hook of Holland, and selling his work to personnel on board the vessels, or ashore, as they lay in harbour: his Belgian file at one point noted (though crossed out) that he ‘hawked’ it, which is probably an apt characterisation. He usually signed ‘A.J. Jansen’, including Rotterdam or Antwerp and a date, but appears to have been known to British clients as ‘Harry’, leading to his first initial sometimes being interpreted as ‘H’. This was beyond reasonable doubt an anglicization of ‘Arie’, the common Dutch abbreviation of Adrianus (and there is no evidence that he called himself ‘Adriaan’). Only one picture signed ‘Harry Jansen’ is so far known, dated 1913: this is of the *Titanic*, with an iceberg close behind, now in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. A second version, with a more distant berg, signed ‘A.J. Jansen / ‘R’dam 1918’, and a third with no ice have also been sighted online but these are so far the only examples not of ships he could have seen.

The last painting by him so far identified, dated 1939, is a striking still-life of fruit and flowers on a table (possibly a copy), noted at online German auction in September 2020. By this time his age and a dying market for painted ship portraits had probably turned him towards other subjects. A few small Dutch country and figure scenes have also been sighted online; also a copy of Adolph Artz’s ‘In the orphanage at Katwijk-Binnen’ (painted *c*.1870–90 and in the Rijksmuseum since 1907), and a commemorative portrait of Charles Fryatt, the Great Eastern Railway ferry captain shot by the Germans in 1916 for attempting to ram the U-boat that attacked his ship: the last was probably painted shortly after the event. His overall style is simple, colourful and with graphic affinities to commercial poster art.

Jansen’s wife Hendrika died in Rotterdam on 25 March 1928. Aplonia and Jansen finally married in Antwerp on 9 May 1942, probably in part to protect her position as next of kin and in respect of the small public pension (with extra assistance for the straitened) on which he was then living until his death, aged 80, on 31 December 1943. Aplonia remained at Franckenstraat 5 until possibly as late as 1960, and after two other short local moves died in Antwerp on 11 October 1966.

Jansen’s Belgian residence file, which includes photographs of him and Aplonia in 1925 and 1942, suggests they probably had a fairly precarious existence for at least the last twenty years of his life (<https://bit.ly/3jRv02m>). He should also not be confused with the Danish-born but German-resident marine painter Alfred Jensen (1859–1935), sometimes accidentally called Jansen, who had academic training and became a professor at the Hamburg School of Applied Arts.

*Noted from Art UK discussion on the painting of the steamer* Douglas *by H. Frost in the Manx National Heritage collection, February 2020, and the NMM’s of the* Titanic *by Jansen, Aug.–Dec. 2020. The latter contains a number of informative links including to official Belgian records noting the Jansens’ residential movements, thoroughly documented by Osmund Bullock in the course of the discussion.*

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