

Media information, January 21, 2022

Jewish Museum Vienna receives restituted masterpiece of Viennese Romanticism as a gift

The restituted drawing *Bildnis eines vornehmen Herren* was donated to the Jewish Museum Vienna. The artwork had been owned by the ALBERTINA since 1939 and was recommended for restitution in 2013. The heiress, who was located in 2020, wished for the drawing to remain in Vienna and subsequently gave it to the Jewish Museum Vienna.

The executing artist and the person portrayed on the drawing have not been able to be determined so far. Later notes, some of which were only added to the back of the sheet during the inventory by employees of the ALBERTINA, interpret it as a portrait of a Viennese mayor Leopold Rössler and suspect that the artist was Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller. However, no one by that name is known to have held this position.

Fashion details point to an origin in the early 1820s. Stylistically, the sensitive pencil portrait belongs to the circle of the Lukasbund, founded in 1808, an association of art students who, out of disappointment, swore off academic training. The drawing is particularly close to the highly cultivated portrait art of Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794–1872), one of the pioneers of Viennese Romanticism.

The restitution case of Adella Feuer

Adella Feuer (née Taubmann) was born in Aachen in 1903 and married Max Feuer in Vienna in 1927. They had no children and divorced in 1934. After the “Anschluss” of Austria to the German Reich, Adella Feuer, who as a Jewish woman was threatened by National Socialist persecution, prepared to flee and applied to the Central Monument Protection Authority for permission to export her art objects. However, the export license for the pencil drawing was not granted and therefore she apparently decided to sell it to the ALBERTINA – as evidenced by the receipt dated March 15, 1939, which she signed.

Adella Feuer escaped from Vienna but was arrested in Italy and deported to Auschwitz in 1944. She survived and emigrated to the USA in 1947, where she assumed her mother's maiden name and called herself Ada Imberman from then on. She passed away in Miami Beach, Florida in 1979.

In the course of proactive provenance research by the Commission for Provenance Research, the work that Adella Feuer had once sold was found and brought to the attention of the Art Restitution Advisory Board. In March 2013, it recommended that the drawing be restituted from the ALBERTINA.

Following the suggestion of the Art Restitution Advisory Board, the Jewish Community of Vienna (IKG) was commissioned to determine the heirs of the drawing recommended for restitution. During the research, the IKG was able to trace Adella Feuer's nephew and niece as heirs. The nephew renounced his share and niece Sylvia Taubman became the sole heir. It was her wish that the graphic artwork should remain in Vienna and be donated to the Jewish Museum Vienna.

Director Danielle Spera stated: "The Jewish Museum Vienna is very grateful for this donation. The pencil drawing allows us to commemorate Adella Feuer and the Taubman family by communicating their fate to our visitors and raising awareness of the urgency of restitution."

"Since the Art Restitution Act was enacted in December 1998, the Art Restitution Advisory Board has passed resolutions on the return of almost 4,000 objects from the ALBERTINA in 46 cases. For decades, the ALBERTINA has been a reliable partner when it comes to restituting stolen art and conducting active provenance research. We should not and do not want to own works that have illegally entered our collection. Sometimes this concerns works worth many millions of euros, sometimes those of minor but high symbolic or personal value. Justice should never be measured in money. And it does not know any time frame either: The ALBERTINA will continue to make every effort to return works to their rightful heirs where necessary," says General Director of the ALBERTINA Klaus Albrecht Schröder.

Queries

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Photos and press material for the current exhibitions are available on the Jewish Museum Vienna website at www.jmw.at/presse.



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