

PROVENANCE RESEARCH AT THE LENTOS KUNSTMUSEUM LINZ

Interim Report
October 2019

1. DEFINITION “PROVENANCE RESEARCH”

Provenance research concerns itself with the scientific investigation of the original production and the changes in ownership of artworks or other cultural or archive assets, in museums, libraries and archives and in the art and antiques trade, and attempts to document their entire history.

2. PROVENANCE RESEARCH IN AUSTRIA

Assets systematically looted from Austria's Jews from April 1938 passed to a significant extent into the ownership of public and private collections. Looting concerned all categories of assets, cultural goods such as paintings, drawings, sculptures and furniture down to unassuming household belongings. Depending on their value, these looted objects were either sold to museums and collections or otherwise disposed of. The sale was effected via auctioneers such as Vienna's Dorotheum, a major trading place for looted cultural assets not only during the Nazi era but also after 1945.

The postwar era was characterised by a generally insufficient readiness to restitute looted artworks so that even today there are still in Austria's museums and collections several thousand artworks that had belonged to Jewish collectors before 1938, often without anyone being aware of that fact. Since it is our duty to do everything in our power to cast light on intransparent provenances, research on the history and origins of artworks has become an especially labour intensive, crucial field in the academic and scientific work carried out in museums.

The Federal Art Restitution Act passed in December 1998 (Bundesgesetz über die Rückgabe von Kunstgegenständen aus den Österreichischen Bundesmuseen und Sammlungen, BGBl. 181/1998/181) prioritised provenance research in Austria's federal museums and collections. The chief aim is now to screen museum holdings item by item for their provenance and to check whether they became the property of the Federal Republic in the of the Nazi rule of terror. If that was the case they must be returned to the original owners or, if these are no longer alive, to their rightful heirs. The research required for restitution is being undertaken systematically by the Commission for Provenance Research.

Provenance Research Legislation for States (Länder) and Municipalities

In addition to the legislature at the federal level the state legislative assemblies have also come to recognise the problems arising from the looting of Jewish assets and the inconclusive restitution practice in the postwar era. This has resulted in legislation to ease restitution, which in Upper Austria's case has taken the form of the Landesgesetz über Restitutionsmaßnahmen für Opfer des Nationalsozialismus (State Law on Measures of Restitution for Victims of National Socialism; LGBl. Nr. 29/2002). This legislation provides for restitution free of charge to the original owner or their rightful heirs of artworks looted from victims of National Socialism, in consequence of or in connection with events that took place in the territory of today's Republic of Austria between 1938 and 1945.

Wenngleich die genannten gesetzlichen Regelungen insbesondere aus verfassungsrechtlichen Gründen nicht unmittelbar für die Gemeinden wirksam sind, bekennt sich die Stadt Linz

Even though the legislation mentioned above is not immediately applicable to municipalities largely for constitutional reasons, the City of Linz has nevertheless opted for an approach that corresponds to the intentions of the federal and state legislatures and endorses the policy mandated by the Restitution Law.

3. PROVENANCE RESEARCH IN THE MUSEUMS OF THE CITY OF LINZ

The City of Linz has been committed for decades to a rigorous examination of the role it played in the Nazi era in a way that has been equalled by only few Austrian municipalities. For this purpose, a great number of initiatives have been implemented, such as research projects, publications and exhibitions.

As part of the assiduously pursued provenance research the collections of the City of Linz's museums – collections of paintings, sculptures and graphics dating to before 1945, which were acquired after 1933 – are painstakingly screened. By doing so, the City of Linz follows in the footsteps of Austria's federal museums, which have similarly been engaged since the passing of the 1998 Restitution Law in screening their holdings for artworks looted by the Nazis.

Research on the Provenance of the Wolfgang Gurlitt Collection

In May 2003, the LENTOS Kunstmuseum Linz was founded as an institution to take over from the Neue Galerie der Stadt Linz. The core collection of the Neue Galerie, which was founded in 1946, was comprised of works purchased by the City of Linz in 1952/53 and 1956 from the Berlin art dealer and publisher Wolfgang Gurlitt (1888–1965), 111 paintings altogether plus watercolours, drawings and graphics by German and Austrian artists above all from the 19th and 20th centuries, such as Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, Oskar Kokoschka, Otto Mueller, Lovis Corinth and Max Pechstein.

The origins and histories of works in this collection have been systematically screened since 1998. In 1999, the City of Linz published a first comprehensive research report on the Wolfgang Gurlitt Collection, compiled by the Director of Linz's Municipal Archive, Dr. Walter Schuster. To boost provenance research, Linz's Mayor and the city's Chief Executive Director instigated the formation of a working group in 2007, which has since co-opted several acknowledged experts in the field. Their scope is not limited to the latest provenance inquiries but extends to a systematic investigation into all the artworks the City of Linz purchased from the Wolfgang Gurlitt Collection.

The research results will be stored in the museum's own data archive, which makes it possible to retrace the path research on any specific object has taken in archives and publications and to classify artworks according to the categories "unobjectionable", "objectionable" and "status unclarified". The working group bases its reports and recommendations on the results of ongoing research. A restitution decision is made by the competent political authority of the City of Linz. Depending on the value of the object in question, this is either the city senate as a collegial authority or the City Council.

Standardised Approach and Research Methods

Provenance research at the LENTOS is modelled on the methodological standards in force at Western European and North American museums and is in permanent contact with a great number of institutions both in Austria and abroad.

In addition to the museum's own files, such as inventories of the collection and the purchase documents, provenance research takes into consideration documents from the following archive holdings:

- Sales documents in the Archive of the City of Linz
- Documents at Upper Austria's State Archive (Oberösterreichisches Landesarchiv)
- Documents at Styria's State Archive (Steirisches Landesarchiv)
- Documents at Salzburg's State Archive (Salzburger Landesarchiv)
- Documents at the District Court Bad Aussee
- Documents on Wolfgang Gurlitt in the National Archives, Washington
- Files on Restitution and on Export Permits at the Federal Monuments Authority Austria, Vienna (Bundesdenkmalamt, Wien)
- Files at the Austria Federal State Archive
- Restitution Files at Vienna's Municipal and State Archive (Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv)
- Documentation Center of Austrian Resistance (Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes; DÖW)
- Files at the Treuhand Administration of Cultural Assets at the German Federal Archive (Treuhandverwaltung für Kulturgut im deutschen Bundesarchiv Koblenz)
- Files at the Federal Archive Berlin (Bundesarchiv Berlin)
- Files at the Berlin State Archive (Berliner Landesarchiv)
- Files at the Archive of the Berlinische Galerie
- Exhibition and auction catalogues dating to the period between the 1920s and the 1940s

Research Results

To date, 64 works of art have been investigated, with the focus of the investigation being on the Gurlitt Collection. On the basis of this research 13 paintings have been restituted so far (see Section 4 below).

| Inv.no. | Artist | Title | Date of purchase |
|---------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Corinth, Lovis | Porträt Wolfgang Gurlitt | 1953 |
| 2 | Faistauer, Anton | Stilleben mit Hyazinthe | 1953 |
| 3 | Klimt, Gustav | Frauenkopf | 1953 |
| 4 | Kokoschka, Oskar | Vater Hirsch | 1953 |
| 5 | Kokoschka, Oskar | Marcel von Nemes | 1953 |
| 7 | Romako, Anton | Ruine Liechtenstein | 1953 |
| 8 | Barlach, Ernst | Trauernde (Gipsrelief) | 1953 |
| 9 | Romako, Anton | Don Quichote | 1953 |
| 10 | Romako, Anton | Mädchen mit aufgestützem Arm | 1953 |
| 11 | Schiele, Egon | Bild Trude Engel | 1953 |
| 12 | Schiele, Egon | Brüder Benesch | 1953 |
| 13 | Schiele, Egon | Krumauer Landschaft | 1953 |
| 16 | Corinth, Lovis | Frau vor dem Spiegel | 1953 |
| 17 | Amberg, Wilhelm | Strand in Misdroy | 1953 |
| 18 | Amberg, Wilhelm | Im Garten | 1953 |
| 19 | Anderson, Robin | Sinnende | 1953 |
| 20 | Busch, Wilhelm | Kinder in Landschaft | 1953 |
| 22 | Carus, Carl Gustav | Boot im Eis | 1953 |
| 23 | Corinth, Lovis | Othello | 1953 |
| 24 | Corinth, Lovis | Schwabing | 1953 |
| 25 | Corinth, Lovis | Dächer | 1953 |
| 27 | Faistauer, Anton | Dame in rotem Kleid | 1953 |
| 28 | Feuerbach, Anselm | Nana | 1953 |
| 29 | Feuerbach, Anselm | Musizierende Knaben | 1953 |
| 30 | Feuerbach, Anselm | Steiniger Bergpfad zwischen Felsen | 1953 |
| 31 | Gille, Christian Friedrich | Parklandschaft | 1953 |
| 32 | Gurlitt, Louis | Sabiner Berge | 1953 |
| 33 | Habermann, Hugo von | Stehende Frau | 1953 |
| 34 | Habermann, Hugo von | Dame mit Perlenkette | 1953 |

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| 35 | Habermann, Hugo von | Landschaft | 1953 |
| 36 | Hofer, Karl | Damenporträt | 1953 |
| 37 | Klinger, Max | Blick auf den Vesuv | 1953 |
| 48 | Müller, Otto | Badende Mädchen | 1953 |
| 65 | Kolbe, Heinrich | Im Boot | 1953 |
| 68 | Schick, Rudolf (urspr. Böcklin, Arnold) | Italienische Landschaft | 1953 |
| 69 | Schick, Rudolf (urspr. Böcklin, Arnold) | Der Faun | 1953 |
| 70 | Feuerbach, Anselm | Badende in Landschaft | 1953 |
| 71 | Corinth, Lovis | Weihnachtsbaum | 1953 |
| 72 | Klinger, Max | Sitzender Akt | 1953 |
| 75 | Trübner, Wilhelm | Bildnis Carl Schuch | 1953 |
| 76 | Kokoschka, Oskar | Die Freunde | 1953 |
| 77 | Faistauer, Anton | Liegender Akt | 1953 |
| 78 | Hagemeister, Karl | Zahmes Reh | 1953 |
| 81 | Romako, Anton | Der Zweikampf | 1953 |
| 82 | Romako, Anton | Barcarole | 1953 |
| 83 | Romako, Anton | Zigeunerlager | 1953 |
| 84 | Schick, Rudolf (urspr. Böcklin Arnold) | Gefilde der Seligen | 1953 |
| 94 | Nolde, Emil | Maiwiese | 1953 |
| 103 | Romako, Anton | Mädchen mit Früchten | 1954 |
| 104 | Romako, Anton | Ungarische Puszta | 1954 |
| 105 | Friedrich, Caspar David | Uttewalder Grund um 1825 | 1954 |
| 133 | Hagemeister, Karl | Landschaft | 1956 |
| 134 | Buchholz, Karl | Landschaft | 1956 |
| 137 | Corinth, Lovis | Alte Frau um 1880 | 1956 |
| 138 | Ury, Lesser | Die Näherin | 1956 |
| 139 | Amberg, Wilhelm | Frau im Walde | 1956 |
| 141 | Keller, Albert von | Studie zur "Hexenverbrennung" | 1956 |
| 143 | Beckmann, Hans | Meraner Landschaft | 1956 |
| 145 | Romako, Anton | Bildnis Karl Schwach | 1956 |
| 148 | Kloeber, August Friedrich Karl von | Studie | 1956 |
| 149 | Klimt, Gustav | Frauenbildnis | 1956 |
| 159 | Modersohn-Becker, Paula | Landschaft mit drei Kindern und Ziege | 1958 |
| 168 | Klimt, Gustav | Kuhstall | 1958 |
| 174 | Pechstein, Max | Unterhaltung | 1955 |

4. COMPLETED RESTITUTIONS

1999

Lesser Ury, Die Näherin, 1883

Oil on canvas, 52 x 42.5 cm

Restituted to the rightful heirs of Fritz Loewenthal

Loewenthal's father-in-law William Bennigson was compelled to leave this painting and many other works of art in Berlin prior to his deportation and entrusted them to Wolfgang Gurlitt. In the presence of a witness Gurlitt then gave an undertaking to either return these works of art or to make full payment for them. As early as July 1950, Fritz Loewenthal, who had emigrated to Israel, contacted Wolfgang Gurlitt asking him, among other things, about the whereabouts of the Lesser Ury painting. Gurlitt refused to return the painting. In 1999, the City of Linz formally acknowledged that the Loewenthals had been persecuted and that the sale of the

painting had taken place under duress. The painting was restituted.

2003

Egon Schiele, Krumau (Stadt am Fluss / Krumauer Landschaft), 1916

Oil on canvas, 110.5 x 141 cm

Restituted to the rightful heirs of Daisy und Willy Hellmann

After the Gestapo had confiscated this painting from its owners Daisy and Willy Hellmann in Vienna, it was bought by the Vienna Galerie St. Lucas in 1942 on behalf of Wolfgang Gurlitt at an auction organised by the Dorotheum. An application for restitution submitted by the Hellmanns in 1948 was rejected. In 1952/53 Wolfgang Gurlitt sold the painting to the City of Linz, which finally restituted it in 2003 to the rightful heirs of Daisy Hellmann.

2009

Gustav Klimt, Damenbildnis (Portrait Ria Munk III), 1917/18

Oil on canvas, 180.7 x 89.9 cm

Restituted to the rightful heirs of Aranka Munk

The portrait of the daughter of Viennese industrialists Alexander and Aranka Munk, Ria, who committed suicide at the age of 24 in 1911, was kept by her mother in the Munks' villa in Bad Aussee. In 1941, Aranka Munk was deported to Łódź, where she was subsequently murdered. After Aranka's deportation the portrait was unaccounted for. The circumstances under which it was acquired by Wolfgang Gurlitt, who sold it to the City of Linz in 1956, are likewise unclear. The City of Linz fully acknowledged that Aranka Munk was a victim of Nazi persecution and restituted the painting to her heirs in 2009.

2011

Wilhelm Trübner, Bildnis Carl Schuch, 1871

Oil on canvas, 53 x 43 cm

Amicable resolution with the heirs of Harry Fuld jr.

The painting was acquired from Wolfgang Gurlitt in 1953. Several years after the purchase it turned out that before 1945 the painting had belonged to a Frankfurt patron of the arts, the industrialist Harry Fuld jr. Persecuted by the Nazis for racist reasons, Fuld emigrated in 1937 from Vienna to London, where he died in 1963. He deposited his collection with a Berlin forwarding company, Knauer, for safekeeping. The collection was subsequently confiscated by the Nazis and sold piece by piece by the Berlin auctioneers Hans W. Lange. How Gurlitt acquired the Trübner painting is still a matter of speculation. Since it is evident that Harry Fuld jr. lost his collection because of his persecution and expropriation, the City of Linz reached an amicable resolution with his rightful heirs in 2011.

2012

Anton Romako, Mädchen mit aufgestütztem Arm (the daughter of the artist), ca.1875

Oil on canvas, 72.5 x 61 cm

Anton Romako, Der Zweikampf (Kämpfende Ritter),

Oil on canvas, 110 x 82.5 cm

Anton Romako, Lager im Wald (Zigeunerlager), ca. 1879

Oil on canvas, 41 x 32 cm

Anton Romako, Mädchen mit Nusskorb (Tochter des Künstlers), ca. 1880
Oil on canvas, 139 x 89.5 cm

Anton Romako, Ungarische Puszta (Strohschober in Bálványos), ca. 1880
Oil on canvas, 26.5 x 21.5 cm

Anton Romako, Bildnis Karl Schwach, 1854
Oil on canvas, 45.5 x 37 cm

Restituted to the legal successor of Oskar and Malvine Reichel.
Thanks to the generous goodwill of the Reichel's successor, the six paintings will continue to be displayed at the LENTOS on permanent loan.

Acquired from Wolfgang Gurlitt in 1953–56, all six Romakos were part until 1938/39 of the collection of Oskar Reichel, a medical doctor in Vienna. The fact that as a victim of racist persecution Reichel was forced to sell up under duress after the Anschluss only became known to the City of Linz in the course of systematic provenance research. The paintings were restituted to the Reichels' legal successor. Today they are on display at the LENTOS on permanent loan.

2015

Lovis Corinth, Othello (Der Mohr), 1894
Oil on canvas, 78 x 58.5 cm

Lovis Corinth, Blick aus dem Atelierfenster (Schwabing), 1891
Oil on canvas, 64.5 x 50 cm
Restituted to the rightful heirs of Jean und Ida Baer

The two Corinth paintings, acquired from Wolfgang Gurlitt in January 1953, were part of the Berlin commercial judge and merchant Jean Baer's collection. When Baer died in 1930, he left his collection to his wife Ida Baer, who suffered persecution for racist reasons when the Nazis came to power in 1933. Between 1939 and 1942, when Ida Baer was deported to the concentration camp at Theresianstadt – she was murdered there in the same year – the collection, including the two Corinths, went missing without leaving a trace. It is unknown how Wolfgang Gurlitt acquired the paintings. Acknowledging the status of Ida Baer as a victim of National Socialism, the City of Linz followed the recommendation of Austria's Art Restitution Advisory Board and restituted both paintings to Ida Baer's rightful heirs.

2015

Emil Nolde, Maienwiese (Maiwiese), 1915
Oil on canvas, 48 x 79 cm
Restituted to the rightful heirs of Otto Siegfried Julius

Until September 1938, the painting was part of the collection of the Hamburg urologist Otto Siegfried Julius, who in 1938 fled from racist persecution first to Switzerland and then, in 1939, to the United States. Julius's Hamburg housekeeper tried to ship the priceless collection to Switzerland, but none of the works actually arrived in that country. In November 1953, the City of Linz acquired Emil Nolde's landscape *Maienwiese* from the Salzburg gallerist Friedrich Welz. How Welz came by the Nolde is unclear. On the recommendation of Austria's Art Restitution Board the City Council decided in favour of restitution in 2015.

5. OUTLOOK AND INFORMATION

The systematic screening of the collection with regard to the precise provenance of the works of art is far from complete and is being actively pursued.

For inquiries, evidence or supplementary information please contact:

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