

**BUNDESKUNSTHALLE**



Zu Gast im  
**Gropius Bau**



## **GURLITT: STATUS REPORT**

**An Art Dealer in Nazi Germany**

14 September 2018 to 7 January 2019

**Media Conference: Thursday, 13 September 2018, 11 a.m., Gropius Bau**

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## Exhibition Dates

Exhibition	14 September 2018 to 7 January 2019
Director	Rein Wolfs
Managing Director	Patrick Schmeing
Curators	Rein Wolfs Agnieszka Lulińska
Assistant Curator	Lukas Bächer
Member of the scientific working	Andrea Baresel-Brand, Head of Department Lost Art and Documentation, German Lost Art Foundation  Meike Hopp, Art historian and provenance researcher, Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte Munich  Birgit Schwarz, Art historian and provenance researcher, Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nuremberg
Members of the Advisory Board	Esther Tisa Francini Gilbert Lupfer Uwe M. Schneede Hermann Simon Shlomit Steinberg
Patrons of the exhibition	Minister of State Monika Grütters, Member of the German Bundestag and Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, Federal Republic of Germany  Federal Councillor Alain Berset, Head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs (EDI), Switzerland
Head of Corporate Communications / Press Officer	Sven Bergmann
Catalogue / Press Copy	€ 29.90 / € 15



Opening Hours	<p>Wednesday to Monday: 10 a.m.–7p.m.          Tuesday closed          Open on holidays (closed on 24 and 31 December 2018)          The box office closes at 6.30 p.m.</p>
Admission standard / reduced	<p>Admission free up to 16 years of age          € 10 / € 6.50</p>
Permanent Education	<p>Provenance workshop in the exhibition          Members of the education and interpretation team are on hand to answer your questions about the Schwabing Art Trove and provenance research.          Wednesday, Thursday, Sunday and public holidays, 12–5 p.m.</p>
Audio guide / Media guide / App	<p>Audio guide in German and English          Media guide in German Sign Language          Admission free          Audio guide App through App Store or Google Play          Creative concept and production: linon</p>
Public Guided Tours	<p>Wednesday: 5.30 p.m.          Sunday and public holidays: 3 p.m.          € 3 plus admission          In German          No registration</p>
Guided Group Tours information and registration	<p>Museumsdienst Berlin          T +49 30 24749–888          museumsdienst@kulturprojekte.berlin</p>
Curator-guided Tours	<p>With Rein Wolfs, director of the Bundeskunsthalle: Sat., 29 Sep., 4–5 p.m.          With Agnieszka Lulińska, curator: Fri., 26 Oct., 4–5 p.m.          €3 plus admission, registration required</p>
Lecture	<p>With Agnieszka Lulińska, curator          19 Sep., 5.30 p.m.</p>



Thematic Guided Tours	<p><i>Apart from Gurlitt – Provenance research as biographical inquiry</i></p> <p>With Lukas Bächer, curatorial assistant Wed., 10 Oct. and 7 Nov., 11–12 am Thu., 11 Oct. and 8 Nov., 5–6 p.m. Registration required</p>
Lunchtime Guided Tours	<p>Every first Wednesday of the month 1–1.45 p.m. € 3 plus admission</p>
Exhibition Talk	<p><i>Nazi-looted art in private hands – What are the consequences of the Gurlitt case 20 years after the Washington Declaration?</i></p> <p>Thursday, 11 October, 7 p.m., c. 70 minutes</p> <p>Participants: Hans-Jürgen Papier, former president of the Federal Constitutional Court, professor emeritus of public law and social law Friederike Gräfin von Brühl, lawyer, partner at K&amp;L Gates, Berlin (requested) Günter Winands, head of department at the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, Berlin Idea and chair: Stefan Koldehoff, cultural editor, Deutschlandfunk Free admission; please register by 8 October</p>
General Information (German / English)	T +49 30 24749–888
Location	Gropius Bau Niederkirchnerstraße 7 10963 Berlin
Public Transport	U-Bahn Line 2 (stop: Potsdamer Platz) S-Bahn Line 1, 2, 25 (stop: Potsdamer Platz or Anhalter Bahnhof) Busses: M29 (S Anhalter Bahnhof), M41 (Abgeordnetenhaus).
Press Information (German / English)	<a href="http://www.bundeskunsthalle.de/en/press/press-information.html">www.bundeskunsthalle.de/en/press/press-information.html</a>

An exhibition organised by the  
Bundeskunsthalle and  
Kunstmuseum Bern

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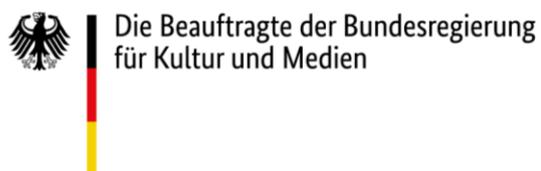
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## Information on the Exhibition

The exhibition revolves around a selection of approximately 200 works of art brought together by the German museum professional and art dealer Hildebrand Gurlitt (1895–1956). Working closely together, the Art and Exhibition Hall in Bonn and the Kunstmuseum Bern have surveyed the more than 1500 items in the Gurlitt cache and presented their findings in three exhibitions. The exhibition at the Martin Gropius Bau – subtitled *An Art Dealer in Nazi Germany* – differs from the two preceding shows in that it focuses on the campaign against ‘degenerate art’ and on the Nazi regime’s Europe-wide theft of cultural assets.

The cache of art seized in 2012 from Cornelius Gurlitt (1932–2014), the son of Hildebrand Gurlitt, draws attention to the role of the art trade within the criminal Nazi regime and to the fact that Hildebrand Gurlitt benefitted enormously from the gradual disenfranchisement, dispossession and despoliation of the Jews in Europe.

As an art historian, Hildebrand Gurlitt championed the art of the avant-garde, but as an art dealer, he tendered his services to the Nazi regime. The provenances of the works shown here clearly demonstrate that he had no qualms about their often problematic origin. The exhibition presents works confiscated as ‘degenerate’ from Germany museums in 1937/38 as well as works whose origins remain to be identified. Some of the latter are under suspicion of having been seized as a result of Nazi persecution and of being Nazi-looted art.

The exhibition also sheds light on the fate of some of the previous owners – most of them Jewish collectors or art dealers. Their stories appeal to our political and moral obligation to address the issue of Nazi-looted cultural assets and their history in public and private collection with sensitivity and respect.

To study the Gurlitt cache, an international team of experts, the *Schwabing Art Trove Taskforce*, was established – a first in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany. The taskforce was succeeded by the *Gurlitt Provenance Research Project*, which continues to investigate the individual works.

Spanning a wide range of eras and styles – from Dürer to Monet and from Cranach to Kirchner and Rodin – the exhibition presents works that have been hidden from public view for decades and provides an insight into the current state of the investigation of the Gurlitt cache. Equally important is the large body of original documents and historical photographs that convey a sense of the period.

By tracing the provenance of each of the works on show, the exhibition sheds light on the complex history of the individual objects and the fate of their owners. Gurlitt’s roving activities on the art markets of the Nazi-occupied territories mean that we cannot rule out that at least some of the works he



bought were acquired unethically and/or unlawfully. A great many of the works in the Gurlitt cache were seized as 'degenerate' from German museums in 1937, and for a sizable number of works, the provenance is likely to remain unclear, either because conclusive documents are lost, or because the dealers involved made sure to cover their tracks.

'It is extremely important that this chapter of the German – and consequently European – history is never forgotten. The Nazi art theft is still far from being resolved conclusively, and it absolutely has to be seen within its overall historical context, which includes the persecution, disfranchisement and dispossession perpetrated by the Nazi regime and, ultimately, the Holocaust,' explains Rein Wolfs, director of the Bundeskunsthalle.



## Chronology of the Gurlitt Art Trove

**22 September 2010** Following customs checks in a train, the Department of Public Prosecution in Bavaria begins an investigation into the affairs of Cornelius Gurlitt on grounds of suspected tax evasion.

**28 February – 2 March 2012** In the course of the investigation by the public prosecutor Cornelius Gurlitt's apartment in Musnic is searched.; the works of art found are seized. This confiscation, still not rescinded by the time of Gurlitt's death, remains a highly controversial issue.

**3 November 2013** The public learns of the "Schwabing art trove" following an article in *Focus* magazine. It is claimed that many of the works are looted art; the details regarding the value of the collection are wildly exaggerated.

**11 November 2013** The *Schwabing art trove task force* starts work. During the following weeks the confiscated works will be published on [lostart.de](http://lostart.de).

**11 February 2014** Cornelius Gurlitt's lawyers announce that a large number of further artworks have been found in Gurlitt's house in Salzburg.

**7 April 2014** Cornelius Gurlitt reaches an agreement with the Free State of Bavaria and the Federal Republic of Germany regarding the further treatment of the artworks in his possession. He agrees that the collection should be investigated by the 'task force' and expresses his willingness to retribute those artworks which are proven to be looted art in accordance with the Washington Principles.

**6 May 2014** Cornelius Gurlitt dies at the age of 81 in Munich. The following day the Stiftung Kunstmuseum Bern announces that Gurlitt had made it his sole heir in his will.

**24 November 2014** The Kunstmuseum Bern accepts the legacy.

**1 January 2015** The German Lost Art Foundation, which had been formed by the Federal Government, the Länder and the leading local government authorities on the initiative of the Federal Minister for Culture, Prof. Monika Grütters, takes up its duties.

**28 April 2015** On behalf of various family members Uta Werner, Cornelius Gurlitt's cousin, lodges an appeal against the granting of probate to the Kunstmuseum Bern. It is claimed that at the time when he made his will, Gurlitt was no longer capable of doing so and that the legal heirs should inherit his estate instead of Bern.

**13 May 2015** Max Liebermann's painting *Riders on the Beach (Reiter am Strand)* is restituted to the descendants of David Friedmann.



**15 May 2015** The painting *Seated Woman* by Henri Matisse is restituted to the descendants of Paul Rosenberg.

**14 January 2016** The Task Force presents its final report. Researchers subsequently take up the project Provenance Research Gurlitt for the German Lost Art Foundation.

**15 December 2016** The Regional Appeal Court in Munich rejects the objection to Gurlitt's will: Bern is confirmed as heir to the estate.

**20 February 2017** Adolph von Menzel's drawing *Interior of a Gothic Church* is restituted to the descendants of Elsa Helene Cohen.

**18 May 2017** The Federal German government announces that the painting *The Seine and the Louvre* by Camille Pissarro has been restituted.

September 2018



## Exhibition Topics

### (...) or What is Provenance?

We can usually tell the motif and technique of a work of art at first glance, but to really understand the work, we need additional information about the artist and the context in which it was created. Equally important is the provenance (from Latin *provenire* 'to come from'). The seemingly prosaic list of particulars that accompanies each of the works shown in this exhibition – and that ideally provides an unbroken record of ownership from the artist's studio to today – conveys not only information about the history of the object but also about the people who owned it.

This history of changing ownership leaves traces, for example in the form of inscriptions on the reverse of pictures, in old exhibition or sale catalogues and archives. But the record is often fragmentary; information can get lost over the course of decades or even centuries. The victims of Nazi persecution who fled their homes were rarely able to carry proof of ownership of the art they left behind. Moreover, the people who were actively involved in the organised theft and the art trade were anxious to cover their tracks.

The resultant gaps in the provenance are marked with an ellipsis in parentheses.

Because of these gaps, it cannot be ruled out that many of the works found in the Gurlitt trove were acquired unlawfully, even without concrete evidence of persecution-related dispossession. It is for this reason that they have been entered into the public online database of the German Lost Art Foundation (LostArt.de, see link in the captions). A special case are the works seized in the purges designed to rid public collections of 'degenerate art.' Because these confiscations affected predominantly public institutions, it was decided after the end of the war to waive claims to restitution. Hildebrand Gurlitt and his heirs are the lawful owners of these works.

### **Cornelius Gurlitt**

Rolf Nikolaus Cornelius Gurlitt was born in Hamburg on 28 December 1932, the son of the art historian and art dealer Hildebrand Gurlitt and his wife Helene. He grew up in Hamburg and Dresden with his sister Benita (1935–2012). From 1946, Cornelius attended the Odenwaldschule, a progressive private boarding school in Hesse, and he continued his education at the Max Planck Gymnasium in Düsseldorf, graduating in 1953.

He studied history of art at the university of Cologne and trained as a picture restorer in Düsseldorf. After the death of his parents, he lived quietly in Munich and Salzburg, meeting expenses by selling some of the works he had inherited. That the inheritance of these works and their problematic provenance was a lifelong burden for Cornelius and his sister is borne out by a letter Benita wrote to her brother in 1964: 'Do you occasionally take pleasure in what you have?'



[...] It sometimes seems to me that his most personal and valuable bequest has become the darkest burden for us.'

At the beginning of 2012, the Public Prosecutor's office in Augsburg investigated Cornelius Gurlitt for possible tax evasion and seized the works stored in the Munich flat. The connection with Hildebrand Gurlitt raised suspicions that some of the works might be Nazi loot. When the story finally broke in 2013, many of the more unscrupulous reports sensationalised the discovery and described it as a priceless Nazi treasure.

Holocaust victims, their descendants and journalists from all over the world came forward with enquiries about the cache. To facilitate the investigation of the provenance of the individual works and safeguard the transparency of the process, the suspect works were registered on the Lost Art Database.

In April 2014, in line with the Washington Principles and as one of only a few private individuals to have adopted these principles – Cornelius Gurlitt agreed to restitute any work identified as looted. He died on 6 May 2014

### **Case study Georges Mandel**

Thanks to a handwritten note by the French art historian Rose Valland (1898–1980), Thomas Couture's *Portrait of a Young Woman* can most likely be traced back to the collection of the French politician Georges Mandel. In 1954, Mandel's companion, the actress Béatrice Bretty, told her that after Mandel's arrest, an otherwise unspecified female portrait had disappeared from his apartment. In the absence of any photographs to support her claims, she mentioned a small hole in the canvas as a distinguishing mark. In 2017, restorers examining the painting by Couture from the Gurlitt cache discovered just such a hole.

Georges Mandel (1885–1944), born as Louis Georges Rothschild, was one of the most influential politicians of the French Third Republic. As minister of the interior, he vehemently opposed Fascism and spoke out against the armistice with Nazi Germany. After his arrest at the hands of the Vichy government in 1940, he was held in French prisons and German concentration camps. He was shot in the forest of Fontainebleau by members of the pro-German paramilitary *Milice* on 7 July 1944.

It has not yet been possible to reconstruct when and under what circumstances Thomas Couture's portrait disappeared from Mandel's apartment in Paris. The apartment was searched by the Special Command Force Künsberg in August 1940; works of art and papers were seized and taken to the German embassy in Paris.

These leads suggest that Thomas Couture's *Portrait of a Young Woman* should be classified as a work confiscated as a result of Nazi persecution and thus as looted art.



### Case study The Deutsch de la Meurthe Family

Unlike her brother Cornelius, Nicoline Benita Renate Gurlitt (1935–2012) inherited only very few works of art from her parents. In 2017, these works – a total of eighteen – were added to the Lost Art Database and investigated in the context of the Gurlitt trove. In line with the *Washington Principles*, the current owner has voluntarily agreed to restitute any works that can be proven to have been looted or acquired under duress.

There are strong indications to suggest that the group of French drawings shown here came from the Jewish Deutsch de la Meurthe family. Auction catalogues document that the drawings were bought in 1898/99 by Henry Deutsch de la Meurthe (1846–1919). The French industrialist went down in history as a promoter of early aviation.

His daughter, Suzanne Deutsch de la Meurthe (1892–1937), inherited her father's enthusiasm for aviation. After the German occupation of France, her elder sister, Betty (1887–1943), was deported and murdered at Auschwitz. Only her youngest sister, Georgette (1895–1987), survived the Holocaust. The descendants of the Deutsch de la Meurthe family were contacted in the run-up to this exhibition and endorsed the presentation of the works.

The family residence on the Place des États-Unis in Paris was requisitioned by the German occupiers and used as a storeroom for furniture pillaged in the systematic plunder of Jewish homes known as *Möbel Aktion*. The records of this large-scale theft are lost. It remains unclear whether Gurlitt had access to stores of this kind or could obtain 'goods' from them through middlemen. What is certain is that the family did not voluntarily leave the four works behind and that they must therefore be considered as Nazi-looted cultural assets.

## 1 **Controversial Modernism**

At the turn of the century, Modernism – in society as well as in the arts – was defined by struggle. The very terms 'modern', 'progressive' or 'innovative' were fraught with controversy. They were the creed and battle cry of the dissatisfied rebellious factions in the intellectual force field of the period. At the forefront of the struggle, avant-garde artists saw their activities as a weapon in the battle against ossified bourgeois values.

With the foundation of the artists' group *Brücke* in 1905, Dresden became the birthplace of Expressionism. In January 1919, after the First World War and the November Revolution, a second generation of Expressionists around Otto Dix and Conrad Felixmüller founded the *Sezession Gruppe 1919*. For the first time in Dresden, modern art met with official recognition: The Dresden Art Academy appointed the Austrian painter Oskar Kokoschka – still the youngest professor ever appointed in the history of the academy. Hans Posse, director of the Dresden Picture Gallery and a friend of Kokoschka, bought works by avant-garde artists



and even presented them as the official German contribution to the Venice Biennales of 1922 and 1930.

The *Fides Gallery of Contemporary Art*, founded by Rudolf Probst in 1923, presented highly acclaimed exhibitions which were reviewed by the young Hildebrand Gurlitt. In June 1925, Gurlitt became director of the König Albert Museum in Zwickau. His ambitious exhibition programme of contemporary art and supporting events introduced Zwickau audiences to Modernism. Gurlitt presented not only his recent acquisitions but also loans from artists, the Dresden museums, gallerists and private collectors, among them Fritz Salo Glaser.

Gurlitt's modern outlook made him highly unpopular with reactionary and nationalist forces as well as the NSDAP. Despite broad support from renowned colleagues and an intervention from the German Museum Association, his contract was not renewed when it ran out on 30 March 1930.

### **Cornelia Gurlitt**

With very few exceptions, Expressionist artists' groups like *Brücke* were a distinctly male phenomenon. Among the marginalised female artists was Cornelia Gurlitt (1890–1919), about whom the art critic Paul Fechter wrote 'For this woman, whose name and achievement is known only to a small circle of people, was perhaps one of the greatest talents of the younger Expressionist generation [...], her drawings, lithographs and paintings of the time are among the most powerfully expressive works of those years.'

Cornelia Gurlitt, Hildebrand Gurlitt's elder sister, spent the First World War (1914-1918) working as a field nurse in Vilnius. Her works from this artistically intensely fruitful period capture the multicultural atmosphere of the city, including scenes of everyday life in the Jewish quarter. Under the influence of Marc Chagall, Cornelia Gurlitt set down a highly personal vision of Jewish life in the Lithuanian capital, a world that most Germans would not have been familiar with. After her suicide in 1919, Hildebrand Gurlitt acted as her executor and managed his sister's artistic estate.

### **Expressionism in Dresden**

In 1905, Fritz Bleyl, Erich Heckel, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, who were studying architecture at the Dresden Technical University, founded the artists' group *Die Brücke*. Breaking with the Naturalism of the nineteenth century, they collectively developed a new concept of painting that foregrounded the free handling of form and colour as the primary means of expression. Redolent of a reaction against 'civilised' society and moral taboos, Expressionism presented a new image of humanity that met with public incomprehension and rejection.

In the autumn of 1917, the Arnold Gallery introduced Dresden to the works of a second generation of Expressionists. Its leading light, Conrad Felixmüller, held regular 'Expressionist soirées' and discussions in his studio, which were attended by Hildebrand Gurlitt. Gurlitt's lifelong interest in the Expressionists, whose



work works he was to collect and deal in, was kindled early. As an eleven-year-old, accompanied by his mother, he had visited the first exhibition of the *Brücke* artists in Dresden. It shocked and fascinated him in equal measure: ‘these barbarically passionate, vivid colours, this crudeness, framed by the most primitive wooden slats were like a slap in the face.’

### **Case study Fritz Salo Glaser**

Art collectors like the Dresden lawyer Fritz Salo Glaser (1876–1956) played an important role in the history of the avant-garde. A passionate champion of the *Dresdner Secession Gruppe 1919*, he participated in the activities of the young Expressionist art scene. His home was open to artists and writers, and among his many guests was Hildebrand Gurlitt – twenty years his junior – who admired the collector’s works by artists such as Otto Dix, Max Beckmann, Conrad Felixmüller et al. As director of the museum in Zwickau, Gurlitt presented numerous loans from Glaser’s collection, which ran to more than 400 works.

Because of his Jewish heritage and his left-wing political convictions, Glaser was excluded from the legal professional association in 1933 and barred from practicing law in 1936. He was forced to sell many works of his collection to survive. In February 1945, he narrowly escaped deportation to the Theresienstadt concentration camp. After the war, he worked as a lawyer in Dresden, East Germany. In 1947, after successfully representing a group of former Nazi judges who had been accused of high treason, he was stripped of his status as a ‘victim of Fascism’ and denounced as a ‘supporter of neo-Fascist endeavours.’

Inscriptions on the reverse identify three of the works shown here as having once been part of Glaser’s collection. Wilhelm Lachnit’s watercolour *Girl at a Table* was exhibited in 1929 with that provenance. When and under what circumstances it came into Gurlitt’s possession remains unclear.

## **2**

### **The Debate about Nordic Art**

The rejection of international ‘foreign’ stylistic developments and arguments about different forms of modern art had already marked the cultural discourse of the Weimar Republic in the late 1920s. In 1930, when Gurlitt was dismissed in Zwickau, the local chapter of the arch-conservative Militant League for German Culture accused him of having promoted the Expressionist sculptor Ernst Barlach in his ‘subhuman’ degeneracy.

With the Nazi rise to power in 1933, these ideological debates about the character of ‘German art’ grew more virulent. The question what ‘true’ National Socialist state art really stood for was far from settled. Nowhere were the contradictions within Nazi cultural policy more evident than in the regime’s attitude to Expressionism. On the one hand, Reich Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels (1897–1945) sought to establish ‘German Nordic’ Expressionism –



championed by artists like Ernst Barlach, Edvard Munch or Emil Nolde – as the official national style. On the other hand, Expressionists were singled out for racial and political discrimination and branded as ‘cultural Bolshevists’ and ‘degenerate artists.’ It was not until the summer of 1935, that Hitler made his own position clear. In his speech at the Nuremberg rally, he openly condemned Expressionism and modern art.

To mark the inauguration of the *Haus der Deutschen Kunst* in Munich in 1937, a pageant celebrated *2000 Years of German Culture* and presented the state-approved ideal of ‘German’ art of the future. In line with the Party’s nationalist agenda, it was to look to the Middle Ages, the German Renaissance and the academic naturalism of the nineteenth century.

### **Edvard Munch and Ernst Barlach**

The very first solo exhibition of the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (1863–1944) at the Berlin Kunstverein in 1892 caused a resounding scandal. The bourgeois audience was shocked by the unsparing depiction of fundamental human sensations such as eroticism and death, longing and mourning, loneliness and hope. These motifs were to form an important source of inspiration for the artists of the Brücke group. At the same time, Munch was co-opted by ideologists seeking to promote ideas about Nordic and Germanic supremacy. In 1933, Goebbels celebrated the artist as an ‘an heir to Nordic nature.’ Four years later, however, a total of 82 of his works were seized as ‘degenerate’ from German museums.

Until the mid-1920s, the sculptor Ernst Barlach (1870–1938) was seen as a beacon of hope for a new German art that took pride in its Northern, Gothic roots. Hildebrand Gurlitt regularly exhibited Barlach’s sculptures and works on paper at the museum in Zwickau and, later, at the Kunstverein Hamburg. But after 1930, the tide began to turn. While progressive forces continued to celebrate Barlach as a great master, the populist anti-modernists accused his work of corroding the German state. In 1937, some 700 works by Barlach were seized as ‘degenerate.’ Gurlitt was able to acquire a sizable number of prints from this body of confiscated works.

### **‘Old Masters’ and Dutch Painting of the Golden Age**

The term ‘Old Masters’ is a collective term coined in the nineteenth century to describe those artists of the preceding periods that were regarded as worthy of emulation. Having lost their erstwhile canonical status in the wake of Modernism, they were once again promoted as role models under the Nazis. Gurlitt’s estate yielded religious paintings as well as prints with mythological and secular subjects, among them an impression of Albrecht Dürer’s famous engraving *Knight, Death and the Devil* and Hans Holbein the Younger’s woodcut *The Emperor* from the *Dance of Death* cycle. These pioneers of the German Renaissance were co-opted by Nazi propagandists as figureheads of a national German art.

In the seventeenth century, the rise of the Netherlands as the world’s leading economic power fostered a dynamic art market that inspired artists and collectors in equal measure. Closely observed genre scenes, atmospheric



landscapes and meticulously detailed interiors provided a multifaceted picture of the period of their creation and shaped bourgeois tastes in art well into the twentieth century.

The top echelon of the Nazi hierarchy was particularly fond of Dutch seventeenth-century art. The enforced sale of numerous Jewish private collections after 1933 offered public institutions and private buyers an opportunity to round out their holdings with high-quality works.

### **Emil Nolde**

For decades, post-war Germany celebrated the painter Emil Nolde (real name Hans Emil Hansen, 1867–1956) as the epitome of the Nazi-persecuted artist who, in defiance of the ban forbidding him to paint even in the privacy of his own home, valiantly clung to his ideals and produced a secret body of steadfastly modernist work. In recent years, however, his place in the history of the Third Reich has come under closer scrutiny.

Nolde's career is full of contradictions. By the 1920s, he had become the most successful German artist of his generation, but he continued to cultivate the image of himself as an outsider and to foreground his Nordic roots. At the height of his success in 1927, his expressive, explosively colourful compositions were praised as 'rustic, forceful, Nordic, imaginative, non-European, German.'

Nolde welcomed the rise of Nazism with enthusiasm and joined the National Socialist Working Group of North Schleswig in 1934. He spoke out against the alleged Jewish domination of the German art world and would have loved to put his art at the service of the new German state, but his radical anti-classicism turned out to be incompatible with the Nazi ideal of art.

Although more than a thousand of his works were removed from German museums during the purges of 1937 and more than fifty were derided as the sick daubs of a psychopath at the infamous Degenerate Art Exhibition later that year, the artist suffered no financial hardship. On the contrary, the exhibition brought him to the attention of several collectors, among them the chocolate manufacturer Bernhard Sprengel from Hanover. Sprengel, whose collection is now open to the public in the museum that bears his name, bought numerous works by Nolde, some through Hildebrand Gurlitt, others directly from the artist.

## **3**

### **The Politics of Art in Nazi Germany**

Art and culture played a key role in the Nazi politics. As effective propaganda tools, they were instrumentalised in the outward representation of the totalitarian regime's claim to power. Following the formation of the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda and the Reich Chamber of Culture under the aegis of Joseph Goebbels, the foundation of the Reich Chamber of Fine Arts



in November 1933 created a central regulatory body for the *Gleichschaltung*, control and coordination of a unified national cultural life. The Reich Chamber of Fine Arts was tasked with promoting 'German art' that enshrined 'eternal race values' and National Socialist ideals and with the prevention of 'pathological degeneracy' in the arts.

Membership in the Chamber was compulsory for all artists, publishers, gallerists and art dealers. Exclusion or non-admission amounted to a professional ban and loss of livelihood. The first purges were directed against political opponents and non-Aryans. Subsequent cleansing campaigns eliminated those who allegedly produced art that did not conform to *völkisch* ideals – i.e. art that was not sufficiently German or otherwise aesthetically or politically unacceptable to Nazi ideological precepts. In an effort to establish a popular culture cast in the mould of National Socialism, the regime reserved the sole right to control the cultural sector in its entirety and to define what qualified as art.

The first president of the Reich Chamber, headquartered on Lützowufer (Blumeshof 4–6) in Berlin, was the architect Eugen Hönig (1873–1945). In 1936, he was succeeded by the Munich painter and academy professor Adolf Ziegler (1892–1959). In June 1937, he empowered Goebbels to 'cleanse' German museums of 'degenerate' art.

### **Socio-critical Art**

The First World War and the subsequent November Revolution had politicised vast swathes of society and, with them, the artists. As a Dadaist and member of the Communist Party, George Grosz saw his art as a political weapon to be wielded in the service of the proletarian revolution. His biting critique of militarism, unthinking obedience to authority and edifying displays of patriotism made him deeply unpopular with the Nazis. Having emigrated to the US in 1932, he was stripped of his German citizenship in 1933.

Equally offensive was the unsparing realism of Otto Dix. A veteran of the First World War and profoundly affected by the experience, he captured the gut-wrenching brutality of battle in works that stirred political controversy. In 1924, in the wake of his monumental painting *The Trench*, he created *The War*, a portfolio of prints that can be read as a stark warning against the inhumanity of militarism. In 1933, he lost his tenure at the Dresden Academy and retired to Lake Constance, where he painted mainly politically innocuous landscapes.

In the 1920s, Hildebrand Gurlitt had supported both artists and openly sympathised with their socio-revolutionary ideas. In 1937, as one of only a handful of authorised art dealers, he acquired substantial lots of 'degenerate' art, among them numerous works by Dix and Grosz, that had been seized from museums all over Germany.



## **The Berlin Secession**

Founded in 1898, the Berlin Secession became a melting pot for modern approaches in art, especially Impressionism and early Expressionism. Among the artists who shaped the association's profile were Edvard Munch, Max Liebermann, Lovis Corinth, Max Slevogt, Emil Nolde and Käthe Kollwitz.

Hildebrand Gurlitt's generation regarded the Secession artists as the founders of Modernism in Germany. Lovis Corinth, who presided over the association for many years and an artist whose work embraced Impressionism and Expressionism, was famed for his vivid and occasionally shockingly realistic portraits as well as for his mythological and biblical scenes. His pessimistic and excessive late work was denounced as 'degenerate' by the Nazis.

In 1919, Käthe Kollwitz became the first woman to be appointed professor at the Prussian Academy of Fine Arts. She was dismissed in 1933 on account of her Socialist convictions and committed pacifism. Her work addressed social evils and the realities of the lives of contemporary women. Her sculpture *Pietà* (c. 1938) gave voice to her grief at the death of her son Peter who was killed in the First World War. A scaled up copy of the sculpture is installed at Central Memorial of the Federal Republic of Germany for the Victims of War and Dictatorship at the Neue Wache in Berlin.

## **The Commission for the Exploitation of Degenerate Art**

In 1937 and 1938, some twenty thousand works were seized from more than a hundred museums, either because they were by artists whose race or political views did not conform to Nazi precepts or because the works themselves did not comply with the regime's proclaimed taste in art. Museums were 'cleansed' of Expressionism and abstraction as well as of works of a socio-critical nature, for example by members of the radical *Dresdner Sezession Gruppe 1919*.

A special commission was set up to dispose of these examples of 'morally corrupt art' under the proviso that the works be sold for foreign currency and abroad alone. Among the expert members of the Commission for the Exploitation of Degenerate Art was the art dealer Karl Haberstock (1878–1956). In October 1938, Hildebrand Gurlitt applied to the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda for permission to assist in the sale of 'degenerate' art and was entrusted with the task alongside Bernhard A. Böhmer (1892–1945), Karl Buchholz (1901–1992) and Ferdinand Möller (1882–1956).

One can only speculate why Gurlitt chose to serve the Nazi regime and its reactionary cultural policies that had already cost him his job not just once, but twice. He took a total of 3,879 items, most of them prints, from the stock of confiscated works. How many of those were still among the Gurlitt trove discovered in Munich remains unclear because of the lack of unique identifiers.

## **The Trade in 'Degenerate' Art**

Researchers assume that some 500 works in the Gurlitt trove were seized as 'degenerate' from the collections of German museums in 1937/38. It is



impossible to identify them with any degree of precision because most of them are prints and drawings, which tended to be given short shrift in the confiscation inventories.

In addition to prints and drawings, Hildebrand Gurlitt handled a number of outstanding masterpieces, among them Franz Marc's *Fate of the Animals*, which he sold to the Kunstmuseum Basel in 1939. Gurlitt did not always follow the strict order to sell works of 'degenerate' art to foreign buyers only. Otto Mueller's painting *Two Female Nudes* came from the collection of Ismar Littmann (1878–1934), a Jewish lawyer in Breslau (Wrocław), who had been driven to commit suicide by the rise of anti-Semitic discrimination. The painting was seized before the planned auction of his estate and entered the National Gallery in Berlin, whence it was seized again in the purges of 1937 and sold to Gurlitt. Gurlitt then sold it to the Cologne collector Josef Haubrich (1889–1961). In 1999, the work was restituted to Littmann's heirs and reacquired from them by the Museum Ludwig in Cologne.

Gurlitt was not involved in the sale of Lovis Corinth's self-portrait, also confiscated from the National Gallery in Berlin. It was deemed 'internationally exploitable' and sold, along with other key works, at the infamous Grand Hotel auction of 'degenerate art' conducted by Theodor Fischer in Lucerne in 1939. The Kunstmuseum Bern acquired it at that auction.

### **Case study Max and Martha Liebermann**

The Berlin painter Max Liebermann (1847–1935) was one of the most successful and respected German artists. As a prominent figure of public life and long-standing president of the Prussian Academy of Arts, he wielded considerable influence. His extensive art collection drew many visitors, not least because of its outstanding examples of French Impressionist art which Liebermann admired greatly.

The Nazi rise to power was a turning point for the artist. Cosmopolitan, secular, assimilated, as German as he was Jewish, Liebermann was everything the Nazis abhorred. His works were not denounced as degenerate, but by 1938 his Jewish heritage excluded him from all museum exhibitions in Germany. He did not live to see it: isolated by the rising tide of anti-Semitism, he died in February 1935 at the age of 87. His widow, Martha Liebermann (1857–1943), took charge of his estate.

The most valuable paintings of the Liebermann collection had been sent to Switzerland for safekeeping in the early years of the Nazi regime. In 1938, the artist's only daughter, Käthe, decided to leave Germany for the US with her family. Unwilling to abandon Berlin and her husband's grave, Martha Liebermann stayed behind as the city's synagogues went up in flames. In deep financial difficulties, she was forced to sell works of art from the collection. She committed suicide on the eve of her deportation to Theresienstadt and died, aged 84, in the Jewish Hospital of Berlin on 10 March 1943.

After her death, the apartment was sealed by the Gestapo and the assets seized without compensation. The furnishings and the remaining works of art were



evaluated and disposed of through channels that have yet to be identified. It is not clear whether works from the Liebermann estate are among the 70 drawings and pastels in the Gurlitt hoard.

#### **4** **Lucrative Deals**

Three years after his dismissal from Zwickau, Gurlitt, now director of the Hamburg Kunstverein, came under fire again. Conservative critics attacked his programme of exhibitions, which focused on avant-garde art. In the summer of 1933 he was forced to resign and decided to establish himself as an art dealer, opening the 'Kunstkabinett Dr. H. Gurlitt' in 1935. The Reich Citizenship Laws, promulgated as part of the Nuremberg Laws on 14 November 1935, classified Gurlitt, whose grandmother was Jewish, as being of mixed race or 'quarter Jewish'. To safeguard his business, Gurlitt made it over to his wife Helene.

Thanks to his excellent contacts with artists, gallerists and collectors Gurlitt quickly became very successful. But Nazi state intervention in the art market was mounting: Membership in the Reich Chamber of Fine Art, made compulsory in 1935, systematically pushed Jewish dealers out of the market. The growing stigmatisation and disenfranchisement of artists, dealers and collectors all around him did not stop Hildebrand Gurlitt from exploiting the situation to his advantage. By 1938 he was buying works from collectors who were classified as Jewish by the Nazi race ideology and who were forced to sell their possessions because they had lost their livelihoods and had to pay discriminatory levies, for example the 'Jewish Property Tax' and the 'Reich Flight Tax'.

#### **The Exhibition Programme of the Kunstkabinett**

The intimate character of the Kunstkabinett not only provided a protected space in which to conduct transactions, it also shielded Gurlitt's exhibitions from undue scrutiny. In 1936, he presented Max Beckmann's final exhibition before the artist went into exile in Amsterdam in 1937. Shaken by his traumatic experience of the First World War, Beckmann had developed a highly personal visual language of symbolic characters and scenes. In his print portfolio *Faces*, he described the topsy-turvy world of the Weimar Republic, capturing flashes of life at different moments with unflinching directness.

But Gurlitt also knew that it was in his best interest to cater to the prevailing taste. The regime's wholesale condemnation of Modernism led to a resurgence of interest in German nineteenth-century art. In this area, Gurlitt could draw on extensive family holdings. His grandfather, Louis Gurlitt, had been a renowned Danish-German landscape painter whose harmoniously composed, panoramic landscapes captured the sights of his travels through Scandinavia, Italy, Spain and Greece.

### **Disenfranchised – Dispossessed – Murdered**

The art theft perpetrated by Nazi Germany may have had historical precedents, but its scale and consequences exceeded anything that had gone before. It was part of a strategically planned programme of extermination directed against the Jews of Europe and underpinned by racial fanaticism and greed. Jews were systematically stripped of their rights, their property and, finally, murdered in their millions.

The anti-Semitic laws, regulations and decrees exemplify the spuriously legitimised mass robbery and murder committed by the Nazi regime. And it was not just the state and its henchmen that profited from this crime against large parts of the population. The photograph of an auction of 'abandoned' household goods, held in Lörrach in 1940, shows that people from all sections of society – the much-touted German *Volksgemeinschaft* – enriched themselves at their former neighbours' expense. Few asked what fate awaited them after their deportation. The reality of concentration camps, mass extermination and 'death factories' like Auschwitz was wilfully ignored and left no discernible mark on the collective consciousness.

The Nazi looting of the occupied territories in Europe is inextricably linked to the Holocaust. The murder of millions of people precludes any 'reparation' in the true sense of the word. Today, more than seventy years after the end of the war, the stolen assets can and should be returned to their legitimate owners or their heirs. The shameful history of dispossession, deprivation and displacement is forever inscribed in the works.

### **Study case Henri Hinrichsen**

The Jewish music publisher and art patron Henri Hinrichsen (1868–1942) was one of the most respected citizens and businessmen of Leipzig. That changed abruptly with the Nazi's rise to power. Hinrichsen's renowned music publishing business C.F. Peters was 'Aryanised' in 1938. To be able to pay the punitive and discriminatory charges imposed on Jews, among them the Jewish Property Levy, Hinrichsen was forced to sell his art collection. Hildebrand Gurlitt's accounts for 1940 show that he acquired two paintings and two drawings from Hinrichsen's collection, among them Carl Spitzweg's drawing *Playing the Piano*.

Stripped of nearly everything they had once owned, Hinrichsen and his wife Martha fled Germany for Brussels in 1940, hoping to obtain visas for Britain or the United States. Martha died in Belgium in 1941; Henri Hinrichsen was arrested and deported to Auschwitz, where he was killed upon his arrival on 17 September 1942.

Asked about the whereabouts of the Spitzweg drawing by the authorities and the Hinrichsen descendants after 1945, both Hildebrand Gurlitt and his wife Helene repeatedly denied that they were still in possession of the work, which was recovered as part of the Schwabing 'art trove' in 2012. Because it is part of a pending restitution case, we can only show a photographic reproduction.

### **Study case Wolffson Family**

The photograph of the so-called Menzel wall – thirty-six drawings by Adolph von Menzel (1815–1905) – shows the centrepiece of the collection put together by the Hamburg lawyer and art patron Albert Martin Wolffson. After his death, the valuable drawings passed to his children, Ernst Julius Wolffson and Elsa Helene Cohen. The Protestant family – stigmatised as Jewish by the Nuremberg race laws of 1935 – fell victim to Nazi persecution. While Ernst Julius remained in Hamburg, Elsa Helene fled Germany for the United States with her son's family in 1941. It is likely that the Menzel drawings were sold at the end of 1938 to finance the impending emigration.

Gurlitt acquired a total of 23 Menzel drawings, which he knew to be of museum quality. In 1939, he exhibited them at his Hamburg gallery and offered them at a considerable mark-up to museums and private collectors. Gurlitt's account books show that the price he paid was very low. For the drawing *View Across the Roofs of Schandau*, for example, he paid only 300 Reichsmark. One year later, he sold it to the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne for 1400 Reichsmark. After the war, he denied all knowledge of the whereabouts of the works from the Wolffson collection. The drawing *Interior of a Gothic Church* found in the Gurlitt cache was restituted to the representatives of the heirs of Elsa Helene Cohen, née Wolffson in 2017.

## **5**

### **Nazi Art Theft and the 'Special Commission Linz'**

After the annexation of Austria in March 1938, the Gestapo seized numerous Jewish art collections, most prominent among them the legendary Rothschild collection. The *Führervorbehalt*, promulgated on 18 June 1938, legitimated Hitler's claim to first access to all looted art. He planned to distribute the works among the museums of the *Ostmark*, the formerly independent Federal State of Austria. Particularly dear to Hitler's heart was the idea of the *Führermuseum*, which he planned to open in Linz on the Danube. In June 1939, he charged Hans Posse, director of the Dresden Picture Gallery, with putting together a collection for the planned museum. This ambitious museum project was never realised.

Hitler gradually extended the *Führervorbehalt* over the entire area of the German Reich and the occupied territories, granting Posse access to vast holdings of 'museum-worthy' looted art. Casting his net even wider, in 1940 Posse began acquiring works seized from their legal owners from fiscal and financial authorities, Nazi organisations involved in systematic looting of art and from the European art trade. In the summer of 1940, Hitler's Special Commissioner Hans Posse compiled the first inventory of the planned Führer Museum in Linz. Because the paintings were stored at different sites, the *Sonderauftrag Linz* commissioned photo albums that allowed them to present the current holdings to Hitler.



After Hans Posse's death in December 1942, Hermann Voss succeeded him as Special Commissioner. Because Voss took office after the decisive events of Stalingrad and had to consider the very real possibility that the Nazi regime might come to an end, he changed strategy. This reinforced the long-held idea that the principal *raison d'être* of the "Special Commission Linz" was the acquisition of works for the *Führermuseum* and glossed over the fact that the Commission was also responsible for the distribution of looted art to museums in the Reich.

### **Chief Buyer Hildebrand Gurlitt**

By the summer of 1943, Gurlitt was working in an official capacity for the "Special Commission Linz", buying works in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. According to the Commission's accounts, in the period between May 1941 and October 1944, he supplied his superiors – and, with them, Adolf Hitler – with at least 300 paintings, drawings, sculptures and tapestries valued at almost 9.8 million Reichsmark. Over the course of that time, the primary focus of Gurlitt's private and official acquisitions gradually shifted towards prints. High-quality paintings were increasingly hard to come by, and prints were easier and less conspicuous to transport.

The vast majority of objects for the planned Führer Museum, however, came from different sources. Hitler was particularly interested in the Baroque artist Peter Paul Rubens. The Rubens painting shown here originated in the collection of King Frederick II of Prussia, whom Hitler revered enormously. Another favourite artist was Hans Makart, who was profoundly influenced by Rubens, and the Munich genre painter Carl Spitzweg. Irrespective of the obvious differences in their creative practices, for Hitler these three artists represented the very pinnacle of German art and German genius.

### **The Taste in Art of the Nazi Elites**

After 1933, Expressionism as a supposedly 'Nordic' and 'Germanic' form of art stood a very good chance of establishing itself as the national style. Leading cultural policymakers, among them Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, were in favour of this possibility. However, by 1937, when the defamatory Degenerate Art exhibition was opened to publicly denounce avant-garde art, Goebbels had submitted to Hitler's anti-modern stance.

For Hitler, true art was closely linked with nature and artistic tradition. He was particularly impressed with the life and work of the Austrian painter Hans Makart, who had risen from a humble background to become a *fêted Malerfürst*, a 'prince of painters', celebrated as the 'Rubens of the nineteenth century'.

Hitler also sought to influence and shape the taste of his leading men with choice presents: Hermann Göring, a passionate huntsman and falconer, was given Makart's painting *The Falconer* for his birthday in 1938.

### **Frans Francken's *Sermon on the Mount* or the Greed of the Masses**

The works of art acquired for the Special Commission Linz were initially kept in Dresden. As the war drew closer, they were moved to the so-called *Führerbau* ('the Führer's building') in Munich, where they were stored in an underground air raid shelter until they could be taken to the salt mines of Altausee in Upper Austria.

Just before American troops entered Munich, in the night of 29/30 April 1945, the *Führerbau* was plundered by the citizens of Munich. Several hundred paintings are still missing. One of the works stolen in 1945 is Frans Francken's *Sermon on the Mount*, which Gurlitt had acquired for the Special Commission Linz, probably in Paris, and which resurfaced in 2009 in the TV programme *Kunst & Krempel* (a German version of the *Antiques Roadshow*). It is currently in private ownership. To this day the supposed provenance of the painting from the collection Valerie Honig seized in Vienna in 1938 could not be verified.

## **6**

### **Trade Hub Paris**

On 30 June 1940, a week after the French capitulation, Adolf Hitler ordered the 'safeguarding' of works of art in public and private hands. Numerous depots with evacuated cultural assets were placed under the supervision of the occupying forces. Works of art and the furnishings of entire apartments owned by French Jews were seized.

Hildebrand Gurlitt was not directly involved in this state-approved art theft. But by November 1940, he was trading on the French, Belgian and Dutch art markets which flourished under German occupation. Here too, victims of the Nazi regime were forced to sell their possessions, which kept the market awash with goods. High-ranking Nazi officials competed with German museums, art dealers and collectors for outstanding works, profiting from favourable exchange rates and coercive trade deals. The competing taskforces, agencies and buyers from the highest party echelons drove prices to astronomical heights.

Once again, Gurlitt benefited from his good connections. He could travel freely in the occupied territories, raise foreign currency and obtain the papers necessary to take works out of the country. In Paris, he developed a close-knit network of dealers, experts and middlemen, among them Theo Hermsen jr., Jean Lenthal and Raphaël Gerard. Between May 1941 and October 1944, Gurlitt sold at least 300 works of art – sourced primarily in occupied France and valued at nearly 9.8 million Reichsmark – to the 'Special Commission Linz'.

The contacts he had made with the Rhenish museums as one of the dealers appointed by the 'Commission for the Exploitation of Degenerate Art' also proved lucrative. In October 1941 alone he sold several French works to the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne for 255,000 Reichsmark. These authorised deals can be traced through the official export licences. But Gurlitt also



augmented his own stock in trade, and those transactions are much harder to reconstruct from the fragmentary records.

### **Japan and European Modernism**

'Japonism is in the process of revolutionising the vision of the European peoples,' observed the French writer Edmond de Goncourt in 1884. Japanese colour woodcuts had been finding their way into Europe since the second half of the nineteenth century. Artists, collectors and art dealers in France and elsewhere were particularly fascinated by Ukiyo-e woodcuts, the 'pictures of the floating world', which are distinguished by striking compositions, sinuous lines, flat perspectives and unmodulated colours.

Equally captivating was their subject matter, which chimed with the modern European artists' penchant for scenes set in the metropolitan demimonde of amusement quarters and theatres. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec adopted elements of Japonism in his lithographs and developed an unmistakable style of his own.

While Japonism spread through Europe, Japan embraced French Impressionism. Among the most important collectors was the industrialist Kōjirō Matsukata who acquired Manet's *Stormy Sea* in or before 1923. The painting was in storage in Paris during the German occupation and changed owner in 1944. It was one of the seventy work Gurlitt left in the care of the Parisian art dealer Raphaël Gerard when he left Paris in 1944.

### **Case study Hans (Jean) Lenthal**

According to his business records, Hildebrand Gurlitt acquired forty-two works of art from Jean Lenthal (born Hans Löwenthal, 1914–1983) in 1942. Because he did not bother to describe them in detail, it is impossible to say with any degree of certainty whether or not these works were among those found in Schwabing.

The Parisian art dealer Jean Lenthal was of Jewish descent and was deported in 1944. One of the few survivors of the Auschwitz and Sachsenhausen concentration camps, he returned to Paris after the war and re-established contact with Hildebrand Gurlitt. The surviving correspondence between the two men in the Gurlitt estate shows that Hildebrand's business records are not a reliable source of information. The letters prove that the sales of 1942 were a sham, and that Lenthal had issued fake sales receipts for works he never sold or owned to allow Gurlitt to obtain an export licence.

### **Impressionism**

The Gurlitt cache has to be seen as the stock in trade of an art dealer who was more interested in pursuing the ever-shifting art market than in stringent curatorial concepts. It is this concern with commercial viability that accounts for the presence of certain artists – for example the French Impressionists – whose work ran counter to Nazis dictates but was highly sought after on the German art market.



Claude Monet's work is celebrated as the epitome of Impressionism. The artist was able to capture the magic of the fleeting moment and the transitory effects of light and colour. Fascinated by the way light and fog transformed the look of the Thames, he painted a whole series of the motif, working on several canvases at the same time.

Dancers were one of Degas' favourite motifs. In their spatial conception and composition, the sketches shown here are reminiscent of photographic snapshots. The small wax figure had not been recorded before its discovery in Munich and could date from the last years of the artist's life, when his failing eyesight prompted him to work in clay and other plastic media.

The human body is one of the oldest motifs of art. In his sculptures, Rodin rejected tradition and the classic ideals of external beauty, focusing instead on inner turmoil and experience expressed by the tactile surface of his works. The stylistic device of the seemingly incomplete or fragmented form emphasises the materiality of his sculptures and their handmade character.

### **Claude Monet's *Waterloo Bridge* – A Family Heirloom?**

A photograph of the painting shown here was found among Cornelius Gurlitt's papers. On the back is a note which reads:

*Dear Hildebrand,*

*'I am happy to confirm that this painting photographed overleaf was purchased by Father for me many years ago and that we gave it to you on your wedding in 1923.'*

*Your mother (Marie Gurlitt)*

*Dresden 14/3/1938"*

Modern provenance research has a problem with statements of this kind. They seem too obvious, too patently designed to allay doubt. One has to wonder why the note was only written in 1938, a full 15 years after the wedding. Moreover, there is no evidence to corroborate the provenance.

### **Case study Armand Dorville**

A label on the back of Jean-Louis Forain's *Portrait of a Lady in Profile* points to an auction of works from the collection of an '*amateur parisien*' at the Savoy Palace Hotel in Nice. The anonymous Parisian art lover was the notary and lawyer Armand Isaac Dorville (1875–1941), a passionate collector and patron of the arts. He was a member of the board of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs and left the museum a generous bequest in his will of 1939. The drawing of a *Lady on Horseback* by Constantin Guys shown here was meant to be part of that bequest. In June 1940, the Jewish collector sought refuge at his estate in the Dordogne in unoccupied France, where he died in July 1941.

When anti-Semitic legislation was imposed in German-occupied France, Dorville's heirs could no longer manage the estate and decided to sell it at



auction. The General Commissariat for Jewish Affairs, founded in 1941, appointed a trustee who seized the proceeds and deposited them in a blocked account. It was not until 1947 that Dorville's surviving heirs could lay their hands on the funds.

The sale took place in Nice in June 1942 and consisted of 450 lots, among them paintings by Pierre Bonnard, Thomas Couture, Félix Vallotton und Auguste Renoir as well as the two female portraits by Jean-Louis Forain shown here. How and when they came into Hildebrand Gurlitt's possession has not yet been established.

### **Post-Impressionism and André Schoeller's Certificates of Authenticity**

Post-Impressionism is a collective term to describe different trends which emerged between 1880 and 1905 and built on the achievements of Impressionism. The Pointillists, among them Georges Seurat and Paul Signac, drew on the latest scientific colour theories to construct their compositions. In his urban landscapes, Signac developed a new style of painting. Instead of working with smooth colour transitions, he experimented with unmediated dots of pure colour, intended to combine and blend not on the canvas but in the viewer's eye.

Seurat's masterful monochrome drawings, on the other hand, capture a magical moment in which the reality of the figure emerges from the fog, in which form comes into being and vanishes.

Hildebrand Gurlitt's estate sheds light on the expert and art dealer André Schoeller (1879–1955) who played an important role in Gurlitt's Parisian network. The estate yielded more than 140 expert opinions and certificates signed by him to confirm the authenticity of works of art. However, as in the drawing *La Promeneuse (Lady Strolling)* by Georges Seurat, it is not always clear whether Schoeller merely appraised the works or whether he was also actively involved in their sale.

After the war, Schoeller was sentenced to pay a substantial fine for unjust enrichment but cleared of collaboration charges because he could provide credible evidence of having been active in the Résistance.

## **Z**

### **A New Start with a Toxic Legacy**

The Gurlitt family home in Dresden burned to the ground during the firebombing of the city in February 1945. Hildebrand Gurlitt, his wife and children fled to Aschbach in Upper Franconia – taking with them several crates of art. For the next three years, they stayed at Pölnitz Manor, where Baron Gerhard von Pölnitz had also provided a refuge for Karl Haberstock, another art



dealer who had traded in 'degenerate art' and worked for the 'Special Commission Linz.'

In January 1948, Gurlitt's denazification trial in Bamberg ended with his exoneration. There is precious little in Gurlitt's papers to suggest he ever had any second thoughts, let alone regrets about his role as an art dealer in the Third Reich, which he repeatedly referred to as a 'tightrope act.' He showed himself willing to cooperate when public institutions enquired into the whereabouts of their lost works but stonewalled all such requests from private collectors. At the same time, he continued to profit from the close contacts he had established with influential institutions and collectors and went on to become director of the Düsseldorf Kunstverein in 1948, where he made it his mission to reacquaint the public in post-war Germany with the 'old' avant-garde.

He made no secret of the works in his own collection; he exhibited them at the Kunstverein and was happy to loan them to exhibitions in Germany as well as abroad, for example to the travelling exhibition 'German Watercolors' that toured the US in 1956. From 1948, he consigned works, many of them once deemed 'degenerate', at auction. After his death in 1956, his family continued the practice.

### **Aschbach – Under Allied Observation**

After the end of the war, most of the works of art in Gurlitt's possession were confiscated by the US Army Monuments officers in Aschbach and taken to the Central Collection Point (CCP) in Wiesbaden. These collecting points were set up by the Western Allies to process and restitute displaced works of art. Gurlitt was put under house arrest for a while. Documents in his papers show that his mail was monitored. Overshadowed by this investigation, the mood in Aschbach – particularly relationship between Haberstock and Gurlitt – was marked by distrust and the constant fear of denunciation.

Nevertheless, Gurlitt did little to help clarify the provenance of the works in his possession. He even wilfully misrepresented the facts to prevent restitution of several works, for example in the case of the Hinrichsen family's Spitzweg drawings. His sworn declaration that his business records had been destroyed and that none of the works had come from Jewish collections or from abroad eventually secured the return of most of the works. He successfully reinvented himself as a victim of the Nazi regime. The judicial process of his denazification at the Bamberg Tribunal ended with his exoneration.

### **Hildebrand Gurlitt as Director of the Düsseldorf Kunstverein**

Having taken office as director of the Düsseldorf Kunstverein on 15 January 1948, Hildebrand Gurlitt once again held a prestigious position in the German art world.



The Kunstverein, founded in 1829, is one of the oldest and biggest in Germany. As its new director, the energetic Gurlitt was able to draw on a large network of contacts and – for the first time in his career – to work without political pressure. In the provisional gallery space in the ruined kunstverein building on Grabbeplatz, he launched an ambitious, modern exhibition programme focusing on German and European top artists, among them Chagall, Beckmann, Maillol, Renoir and Liebermann. He sought to reacquaint German post-war audiences with the ‘old’ avant-garde and succeeded in doubling the membership of the kunstverein and in establishing its reputation both nationally and internationally. Until his death in 1956, he put together some seventy exhibitions, which were well received by the public and by the new political and cultural elites.

### **The Construct of the ‘Klassische Moderne’**

After 1945, the victorious Western Allied Powers organised re-education programs for the zones they occupied in Germany. These programs sought to establish democratic values through confrontation with the crimes against humanity of the Nazi regime. Cultural activities like the reopening of museums and exhibitions of modern art were among the measures promoted by the Allies. From 1949, Hildebrand Gurlitt’s exhibition programme at the Kunstverein Düsseldorf played an important role in shaping the cultural policies of the young Federal Republic.

The year 1955 marked a special cultural watershed. The first *documenta* in Kassel sought to introduce the general public to the avant-garde artists that had been ostracised under Nazi rule. Abstraction was promoted as the true visual language of German contemporary art. In the entrance hall of the Fridericianum, works of contemporary art were juxtaposed with photographs of classical, early Christian and non-European artefacts to emphasise the universal, classic quality of Western Modernism. The term ‘Klassische Moderne’, which was coined to describe the period and which is used in German-speaking countries only, served to underline the sense of a return to a rudely interrupted cultural tradition.

### **Provenance Research**

The media storm that attended the Gurlitt case did much to focus public attention on the subject of provenance research and may inadvertently have created the impression that it was a brand-new discipline. However, provenance research has always been central to art history and museum practice. Efforts to identify Nazi-looted art in museums, libraries and archives were stepped up significantly after the Washington Conference of 1998.

The Gurlitt case clearly demonstrates the need for a stronger commitment – on the part of the art world, but also on the part of the state – to making provenance research an ongoing project and a priority. In the wake of the discovery of the Gurlitt cache, the German Lost Art Foundation was set up Magdeburg, more funding was made available for provenance research nationwide, and chairs for



provenance research were established at the universities of Berlin, Bonn, Hamburg and Munich.

The most important document on the history of a work of art and thus the starting point of any research into its past is the object itself. The backs of the works shown here bear numerous marks and traces, among them a conspicuous blue WIE number – an inventory number assigned to the work at the Central Collecting Point in Wiesbaden.

The biggest challenge facing a provenance researcher is the frequently long-drawn-out quest for relevant sources. In addition to historical catalogues, inventories and archives, researchers can increasingly draw on digitised sources. The most important databases can be accessed at workstations here. Freely available online, they provide a practical introduction to provenance research to anyone who is interested.

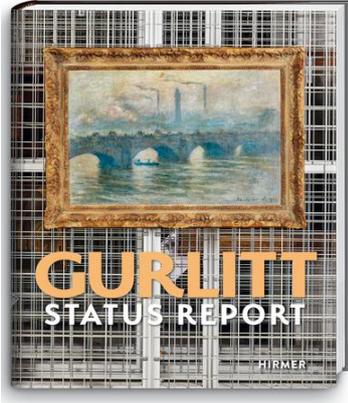
### **The Question of Authorship**

Headline-grabbing forgery scandals highlight the fact that the global art market has always been dogged by fakes. These can be identified in several different ways. Scientific methods allow for the examination of paints and their historicity, while stylistic studies try to identify the characteristic ‘hand’ of the artist. The application of these methods ruled out Marc Chagall as the author of the *Allegorical Scene* shown here.

Another tool is provenance research. The history of ownership starts in the artist’s studio. Crafty forgers therefore often try to imitate originals that are documented in early records or old catalogues to furnish their handiwork with a credible backstory. An example of this is the *Bather* in the style of Edgar Degas, which was probably based on an illustration in the catalogue of the artist’s estate.

Frequently, even the dealers’ labels or stamps on the backs of works are forged. Although the primary task of the Gurlitt researchers is the identification of works looted or unlawfully expropriated during the Third Reich, thorough provenance research can flag up inconsistencies or contradictory information on the origins of works and thereby expose forgeries.

## Publication



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## Current and Upcoming Exhibitions

### **VAJIKO CHACHKHIANI**

#### **Heavy Metal Honey**

**until 7 October 2018**

Vajiko Chachkhiani's works explore existential questions of life and our culture of remembrance. They are notable for the conceptual intelligence and quiet poetry with which he invests even violent themes such as war and death. Looking more closely, the viewer can share in the thought processes and research of the Georgian artist. He retells allegories of everyday life in seemingly familiar images but subtly undermines them with unexpected twists. The artist's films, sculptures, photographs and extensive installations suggest different paths and weave them into a unified whole.

For the exhibition in Bonn, Chachkhiani develops a film and sculpture installation that reflects the cycle of life and the parallelism of stories. Heavy metal in the ground stands as a metaphor for history and honey – sweet but viscous – as a metaphor for internal family structures. Global and individual history share points of intersection at which they are inextricably linked. And it is only the moment of action and recognition that can flip a switch and set stories/history on a different course that changes the narrative.

### **THE PLAYGROUND PROJECT**

#### **Indoor**

**until 28 October 2018**

To complement *The Playground Project* (from 13 July), the Bundeskunsthalle is opening the roof garden and the museum square to *Outdoor*, an exhibition on the subject of 'Play', which provides contemporary artists Nevin Aladağ, Kristina Buch, Ólafur Elíasson, Jeppe Hein, Carsten Höller, Christian Jankowski, Llobet & Pons, Michel Majerus, Andreas Schmitten, Thomas Schütte, Superflex, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Alvaro Urbano and Ina Weber with an opportunity to design interactive installations and spaces, forms and utensil for play. Visitors are invited to experience art in a playful, participatory and performative manner. According to a philosophical definition of *Homo ludens*, play is a primary condition of the generation of culture, because it is through play that *Homo ludens*, unlike *Homo faber*, develops his skills. It is in play as a fundamental, formative and necessary human activity that he discovers his individual qualities, and this experience allows him to develop his dormant personality. In this definition, play is equated with freedom and autonomy of mind.

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## **PRINCELY PAINTERS**

**28 September 2018 to 27 January 2019**

At the height of their meteoric careers, Frederic Lord Leighton, Hans Makart, Jan Matejko, Mihály von Munkácsy, Franz von Lenbach, Friedrich August von Kaulbach and Franz von Stuck were celebrated as princely painters (*Malerfürsten*, literally painter-princes) and enjoyed all the privileges of Europe's high society. They were wealthy, respected and moved in the same elite circles as the rich and famous. Their homes and studios were notable for their splendour, and people thronged to have their portraits painted and to see their sensational pictures. Very few artists attained the lofty status of a princely painters and the public honours this exalted position entailed.

This exhibition is the first to shed light on the phenomenon of the princely painters which transcended national borders, reaching its apogee in the 1870s and 80s before fading away with the outbreak of the First World War. The exhibition focuses on the painters' carefully crafted, highly stylised public personas and the cult-like veneration they inspired. More adroitly than their colleagues, the princely painters used their networks, the new reproductive media, exhibitions, studio visits and the press to advance their social status and to market their works to collectors worldwide.

The special appeal of this exhibition lies in the juxtapositions of the seven painters and their work and in the intriguing glimpses of their charmed lives. By shining a light on the phenomenon of the princely painter – a hitherto ignored facet of the history of modern art – the exhibition opens new insights and research perspectives.

In cooperation with Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie (National Museum in Cracow)

## **ERNST LUDWIG KIRCHNER**

**Imaginary Travels**

**16 November 2018 to 17 February 2019**

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, co-founder of the Brücke group, is one of the best-known German Expressionists. One of the leitmotifs of his life and work is the quest for the exotic and the primal, for far-off lands and cultures. It led him to create



strikingly colourful images that conjure imaginary, far-away worlds, without ever leaving the everyday reality of his life.

Tracing the artist's progress through Dresden, Berlin, Fehmarn and Davos, the exhibition sheds light on Kirchner's career. With a selection of more than 180 paintings, the retrospective explores how the artist responded to social and artistic influences, engaging with them in ever new ways, always prepared to break new ground, both personally and pictorially.

The exhibition *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. Imaginary Travels* is curated by Katharina Beisiegel (Art Centre Basel) in collaboration with Dr. Thorsten Sadowsky (Kirchner Museum Davos) and organised by the Art Centre Basel in cooperation with Bundeskunsthalle.

## **MODERNIST CINEMA**

### **Film in the Weimar Republic**

**14 December 2018 to 24 March 2019**

In the Weimar Republic, in the years between 1918 and 1933, film emerged as a new form of art. Dubbed the 'seventh art', it was experienced collectively and in public in the cinema. The rise of the modern mass medium was swift. Cinema in the 1920s provided scope for experimentation and formed the nucleus for today's international film aesthetic. German film production and, with it, directors like Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau and Fritz Lang and actors like Marlene Dietrich and Emil Jannings achieved worldwide recognition, and for a while the German film industry was seen as a serious competitor to Hollywood. The exhibition sheds light on what was new and original about the new medium and on its relationship and interplay with literature, the fine arts, architecture, psychology and socio-political developments. The mise-en-scène of the exhibition and a series of media installations foreground the ground-breaking innovations. Another focus is on the cinema-going public of the period whose perception of the world was substantially shaped by the novel cinematic language.

An joint exhibition of Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn, and Deutsche Kinemathek, Berlin

## **MICHAEL JACKSON**

### **On the Wall**

**22 March to 14 July 2019**

Michael Jackson is one of the most influential cultural figures to come out of the 20th century and his legacy continues into the 21st century. His significance is widely acknowledged when it comes to music, music videos, dance, choreography and fashion, but his considerable influence on contemporary art is an untold story. Since Andy Warhol first used his image in 1982, Jackson has become the most depicted cultural figure in visual art by an extraordinary array of leading contemporary artists.

This landmark exhibition explores the influence of Michael Jackson on some of the leading names in contemporary art, spanning several generations of artists



across all media. For the first time, Michael Jackson: On the Wall will bring together the works of over forty of these artists, drawn from public and private collections around the world, including new works made especially for the exhibition.

An exhibition developed by the National Portrait Gallery, London, and organised with the Bundeskunsthalle, with thanks to the Michael Jackson Estate.

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