




Editorial 3/2024

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All good things come in threes! That's at least what we hoped to prove right with respect to our annual issues when *transfer* started as a project in autumn 2021 – for we knew third-party funding had been acquired for no more than three years. So, *first things first*, we are very pleased to announce that the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation) has not only prolonged, but also generously extended its support via a second funding grant. This will enable us to continue *transfer* as a fully-fledged Diamond Open Access e-journal, to increase the number of issues per year, to realize Special Issues in cooperation with guest editors, and to offer the quality-assured publication of research data related to individual articles, aiming at even more transparency, interoperability and research synergies in the field of provenance research and the history of collection. We will circulate detailed information on *transfer's* future form and its new features in due course, but to begin with, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to German Research Foundation for making all this possible. This generous funding obliges us to thoroughly reflect on where *transfer* as a transdisciplinary Open Access platform for all aspects of provenance research and contexts of injustice could support future research and academic exchange in the best possible way, and on which projects and fields of research might profit most from its international outreach and high visibility.

More than 25 years after the proclamation of the Washington Principles in 1998, there is still a lot to be done “to ensure that the Nazis’ actions and world view do not remain unchallenged in the galleries and storerooms of our museums today”, as Jacques Schumacher strikingly puts it in his new research guide on *Nazi-Era Provenance of Museum Collections*.¹

Modes of application and transformation into national law, publicity and transparency, funding and political support, access to collections, archives and libraries – to name just a few vital aspects – significantly differ between the 42 countries which have signed the *Washington Conference Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art*. Nevertheless, a comprehensive, country by country assessment of the Washington Principles’ current implementation in all its signatory states still poses a pressing desideratum.

So far, only five European countries have established restitution commissions, one of which is the Netherlands. Taking the lead for our third annual issue, we feel honored that Dick Oosting and Toon van Mierloo – as chairs of the Advisory Committee on the Assessment of Restitution Applications for Items of Cultural Value and the Second World War in the Netherlands – consented to participate in our ongoing interview series on coordination centers, networks, and committees for provenance research and restitution. Rendering advice on restitution applications concerning art and cultural objects held in the Netherlands since its foundation in 2001, the Dutch Restitution Committee is responsible for the restitution of items of cultural value in the Dutch National Art Collection and the Netherlands Kunstbezit Collection. As D. Oosting and T. van Mierloo further explain, if an application for restitution concerns an object owned by a party other than the Dutch State, the Restitutions Committee issues a binding opinion to the applicant and the other party. Offering valuable insights into past and present restitution cases in the Netherlands, the Dutch Restitutions Committee’s two chairmen also describe the 2020 evaluation of Dutch restitution policy conducted in the *Kohnstamm Report*, which lead to several adjustments of the Committee’s proceedings.

A sound restitution practice seeking just and fair solutions depends on proper and systematic

1 Jacques Schuhmacher: *Nazi-Era Provenance of Museum Collections: A research guide*, London 2024, <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10190231/1/The-Nazi-Era-Provenance-of-Museum-Collections.pdf>, <01.12.2024>.

provenance research – this is no less true at a regional level. We were thus delighted to hear that Museumsverband Thüringen (Association of Museums in Thuringia) followed recent developments in setting up its own coordination center for provenance research in 2023. This was of course not the only reason why we approached Sabine Breer with corresponding questions for this annual issue's second interview. With a combination of, on the one hand, many local, often poorly funded smaller museums, and on the other hand several world-famous institutions disposing of own, in-house positions for provenance research (such as the Klassik Stiftung Weimar), conditions for provenance research in Thuringia vary greatly. This necessitates an even closer coordination between individual museums, as S. Breer points out. Not least in view of recent political developments, she raises awareness for a unique historical responsibility regarding the NSDAP's early accession to power in Thuringia, which was later transformed into a role model region for future Nazi rule.

With a challenging provenance gap spanning from 1817 to 1938, a suspected case of Nazi art loot yet again comes to the fore with the undated and unsigned painting *Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* by Caspar David Friedrich. Nadine Bauer and Ute Haug open our *Research Articles* section with an investigation of this famous artwork's provenance. Thereby, the problem of attribution figures prominently because it significantly codetermines the search for origin, as the authors convincingly explain, at the same time sensitizing for the general problem of false attributions and their repercussions for source critique. Ulrich Weitz turns his attention to political opponents of the Nazi regime, who in many cases equally became the victims of art looting. Examining the case of Socialist agitator, publisher and art collector Eduard Fuchs, a close friend and important collector of Max Slevogt, U. Weitz retraces the special relationship between the leftwing publisher and the impressionist artist whose talent Fuchs not only discovered early, but also harnessed to illustrate his own political and satirical publications. Fuchs was exiled to France in 1933. Despite skillful attempts to bring his collection to safety, utilizing his wide networks and legal support from abroad, Fuchs ultimately had to leave his collection to seizure by the Gestapo.

Nazi Germany's foreign and occupation policy in Eastern Europe was deeply interwoven also with regards to the systematic looting of art and cultural objects, as Daniela Mathuber underlines when presenting the results of her provenance research project on looted books, maps and manuscripts in the library of the Leibniz-Institut für Ost- und Südosteuropaforschung (Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies) in Regensburg. During – and indeed for many years after – World War II, the leading personnel of the institute's two predecessor institutions had been active in 'Ostforschung' and making use of corresponding networks for the acquisition of looted books from nearly all formerly occupied countries in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In many respects linked to the concept of 'Ostforschung', the ethnographical collection on everyday culture in Southeastern Europe, assembled during the 1930s by the photo-journalist and later botanist Gustav-Adolf Küppers, is today held at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen (Museum of European Cultures) in Berlin. Matthias Thaden not only reconstructs the collection's creation as an endeavor to save a supposedly disappearing "Volkskultur" in the context of contemporary folklore, racist ideology and German foreign policy led by economic interests in the region. He also traces the dense networks Küppers maintained within the rightwing Völkisch movement during the 1920s and 1930s.

For Eastern Europe in particular, provenance as a historical and legal argument was all too often employed by national interest, and yet proves extremely fluid in view of the fundamental territorial changes and population displacements during and after World War II. This is convincingly demonstrated by Emma Pihl Skoog regarding the dispute over the Teutonic Order's archive after 1945. Analyzing and comparing West German, Polish and Swedish perspectives, she concludes that despite varying interpretations among contemporary scholars lead by national, cultural and historical considerations, the principle of provenance emerged as a key point of contention with far-reaching implications for the fate of historical archives. The biography and networks of private GDR art collector Alfred Lefmann are explored by Julia Kretzschmann shedding new light on the art trade in the GDR in general, and on the role of "Kommerzielle Koordinierung"

(Commercial Coordination) and its unconventional foreign trade strategies in particular. The author explains how Lefmann, despite enjoying privileges and exerting much influence within the GDR Ministry of Culture, lost substantial parts of his art collection due to the opaque practices of the GDR's art and currency trade. Using Lefmann as a case-study, J. Kretzschmann critically examines the functioning of the Ministry of Culture and the protection of cultural property, which often served as a pretext for unlawful dispossession of private collectors, thereby illuminating relevant dynamics within institutional as well as unofficial structures of the GDR.

The GDR's art and museum policy also figures prominently in Barbara Bechter's *Research Report* on misallocations to and from the Porzellansammlung Dresden (Dresden Porcelain Collection) in the wake of the 1958 restitution of huge quantities of art and cultural objects taken by Soviet trophy brigades during and immediately after WWII to the GDR. With the help of Ukrainian archivists, B. Bechter was able to explore a 1947 file on looted art taken by Ukrainian trophy brigades currently held at the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Kiev. This yielded important evidence regarding the Porzellansammlung Dresden and valuable new insights into the history of the collection, which the author presents in a broader context of GDR museum history. Questions of museum management and the establishment of Soviet cultural paradigms are also addressed by Konstantin Akinsha, Kristina Bekenova, Vera Dzyadok, Oksana Kapishnikova and Maria Silina in their research report on museums in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Eastern Europe. Presenting four different case studies, the authors examine the legacy of Soviet museum management after the USSR's collapse in 1991 in former Soviet states and explore the complex interactions between local communities and museum work. They conclude that the impact of Soviet colonialism is still very much tangible in museums and in the cultural policy of the addressed Soviet successor states, setting a general challenge likewise for museum and heritage studies at an international level.

Heading back to Nazi looted art but still focused on developments in Eastern Europe, Zuzana Löbbling takes a look at the restitution of

Nazi-confiscated art in the Czech Republic from a legal perspective. After discussing current and past Czech legislation in the field, Z. Löbbling compares the recent Czech approach to international principles on Nazi-confiscated art, while also providing some practical recommendations for institutions holding Czech state collections. Nazi art looting and the regime's campaign against so-called "degenerate art", reaching its high point in 1937, had severe implications on market prices and art circulation. In his research report, Nils Fiebig shows that this was also the case for African, Oceanic and other Non-European art which until then had been put into dialogue with contemporary modern art by many art dealers and gallerists who were then mostly forced into exile. N. Fiebig argues that despite quite high prices being realized internationally between 1934 and 1945, the market for Non-European art was characterized by exile, denunciation and opportunism while the confiscation of relevant Jewish-owned collections raises questions about the exploitation of looted African and Oceanic art by institutions such as the Gestapo's "Administration Office for Jewish Relocation Goods".

Georg A. Müller and Martin E. Berger look at a very different market when examining the provenance of archaeological objects from Southern Central America in two prominent Dutch ethnographic museums, the Wereldmuseum Leiden and the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam. Investigating the two museums' acquisition practices as well as the biographies of individuals and the history of institutions involved in the objects' supply, the authors elucidate that the collecting of Southern Central American archaeological material in the two Dutch museums should be seen in the context of mostly US-driven corporate and geopolitical interests in the region and was deeply shaped by personal interests and relationships. Personal relationships between Imperial German and British representatives of the local colonial administrations at Lake Malawi in East Africa were fundamental for the appropriation of German gunboat captain Theodor Berndt's ethnographic collection, which he bestowed to the Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum Hannover (Lower Saxony State Museum Hanover) in 1896 where it remains until today. Choosing a trans-imperial approach, Maik Tusch contextualizes

the collection in the German-British colonial co-operation to subdue the local Black population by lending mutual military and logistic support in case of uprisings, during which ‘spoils of war’ – in the form of ethnographic objects – were taken and shared. While it cannot be proven, as M. Tusch explicates, that the collection originates from those interactions, the historical context clearly suggests that many of the objects may have been acquired by violent means.

We sustain the focus on colonial contexts of acquisition at the start of our *Case Studies* section with an expert view on the complex matter of Indigenous human remains. Marie Hoffmann and Wanda Zinger take us on an imaginary journey on the late nineteenth-century French ship *Le Seignelay*, accompanying the real Alphonse Louis Pinart who assembled an astounding collection of human remains during his travels in Oceania. Reconstructing the provenance of Pinart’s collection, the authors reflect on ethical and decolonial questions raised by working with ancestral remains against the background of the cultural and historical specificities of Oceania, arguing for a well-balanced contribution of scientific data to provenance research. A different, yet nonetheless significant kind of data in these contexts can be provided by historical labels, as Johanna Annau, Katja Schurr and Sümeyye Tarhan demonstrate with respect to University of Tübingen’s ethnological collection. As a chance find, these historical labels provide valuable information not only on the objects and their provenances, but also on the collection’s early protagonists. Matching the transcribed labels against corresponding data in the university museum’s database proved to be essential for reviewing data consistency and accuracy and can serve as an example for research on other collections, as the authors explain.

More classical methods of source criticism are employed by Katja Lindenau conducting provenance research on three large preparatory drawings by Oskar Kokoschka for the Breslau crematory planned in 1914, today located at the Kupferstich-Kabinett (Museum of Prints, Drawings and Photographs) in Dresden. K. Lindenau meticulously retraces the provenance of the three drawings back until 1927, thereby disproving previous suspicions that they were looted art.

Finally, a similar project of proactive provenance research, albeit for a whole collection of around 1.200 prints, drawings and autographs established by the Leipzig art lovers Gertrud and Friedrich Lieber and now held at Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Oldenburg (Oldenburg State Museum of Art and Cultural History), is presented by Marcus Kenzler. Providing detailed information on the collectors’ biographies and the collection’s formation, including individual works by Lovis Corinth, Lyonel Feininger, Käthe Kollwitz, Max Liebermann and Edvard Munch, M. Kenzler reports that intense provenance research over several years, despite a number of suspected cases, did not confirm any of the Lieber collection’s graphic works as Nazi-looted art.

Three shorter articles providing key theses of ongoing work round off this year’s annual issue in the *Miscellanea* section. Florina Weber presents a summary of her master’s thesis on the Musée National d’Art Moderne in Paris and its opening in 1942 in the context of Nazi German occupation. The museum’s wartime opening on August 6th 1942 has hitherto often been interpreted as an act of defiance by the French art scene. Analyzing sources from various French archives, F. Weber points out that the opening would in fact not have been possible without explicit toleration by the German occupation regime, highlighting the importance of tracing personal relationships between the French and German officials involved. Focusing on the dominant value and meaning of restituted objects in National Socialist as well as colonial contexts for the purpose of engaging with past injustices, Leah Niederhausen und Klaas Stutje call our attention to objects of alternative value, belonging to marginalized groups or appreciated in different value regimes, which have so far been excluded from the restitution debate. Asking how returned objects shape social understandings of victim groups, the authors advocate for a ‘social provenance research’ perspective to contemplate challenges of exclusion and different value systems.

Citizenship and its significance as either a catalyzing or protective factor in the context of Nazi art loot, unlawful confiscation and other forms of discrimination against Jewish art dealers and collectors poses the central question in Jasmin Kienberger’s paper on the Munich art dealer Norbert

Fischmann. As a former Austrian, and then Polish citizen born in Galicia and categorized as 'Jewish' despite being religiously non-practicing, Fischmann was issued with an occupational ban by the Nazis because of his 'Jewishness'. However, his art objects and further capital assets were seized on the pretext of his Polish nationality shortly after Nazi Germany's attack on Poland in 1939, as J. Kienberger observes on the basis of relevant documents in German, Swiss and British archives. Fischmann decided not to return from a business trip to London shortly before the outbreak of WWII. In Britain, his Polish citizenship prevented him from being categorized as an "enemy alien", and facilitated his acquisition of British citizenship, enabling him to continue his art dealership in the UK.

For our *Book Reviews* section, Brigitte Reincke contributes an extensive discussion of Heike Schroll's recent study on the dislocation of municipal and private art and cultural property in Berlin during WWII and the city council's efforts for recovery and return of those objects during the post-war years. Reviewer and author alike highlight the special circumstances, opportunities and difficulties which arose due to Berlin's status as the former capital of Nazi Germany and its postwar fate as divided, multi-sectored city under Western Allied as well as Soviet occupation. As a gentle reminder, we would like to state again at this point that we explicitly welcome reviews of relevant monographs, anthologies, conference publications or source editions and will gladly procure reviewer's copies for future, highly appreciated book reviews in *transfer*.

To sum up, this annual issue once again brings together a multitude of fascinating articles from all three major theaters of provenance research, namely National Socialist lootings, colonial contexts of injustice, and – in particular – unlawful appropriations and the regime-promoted illegal art trade in former Eastern Bloc countries, including the GDR and Soviet occupation zone. Moreover, various new methodological and conceptual questions, legal and political aspects, collection histories and individual biographies and, last but not least, an astonishingly high number of new sources and techniques for research are presented, hopefully serving as an inspiration and as a sound knowledge base for our readership. As with

previous issues, this outcome was not planned but is the result of the very high number of submissions by authors from various countries and academic disciplines, including many PhD students and early career researchers. Achieving a reasonable selection out of all these welcome submissions was in turn only possible with the help of our peer reviewers, lending us their highly-appreciated expertise, and our advisory board, providing their guidance and numerous valuable suggestions.

We are very much obliged and deeply grateful to all submitting authors, to our reviewers and advisory board members for their hard work, their commitment and their manifold creative input. For their superb technical support and long-term helping hand we sincerely thank the team of *arthistoricum.net* at Heidelberg University Library, notably Maria Effinger, Frank Krabbes and Bettina Müller. For his ever-skillful handling of *transfer's* layout, typesetting and graphics design, we heartily thank Benedikt Schmitz. We also thank all our readers, not least for sending us their critical feedback, and their many ideas which we will gladly seek to implement in developing *transfer's* future.

In confidence that good things will continue, we wish you a pleasant reading!

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Reference

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