




Editorial 1/2022

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Founding an academic journal is always a risk, founding an international, transdisciplinary open access online-journal under the common impression of an alleged “Zeitschriftenkrise”¹ (journal-crisis) and in the midst of a global pandemic is a challenge, to say the least. And yet the barnstorming ascent of provenance research within academia, forming a very dynamic field of research in itself whilst demanding the highest possible level of interdisciplinary cooperation and research transparency, gave the most promising call to accept it. Fully aware of the huge commitment by the community and the many helping hands it would need to tackle said challenge, the editors did not hesitate to make themselves an urgent call: for papers! It was answered rapidly, and on a scope, we would never have expected: until first issue’s submission deadline in May 2022, an impressively high number of manuscripts, covering a multitude of subjects and research fields, written by authors from countries all over the globe, ranging from emerging early career researchers to established scholars and international experts, arrived at the editorial office.

Somewhat overwhelmed by the sheer number of submissions, but grasping this as yet another proof of the uniting, cross-disciplinary “Power of Provenance” (to cite Stacey Pierson’s homonymous article in this issue), *transfer*’s approach of using the concept of provenance as a ‘probe head’ to illuminate apparently all too different research fields from a new angle, revealing hidden interrelations and potential synergies, seems to have landed on fertile soil. However, the need to carefully assess

such a large number of submissions by scholars from many different academic disciplines showed the double-blind peer-review process chosen for *transfer* to be an even more essential tool of quality assurance. Without doubt a laborious procedure, it was to the editors’ utmost pleasure to see their call again answered vividly by those 25 reviewers volunteering to immediately offer their expert expertise, as well as their valuable time and trust, supporting a journal ‘under construction’ also with precious advice and diligently “spreading the word” (Laurie Stein). Of course, it would never have been possible to obtain the help of all those specialized reviewers without the tireless and often invaluable support of our advisory board, already guiding us much in developing the journal’s concept, its thematic scope, not least its name, by assisting with expert expertise whenever required as well as steadfastly encouraging us to keep on going.

At first glance, this annual issue’s table of contents might resemble a wild potpourri of topics, arbitrarily selected by the editors. Choices had to be made indeed. In view of the high number of submissions, stretching our technical, financial and (wo)manpower resources to the limit, nearly every text published sadly implied that another one had to be rejected. This meant weighing decisions carefully, yet also necessitated sound selection criteria. Besides rigorously checking for good academic practice, we also tried to ensure the best possible balance between the various disciplines and research fields involved, between prevalent and novel methodological approaches, different countries/regions of origin, contexts of injustice (Colonialism, National Socialism, Soviet Occupation Zone/GDR) and language of publication, while always trying to secure enough space and visibility for younger scholars. On top, yet also further structuring the journal as a whole, came our decision to

1 See the report on the corresponding discussion-section ‘Jeopardized Journals. Academic Periodicals Today’ held at the 53rd Deutscher Historikertag in Munich, 5th-8th October 2021, <https://www.historikertag.de/Muenchen2021/en/sektionen/jeopardized-journals-academic-periodicals-today/>, <28.09.2022>.

strive for a consistent filling of the characterizing text categories (research articles, research reports, case studies, miscellanea, interviews, book/exhibition reviews). These also center on the concept of provenance, deliberately linking together and mutually supporting what might otherwise just be perceived as individual, subject specific questions and approaches.

Provenance research, besides proper funding, needs coordination, publicity and networking, without which individual research projects all too often reach dead-ends and remain largely unseen even within the academic community. Facilitating this are state-funded ‘coordination centers’ or ‘networks’, in Germany being organized at a regional level, like the recently founded ‘Koordinationsstelle für Provenienzforschung in Nordrhein-Westfalen’ (Coordination Office for Provenance Research in North Rhine-Westphalia) headed by Jasmin Hartmann, or the ‘Netzwerk Provenienzforschung in Niedersachsen’ (Network Provenance Research in Lower Saxony) headed by Claudia Andratschke. We start our first annual issue with the first part of an interview series on these regional coordination and network centers (which we would like to expand to a European level in the next issue) with J. Hartmann and C. Andratschke introducing the important work of their respective institutions and answering some of our interested readership’s most pressing questions.

At the core of this year’s issue, our peer-reviewed *Research Articles* undertake voyages into various fields of provenance research and collection history, and not least very different epochs and places of world history. Beginning with Wiebke Hölzer’s survey of Wolfgang Haney’s startling private collection on anti-Semitism, Nazi persecution, the Holocaust as well as right-wing radicalism after 1945, uniting various groups of objects and reflecting a hitherto neglected aspect of a culture of remembrance in post-war Germany, the focus then shifts towards the phenomenon of ‘provenance branding’ in eighteenth-century Britain, skillfully demonstrated by Stacey Pierson employing the example of famous lexicographer Dr Samuel Johnson’s Chinese porcelain teapot, today kept in the British Museum. The reception and interpretation of object and collection histories also lies at the heart of Beatrice Voirol’s investigation of Lucas Staehelin’s and Theo

Meier’s ethnographic collection from Hiva Oa in French Polynesia, preserved in the Museum der Kulturen Basel (Museum of Cultures Basle). In the early 1930ies, the two adventuresome Swiss collectors travelled to Hiva Oa where they obtained, suspiciously monitored by the French colonial authorities, the relevant artefacts under difficult circumstances – an ambitious collection trip reconstructed in detail on the basis of travel diaries, letters, photographs, and also some local voices. In a very different way, France also features prominently in the next article by Marcus Leifeld and Britta Olényi von Husen on the Dutch art dealer Theo Hermsen, living in Paris since 1939 and cooperating as a commissioned agent with the Nazi-German occupation regime, providing necessary legwork to such infamous art dealers as Hildebrand Gurlitt or Hans Herbst on the vibrant, yet still under-researched Paris art market of the occupation period.

The GDR, of course, formed a very different context regarding its engagement with art policy and collecting, yet also in view of its dedicated politics of history and remembrance. These often employed a complete reinterpretation, compliant with socialist ideology, of eligible past events, which did not stop before rewriting related object histories, as is convincingly shown by Thomas Weißbrich’s article focusing on (alleged) ‘boxer flags’ returned by GDR Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl as “Gifts of State” to the People’s Republic of China in 1955 in an attempt to gain on recognition and prestige, if at least on the stage of the contemporary communist world. “Public facing provenance narratives” and the (hi)storytelling behind these are thus nothing completely new, one could argue reading this section’s final article by Sarah S. Buchanan, Jane Bartley and Nila McGinnis on “Fostering Capaciousness in the Provenance Research Profile through Extensible Stages and Strategies”. Yet in a methodical approach, systematically assessing a growing multitude of provenance research guides as well as analyzing interviews with staff members of various US institutions engaged in provenance research (and its communication into the public), the authors introduce the idea of extensible stages of relevant research work in practice, aiming at a “new people-centered view on provenance researching for transparent humanized storytelling”.

The *Research Reports* comprising the next section direct our view towards ongoing research projects, and in many cases also their practical and legal implications, in various fields. Archaeology is just one of these, yet it recently attracted a staggering amount of attention by international legislation trying to impede money-laundering through an illicit trade in antiquities. Surprisingly or not, these anti-money laundering regulations are largely missing their mark, as Donna Yates and Neil Brodie point out in their well-informed paper on the matter, seemingly due to lacking evidence, showing by contrast that it is the illegally obtained antiquities themselves which are laundered. That legislation and the politics behind it are equally crucial in determining the conditions provenance research is conducted under is strikingly demonstrated by Mathias Deinert, Katja Lindenau, Carina Merseburger, Annette Müller-Spreitz and Alexander Sachse in their seminal report on the current state of provenance research with regard to cultural property losses in the GDR and the Soviet Occupation Zone (1945-1990), offering a chronological overview of political and professional opinion formation on the topic during the last two decades. Glancing at machinery, engineering, industrialization and technical education, and thus shifting the scope of provenance research and the history of collection further beyond its more traditional objects, Anna Mattern illustrates the composition of the mechanical-technological collection of the former Technische Bildungsanstalt (technical educational institution) in Dresden, composed between 1851 and 1872.

With *Off the Map: The Provenance of a Painting*, Molly Boarati chooses to analyze an exhibition on provenance research itself, centered on a portrait by Joseph Wright of Derby which made its way from Germany to the USA and was for a long time suspected to constitute a case of Nazi-confiscated art. Regardless of the fact that it actually wasn't, by carefully reconstructing the portrait's history and critically examining the exhibition, which took place at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina in the fall of 2021, she reveals why and how future exhibition projects on Nazi-era provenance research in the USA should also engage with recent societal topics like racism, whiteness and colonial legacies. Thereby, Boarati

also pinpoints the marked distinctions between recent discussions about Nazi-era provenance research in the USA and Germany. Anja Ebert and Iris Metje report on the once internationally famous faience collection of the Jewish enterpriser Igo Levi, who in 1938, due to imminent persecution, was evidently forced to sell large parts of his collection below value to the former Kölner Kunstgewerbemuseum (Cologne Museum of Arts and Crafts). Shedding new light on the restitution proceedings after 1945, including the somewhat slick acting of the museum staff involved, the authors also present new findings on the collection's scope and compilation as well as Levi's personal networks.

Offering an uncomplicated way to present newly discovered sources, our *Case Studies* section starts where our research reports ended: gauging the enormous extent and impact of the art and cultural property deprivation due to Nazi persecution. "Searching for Nazi-Looted Books at the National Library of Israel", Daniel Lipson not only alludes to the significant field of provenance research within academic libraries, often containing astounding quantities of looted books and manuscripts. He also addresses the, outside Israel largely unknown, episode of thousands of Nazi-confiscated books having been transferred to libraries, schools, synagogues, and yeshivots in Israel since 1949. Complicated questions of restitution and re-acquisition and their respective handling by cultural property holding institutions during the immediate post-war period likewise are pivotal in Eline van Dijk's study on the provenance of the painting *Stadtwache und Rathaus in Münster* by Cornelis Springer. Acquired in 1943 by the Westfälisches Landesmuseum (Westphalian State Museum) in Münster from an art dealer in the occupied Netherlands, it was confiscated by the British in 1948 and brought back to the Netherlands for restitution, whereupon in 1972, the museum was able to regain the painting from the Dutch.

Even under the daunting thread of persecution by the Nazis, the selling of collectibles, like optical instruments in the case of the Berlin Jewish art dealer Julius Carlebach presented by Sandra Mühlenberend as part of a recent research project at the Optisches Museum Jena (Optical Museum Jena), did not always happen under value, nor

without a dedicated purpose. Fostering a mutually respectful, long-lasting work-relationship with the curator of the optics collection at the Carl Zeiss Jena works Moritz von Rohr, who, if not out of altruism, made sure fair prices were paid, eventually enabled Carlebach to finance his (and his wife's) timely emigration to the USA. How important it is to avoid hasty conclusions with respect to the reasons why contemporaries persecuted by the Nazi regime sold or auctioned off art objects and collectibles is again strongly emphasized in the following case-study by Tanja Baensch and Nora Halfbrodt focusing on the object histories of two Rubens paintings whose legal ownership by the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart and the Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe respectively was officially questioned several times. After thorough examination, it concludes that the paintings actually were not sold due to imminent persecution, but because of their former Jewish owner Jakob Oppenheimer's corporate indebtedness, occurring already before 1933.

That restitution can, under the right circumstances, be developed into more than just a one-sided affair, basically benefitting all parties involved, is just one of many thought-provoking impulses brought forward in this issue's *Miscellanea*. Nicola Groß, taking the lead with a brief, yet even the more stimulant summary of her master thesis on the so-called 'Utimum' process (1982-2001) between Denmark and its former colony Greenland, clearly argues for a collective, transparent reviewing of past colonial relationships based on an academically guided cultural and educational policy. In such a way, the very thoughtful and balanced manner in which the restitution of Indigenous art and cultural objects was conducted during 'Utimum' could serve as an example for possible future restitution proceedings in postcolonial contexts. It is hard to deny though that without the initial awareness for at least the possibility of 'burdened' object histories, including the looting and illicit trade in collectibles of any kind, "blind spots", as Sarah Krienen terms it in her paper on archaeological university collections and cultural heritage protection, will inevitably remain. Calling our attention for university collections, reaching far beyond archaeology, as a hitherto neglected field, S. Krienen once again stresses the strong necessity for transparent, open-ended provenance research.


It may sound like a truism, but this, of course, always requires a sound basis of primary sources. Advertising relevant archival holdings within our *Miscellanea*, like the 168 pages strong volume of legal documents the Surrogate Court in New York City produced during its proceedings regarding the bequest of Karl Nierendorf (1889-1947), a German art dealer and established gallery owner living in New York since 1937, Anja Tiedemann valuably adds to this by expertly illustrating this markedly instructive source. Reminding us that the reconstruction and powerful political instrumentalization of (perceived) cultural heritage already left its mark in Germany before the advent of National Socialism, Leonard Borowski gives a summary of his bachelor thesis on the famous 'Babylon Expedition', performed by the (still existing) German Oriental Society from 1898 to 1917, commenting on the expedition's material and archival remnants in archives and museums. Finally, Gita Ho takes up the cudgels on behalf of our *Book and Exhibition Reviews* section with an in-depth review of Christel H. Force's recent anthology on "Paris-Based Dealer Networks, 1850-1950".

Bristling with inspiring, informative and tantalizing articles, the editors very much hope that *transfer's* premiere issue will measure up to our readership's expectations. We would like to express our sincere thanks to all our submitting authors, our reviewers, advisory board members, and to all those lending an ear and giving, often invaluable, advice during the crucial conception phase, notably to Lucy Wasensteiner, as well as to all those many helping hands without which the launching of *transfer – Journal for Provenance Research and the History of Collection* would never have been possible. We are deeply grateful for the generous funding this project receives from the German Research Foundation (DFG). A special thanks goes to our webhosting partner, the Heidelberg University Library servicing arthistoricum.net, notably Maria Effinger, Alexandra Büttner and Frank Krabbes, for their superb technical support, expert advice and reliable guidance (and their patient endurance of our all too often unaware questions). Last but not least, we would like to greatly thank our graphics designer and layout specialist, Benedikt Schmitz, whose manifold creative talents and anticipating functional


design qualities not only fundamentally helped to technically realize, yet also vastly enriched the appearance of this journal.

Notwithstanding the challenging times *transfer* is born into, we lastly subscribe to Hermann Hesse's bolstering verse: there is magic in every beginning. And wish you a pleasant reading!


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Reference

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