




## Editorial 2/2023

Ulrike Saß  / Florian Schönfuß  / Christoph Zuschlag 

*Let's just do it again!* That's exactly what we were tempted to think after the publication of our newly founded online-journal's premiere issue (1/2022) and the encouraging response it received. Of course, it would not be as simple as that, which became clear all too soon when publication requests for the second annual issue of *transfer* began reaching us together with abstracts and drafts of envisaged articles, again spanning an astonishingly wide-ranging scope of subjects and research areas. These naturally included already established fields of interest, yet also made us encounter various new approaches and pioneering studies carrying provenance research and the history of collection into hitherto neglected, if not entirely omitted regional, material and historical contexts. This went hand in hand with an increasing number of academic disciplines and countries of origin represented by the submitting authors – which we confidently dare to interpret as a joyful answering of *transfer's* continuing call for transdisciplinary cooperation and international exchange.

Taking into account the high number, thematic diversity and pronounced relevance of submissions received, the editors' task of evaluating and selecting manuscripts for publication (as already experienced with the first issue) turned out to be far from easy, despite being excellently supported by our peer-reviewers and advisory board members who again did a fantastic job in lending us their profound special expertise. There is no doubt, however, that we read *all* the manuscripts to our greatest benefit and with the utmost pleasure, gratefully welcoming and honoring each and every submission not least as a reassurance of *transfer* apparently starting to fill a gap in the landscape of academic journals.

While waiting curiously for submissions to arrive at the editorial office, we did not remain idle but yet again approached individual scholars and relevant institutions directly. In so doing, we were able to continue our interview series on the regional coordination centers, networks, and official committees for provenance research in Germany, and beyond. Starting with Alexander Sachse, coordinator for provenance research at the 'Museumsverband des Landes Brandenburg e.V.' (Association of Museums in Brandenburg), our interview questions particularly aimed at the challenges smaller museums, often situated in rural areas, hampered by small budgets and serviced by local volunteers, face when being confronted with the necessity of conducting critical research on their collections. A. Sachse answers these questions in the most well-informed manner by explaining how the Association of Museums in Brandenburg supports and coordinates these local efforts and constantly sensitizes on site for the need, yet also the huge benefits provenance research offers also for smaller, more remote art and cultural property holding institutions. Applying the by now well-known 'Erstcheck' (first check) more and more widely and thus also in suspected cases of unlawful acquisition in colonial as well as Soviet/GDR contexts of injustice, A. Sachse strikingly demonstrates that much can be achieved with little if the chances and prospects of provenance research are imparted for maximum outreach.

This is in many ways equally true for the question of restitutions, which we sought to shed more light on with two further interviews. For the first one, our gratitude goes to Sir Donnell Deeny and Sir Alan Moses, both chairmen

of the United Kingdom's 'Spoliation Advisory Panel' which in 2023 holds presidency over the 'The Network of European Restitution Committees on Nazi-looted Art'. Illustrating how the Spoliation Advisory Panel works, who is entitled to appeal to it, and what legal positions it is based on, D. Deeny and A. Moses also focus on the preconditions, workflows and general situation of provenance research in the UK. It becomes clear that the panel and its claims process have received much international recognition as providing a model process for the resolution of restitution claims. Similarly, a lot of international attention and much appreciation is regularly shown towards the Austrian 'Kunstrückgabegesetz' (Art Restitution Law). As Pia Schölnberger, head of the 'Kommission für Provenienzforschung in Österreich' (Commission for Provenance Research in Austria), points out in this issue's third interview, the Art Restitution Law of 1998, which generally enables provenance research within state-museums and federal collections, was enacted only after rising international pressure on the Austrian state, but not as a direct consequence of the Washington Principles (the signing of which happened just one day earlier). With the Art Restitution Law as its base, P. Schölnberger outlines the approaches, priorities, working procedures as well as the various participating institutions of the Austrian Commission for Provenance Research, its future challenges and achievements until to date.

In turn, it is recent research conducted by two Austrian scholars, Paul Ferstl and Theresa Mallmann, which commences the *Research Articles* section with an in-depth provenance analysis of German romanticist Ludwig Tieck's once impressive private library. Auctioned off in 1849/50 and since then widely dispersed, it took years of meticulous, data-base supported research to reveal the composition, provenance, material attributes and probable usage history of large parts of Tieck's extensive book holdings as well as the 'bibliomaniac's' buying practices, which largely rested on his far-reaching intellectual and antiquarian networks. At least, Tieck's books were sold off voluntarily, producing considerable income for their

lawful owner. Not only in this respect, 'Aktion Licht', the GDR's large-scale confiscation operation in January 1962, during which thousands of save deposit boxes over the whole country were secretly opened, provides a stark contrast. Aiming foremost at valuables of all kind, including works of art, which were then to be transformed into (utterly needed) foreign currency, the yield of the flimsily justified operation carried out by the 'Stasi' (State Security), lagged way behind expectations. How the so-called 'Verwertung' (utilization) of the Stasi's booty was organized, why it was executed by the Tresorverwaltung (treasury) of the GDR's Ministry of Finance, who was buying confiscated objects and not least the latter's further whereabouts are questions addressed for the first time by Janine Kersten.

Successfully locating individual objects and reconstructing circumstances of looting, as Anna-Carolin Augustin and Julie-Marthe Cohen prove in their intuitive article on *Leo I. Lessmann's Lost Judaica Collection*, is not only a matter of detecting and interpreting adequate sources. Their genuine approach of 'quovadiens research' substantiates that an interdisciplinary use of written records combined with oral sources can lead to a better understanding of complex object itineraries, details of seizure and sensitive claims for restitution or compensation. The case of Lessmann's collection of Jewish ritual objects, sent from Hamburg to the Netherlands to safeguard it from Nazi grasp, looted under dubious circumstances in occupied Amsterdam, never to return into its owner's hands who, having fled to Palestine, achieved only a partial compensation by West German authorities, serves as a telling case for demonstration.

Likewise illuminating and in some respects comparable to the aforementioned case is the example of Jewish entrepreneur Carl Sachs' art collection, which was exiled to and later transferred several times within Switzerland. Tessa Friederike Rosebrock examines the collection's fate in the framework of Swiss museums frequently holding deposits of cultural objects from collectors emigrating from Germany to Switzerland due to Nazi persecution. Having to

live from the selling of his artworks, Carl Sachs' collection inevitably got scattered. By analyzing previously unknown archival sources, T. F. Rosebrock identifies and localizes a number of works formerly belonging to the collection, thereby presenting various new aspects of the trading with so-called 'Fluchtgut' (flight assets). Profiting from the Nazis' systematic prowling on Jewish and other persecuted groups' art and cultural property were many self-serving art dealers, some of which nowadays being recorded in the list of *Red Flag Names*. An important, if hitherto less well-known representative of this group is Johannes Hinrichsen, whose biography, trade-networks and business-strategy have recently been researched in detail by Annett Büttner. Her article offers valuable insights into Hinrichsens' acting during the Weimar Republic and the Nazi era, mainly on the footing of as yet unknown source material found in the Hinrichsen family's private archive.

The first of this annual issue's *Research Reports* delves deeper into the phenomenon of art deposits at Swiss museums with Vanessa von Kolpinski outlining the history of such deposits at the Kunstmuseum Basel. Focusing on the Deutsch and Borchardt-Cohen collections while using the Basel museum's acquisition book as a main source, she not only further clarifies the history of those two important art collections yet also illustrates the museum's depositary practices and the circumstances of the objects' storage. Even more practical issues of recognition and identification by collection marks come to the fore in Danielle Smotherman Bennet's paper on Hellenistic and Roman terracottas formerly being part of the famous collection of Daniel Marie Fouquet. At the center of the author's investigation stand the 56 terracottas currently held by the Menil Foundation, Houston, Texas, whose provenance as part of the wider collection history is traced with the help of a critical assessment of old labels containing multiple digit-numbers checked against handwritten archival records and photographs of individual items taken by Fouquet.

It goes without saying that a sound understanding of the contemporary art market is a

prerequisite for reconstructing object biographies. Nils Fiebig broadens our respective knowledge base with his seminal research report on the trading with "exotic", i.e. mainly African and Oceanic art during the first three decades of the 20th century. Looking at protagonists like Leo Frobenius, Alfred Flechtheim or Otto Feldmann, the author makes evident how German gallerists and auctioneers sought to succeed in the trade with non-European art and to develop lucrative business models by applying new strategies while hugely benefiting from established colonial trade structures even until the 1930ies. Such findings likewise help in assessing collections with colonial backgrounds in other European countries, notably France. Holding some of the most important collections of this kind, the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum in Paris also serves as a key place for research and exhibition projects in reciprocal perspective and mutual cooperation with the Indigenous communities affected. We therefore gladly follow Lise Mész reporting on the museum's research policy, methodological approaches, its digital techniques of documenting provenance as well as its prominent advisory role in pending restitution cases. By this means, L. Mész also provides some valuable insights into the legislative framework underlining the status and possible handling of state-owned cultural property in and by the French Republic.

Going one important step further in this direction, the present issue's final research report actually gives word to a representative of a community of origin. Kavinda Bibile, member of a regionally important, autochthonous Veddah family in Sri Lanka, ethnologist Carola Krebs and Indologist Maria Schetelich jointly present an in all respects multi-perspective research endeavor reprocessing and restituting photographs, diary entries, and publications of German anthropologist Egon von Eickstedt, whose research trip to then Ceylon in the 1920ies made an important contribution to the historiography of Sri Lanka's Indigenous people. While all the files, photographs and records today held in Germany were made accessible to him, K. Bibile on his part placed the rich material in his

family archive at his co-authors' disposal, allowing for a mutually refined perception and a fascinating crossing of viewpoints on the effects and aftermath of a German scholarly expedition into British ruled Ceylon.

We complete the second issue of *transfer* with no less than five inspiring *Case-Studies*, confirming the validity, but also refining approaches of research while also adding a lot of new ideas and perspectives. The already well-researched and frequently discussed biography of Hannah Arendt, as Shlomit Steinberg, senior curator and provenance researcher at The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, shows, still bears some yet unknown, if undoubtedly remarkable facts concerning our field of interest. Reconstructing Arendt's stay in Germany between late 1949 and early 1950 on the basis of her diaries and private letters, S. Steinberg ably highlights Arendt's mission for the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (JCR) and thus some important aspects of her public activity in the field of restitution. Obvious lacuna and former misconceptions likewise gave the incentive for an essential reassessment of the provenance history of *Virgin and Child*, a famous panel painting by Lucas Cranach the Elder today kept at the Mauritshuis in The Hague, which Emma van Benthem presents in her paper. Having been part of Hermann Göring's enormous collection of looted art, E. van Benthem for the first time retraces the painting's provenance also for the crucial period between 1940 and 1946.

Undeniably, many of today's collecting institutions have colonial roots. Through an in-depth study of historical societies in the United States, whose historic roots predominantly lie in the colonialization of Native American people, Jennifer Hoyer explores how art and cultural property holding institutions may accomplish a transformation into a decolonial future existence. Turning to Sarah Ahmed's theory on queer use and Saidiya Hartman's method of critical fabulation, J. Hoyer suggests a 'roadmap', applicable also for other types of libraries, archives, and special collections, to scrutinize colonial practices imbued in institutional identities and to explore ways these can be mitigated.

Within said colonial, or at least quasi-colonial contexts, archeological artefacts constitute a major category regarding the transfer of cultural objects. This is yet again demonstrated by Gökay Kanmazalp through his investigation of the Boğazköy restitution case, which unfolded between 1906 and 2011 around 10.000 cuneiform tablets and two Hittite sphinxes unearthed by several German excavation projects from the Boğazköy archaeological site in Turkey. Examining archival documents from the Republican Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey and the Central Archive of the Berlin State Museums, the author skillfully reveals the intricate negotiations and power dynamics between German and Turkish museum authorities before a frequently changing political background. No less turbulent times of change and upheaval in the course of the 20th century prevented what was clearly not intended to finally remain only in the form of plans, drawings and sketches: a thermal hotel in Austro-Hungarian Budapest. That architectural bequests, like the one containing the hotel's plans by the renowned Hungarian architects Ede Dvořák and Győző Czigler, represent precious cultural heritage and how respective provenance research can enrich our knowledge far beyond collection history and the reconstruction of edificial details, is vividly exhibited by Enikő Tóth, curator at the Hungarian Museum of Architecture and Monument Protection Documentation Center in Budapest.

From Eastern Europe to Sri Lanka, from the USA's Midwest to the North of modern-day Turkey, from the Netherlands to West Africa – these are just some imaginary milestones reflecting on this issue's *tour d'horizon*. And that's only the geographical scope, leaving momentarily aside historical, material, cultural or methodological contexts and viewpoints. Needless to say, we would never be able to cover such a dazzling variety of research fields with our own, limited knowledge alone. Depending on expert expertise from dedicated specialists, it is hence to our greatest pleasure being able to announce that we could win Prof. Dr. Barbara Kristina Murovec



(Florence/Ljubljana) as well as Prof. Dr. Didier Houénoude (Abomey-Calavi) to join, and notably strengthen, our advisory board.

Sadly, we nonetheless have reason to mourn, lamenting the great loss of a committed supporter and esteemed friend of our journal. Leonhard Weidinger, a great scholar and early pioneer of digital and cross-linked provenance research, passed away just shortly after lending us his helping hand by rendering valuable advice on one of our articles. Owing him a huge debt of gratitude, we publish this issue in his memory.

Our great thanks for making this second issue of *transfer – Journal for Provenance Research and the History of Collection* possible goes to all our submitting authors, our peer-reviewers and advisory board members, with a special thanks again for the reliable support and patient advice from our webhosting partner Heidelberg University Library, notably Maria Effinger, Alexandra Büttner, Frank Krabbes and Bettina Müller. We do not know how this publication could have been realized without the magnificent technical support and creative talent of our graphics designer Benedikt Schmitz who shall be assured of our utmost gratitude. For the generous funding this journal receives, we sincerely thank the German Research Foundation (DFG). Last but not least, we heartily thank our whole readership for the encouraging feedback and all the friendly affirmations we received so far. Already looking forward to the next one, we very much hope that the issue at hand won't leave too much to be desired. Wishing you a pleasant reading!


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#### Reference

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