

The Wolfsonian–Florida International University

Provenance Research Project

The years immediately before and during the Second World War saw many works of art come on to the international market as a result of the Nazi looting of private collections. Though large numbers of seized works were subsequently restituted to their original owners or their heirs, or returned to the country from which they had been confiscated, some continued to appear on the art market and to make their way into other collections, both public and private. Between 1998 and 2001, the Association of Art Museum Directors [AAMD] and the American Association of Museums [AAM] issued a series of guidelines concerning the responsibility of museums for identifying the Nazi-era provenance of artworks in their collection and making this information public.

In response to these guidelines, The Wolfsonian has begun to investigate European paintings in its collection that have unknown or incomplete provenance for the period 1933-45, and that were—or could have been—in continental Europe during those years. The purpose of the provenance research project is to determine whether any artworks that have entered the museum's collection could have been seized or stolen by the Nazis and not subsequently restituted to their rightful owners. The Wolfsonian has begun posting results of this research to the AAM's [Nazi-Era Provenance Internet Portal](#), a database of information about artworks from over 150 museums in the United States. We will continue to add new information as we conduct further research on our European paintings collection. The Wolfsonian plans to extend the provenance research project to its European sculpture collection, as well.

Provenance research can prove challenging, and it is a reasonable assumption that the gaps in the provenance of most of the listed works are attributable either to faulty record-keeping or, just as common, to the privacy of relationships between owner and heir, buyer and seller. Gaps in the provenance of a particular work, therefore, do not necessarily mean that it has been tainted by the events of the Nazi era. Even so, The Wolfsonian will keep its provenance investigation open until the full record of ownership for each artwork of potential concern can be determined with certainty.

The Wolfsonian encourages inquiries and welcomes documentation and other information that may be relevant to Nazi-era provenance issues. Anyone with information or questions concerning any of these works may contact curatorial@fiu.edu or 305.535.2623.