



Painting Restituted Following Publication in the Art Database of the National Fund

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The publication of heirless artworks with questionable provenance in the online art database of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria has led to the restitution of the painting by Adriaen Ostade, "Bauernbesuch/In der Bauernstube" to the heirs of the original owner. The 17th century painting, which had hitherto belonged to the collections of the Vienna Museum of Art History, was identified in the art database by the Commission for Looted Art and shall now be restituted to the heirs of Bruno Jellinek in accordance with a recent decision by the Art Restitution Advisory Board.

The original owner of the painting, the Czech businessman Bruno Jellinek, fled Austria following the "Anschluss" in 1938; his art collection was confiscated by the Nazi authorities and sold, partly to private individuals, partly to state collections. The Ostade painting was confiscated by the VUGESTA (Secret State Police Administration Point for Jewish Removals) and brought to the Dorotheum auction house; however, it was sold to the Art History Museum on 2 December 1941 for 16,000 Reichsmark before its planned sale at auction.

The painting was included on the Art History Museum's list of artworks classified as "ownerless", which the Museum had provided to the National Fund in summer 2006 for publication in its art database. A few weeks after the art database went online on 17 October 2006 the "Commission for Looted Art in Europe", which was representing the heirs of Bruno Jellinek, was able to identify the painting on the internet. Anne Webber, a representative of the Commission for Looted Art, contacted the Art History Museum and the National Fund as well as the Commission for Provenance Research. The latter produced a dossier on the painting and submitted it to the Art Restitution Advisory Board for decision. On 28 September 2007 the Board recommended that the artwork be restituted to the heirs of Bruno Jellinek. The Board had already recommended the restitution of artworks from the holdings of the Albertina to the heirs of Bruno Jellinek in October 2001.

The National Fund's art database contains a catalogue of currently over 8,700 art and cultural objects, sorted according to category, that are held in the collections of the Republic of Austria or the City of Vienna. The majority of objects published in the database are subject of art restitution proceedings. The content of the art database is continually updated.

The publication of objects in the art database occurs in cooperation with the museums concerned and Austrian provenance research bodies. It aims to help establish which objects may be eligible for restitution. To this end, every object is described in accordance with history of art criteria and information on the present status of the restitution is provided for each object. This enables entitled persons to identify art objects and lay claim to them before they are sold by the National Fund, with the proceeds going to help the victims as stipulated by law.