



Press Release

Kunstsammlung Rudolf-August Oetker GmbH audits art collection

<Bielefeld, 26 October 2016> In the spring of 2015, the Board of the Kunstsammlung Rudolf August Oetker GmbH commissioned an audit of its art collection. The first preliminary insights have been gathered.

The Oetker collection includes a wide range of artworks including paintings, silver and porcelain. While much of the collection is based on purchases made by the late Rudolf August Oetker (1916–2007) since the 1950s, the collection also includes, *inter alia*, artworks acquired by Karoline Oetker. Mr Oetker continued to add to the collection by buying from established art dealerships and at auction until his death. Since then, the Kunstsammlung has continued to acquire further artworks on the international art market.

The audit follows a comprehensive review of the history of the Dr. Oetker company during the Nazi era which was commissioned by the Oetker family. The review was the subject matter of a book commissioned by the family and published by C. H. Beck in 2013 (Jürgen Finger, Sven Keller, Andreas Wirsching: *Dr. Oetker und der*



*Nationalsozialismus – Geschichte eines Familienunternehmens
1933–1945).*

The objective of the ongoing audit is to assess whether any audited artwork belonged to a person persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, ideology or political opposition to National Socialism who was wrongfully deprived of such an artwork.

If, as a result of the provenance research, artworks in the Oetker collection are found to have been looted by the Nazis or forcibly sold by their previous owners between 1933–1945, it will be considered whether they have been subsequently returned to the victim or whether the victim or the victim's heir have been fairly compensated. Where this has not been the case, the Kunstsammlung will reach out to the victim's heir with a view to finding an amicable resolution. Such a resolution may include returning the artwork or paying financial compensation.

The research will initially focus on an audit of the collection of paintings. There are several hundred paintings in the collection. The audit of the paintings is ongoing and is expected to continue for at least another year.

The research is led by an independent, experienced and reputable provenance researcher and her team. Independent legal counsel



specialising in art law and restitution have been retained to assist the Kunstsammlung in reaching an amicable settlement with the heirs of unlawfully deprived original owners.

Provenance has been, and will continue to be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking a holistic view of the evidence uncovered by the research undertaken. In undertaking provenance research, the records of the Kunstsammlung are being thoroughly searched and the artworks being audited are being physically inspected. Where appropriate, other available records, archives and databases are being consulted, and information is being sought from art dealers, auction houses and scholars.

So far, only four artworks have been identified in the collection as being candidates for restitution or the payment of financial compensation. Research is ongoing. Each case is being considered in good faith on its own merit and exercising reasonable judgment. Confidential discussions have been initiated with the representatives of several families and the Kunstsammlung is hopeful that settlements can be achieved in the next few weeks.

The Kunstsammlung has invested considerable resources in the audit and it takes extremely seriously any consequences arising from



the discovery that an artwork in the collection was unlawfully misappropriated in the period 1933–1945 without restitution or fair financial compensation.

Please direct your enquiries to:

Dr. August Oetker KG

Senior Executive Manager Corporate Communications

Dr. Jörg Schillinger

Phone: +49 (0) 521/155-2619

Fax: +49 (0) 521/155-11-2619

email: joerg.schillinger@oetker.de