

Spoliation case settled

An ex-gratia compensation payment has been agreed to resolve a case of spoliation concerning a drawing in the style of George Pencz (object number 1997,0712.12) in the British Museum Prints and Drawings collection.

Research recently undertaken has identified the drawing as originally belonging to the collection of Dr Arthur Feldmann which was seized by the Gestapo in March 1939. The discovery was made by Mr Uri Peled, one of the heirs to Dr Arthur Feldmann who has extensively researched his grandfather's collection. The British Museum is delighted that Mr Peled is keen that the drawing remains in the British Museum in honour of his grandfather.

Mr Peled said "The Feldmann family is very happy indeed that the drawing will remain in the British Museum collection. Whenever we can the family prefer to leave drawings with museums to be enjoyed by visitors and scholars and instead ask to be compensated for their loss."

Jonathan Williams, Deputy Director, British Museum said "The British Museum is grateful to Mr Peled for drawing this case to our attention. We are delighted that once again Mr Peled is keen that this work remain in the British Museum's collection for the widest public benefit. This drawing, and others from the original Feldmann collection, will serve as a permanent memorial both to the outstanding importance of Dr Feldmann's collection, and to the terrible circumstances of its spoliation and dispersal".

The drawing was bequeathed to the British Museum by Rosi Schilling in 1997, as part of a small album of 75 drawings compiled for her by her husband, the collector Edmund Schilling (1888-1974). The 46mm pen and brown ink drawing depicts a young couple in a landscape and has been dated to c.1535-45. An attribution to Georg Pencz was made by Edmund Schilling after he acquired the drawing in the 1960s. Pencz was a distinguished engraver on an intricately tiny scale, and this subject is very much in the style of his work. The design would have been made for a small ornament such as a hat- badge or decorative roundel, a type of work for which Pencz is known to have been popular.

The British Museum had accepted the bequest in good faith, and the ownership history of this drawing is very detailed. Recent research, however, undertaken by Mr Peled revealed that it had formerly been in the Feldmann collection and that it had been sold at a sale at Sotheby's in 1946 which contained a large group of drawings from this source.

Mr Peled has continued to research his grandfather's collection since his original claim to the British Museum for four drawings in 2002. That case was considered by the Spoliation Advisory Panel in April 2006 and settled with an ex gratia payment. An ex gratia payment for the Pencz drawing has been made to Dr Feldmann's heirs and it is the express wish of Mr Peled that the drawing remains in the British Museum in honour of his grandfather, together with the four drawings for which settlement was made in 2006, and a further drawing donated to the British Museum by Mr Peled in September, 2006.

Contacts

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