

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

FILLING THE VOID:
TWO PROVENANCE CASE STUDIES
FROM THE MAX STERN ART RESTITUTION
PROJECT¹

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In 2006, Christie's New York alerted the trustees of the Montreal-based Max Stern Art Restitution Project that it had linked the painting *Flight into Egypt* (**Fig. 32**), attributed to Jans Wellens de Cock (1480–1527), to the Galerie Stern in Düsseldorf, an establishment the inventory of which was liquidated in accordance with Nazi law in 1937.² Less than a year later, Christie's Amsterdam contacted the Stern Restitution Project about another painting, *An Extensive Landscape with Travellers on a Track Near a Walled Town with a Castle and Church, a Village Beyond* (**Fig. 33**), attributed to Jan van Goyen (1596–1656) which it also tied to the German gallery.³

¹ I would like to thank Philip Dombowsky at the National Gallery of Canada for his assistance on research for this essay. As well my gratitude for the opportunity to present this paper goes to Dr Gal Ventura, Dr Andrea Gáldy, Ronit Sorek, Netta Assaf and the organisers of *Collecting and Provenance: Usage, Authenticity and Ownership* at the Israel Museum Jerusalem, 13–16 November 2016.

² Monica Dugot to Clarence Epstein, 2 June 2006; *The Max Stern Art Restitution Project Archives, Concordia University, Montreal*. Hereafter, the Max Stern Art Restitution Project will be referred to as the “Stern Restitution Project”.

Flight into Egypt depicts the Holy Family in the painting's centre; a burning idol is to their left and a woman refusing them lodging is to their right; in the background Herod's soldiers are in pursuit.

³ Clarence Epstein to Sherri North Cohen and Willi Korte, 15 August 2007; The Stern Restitution Project Archive. Epstein contacted North Cohen and Korte after speaking to Monica Dugot who told him that Christie's identified a painting “as a possible Stern claim.” Hereafter, *An Extensive Landscape with Travellers on a*



Figure 32: Circle of Jan Wellens de Cock, *Flight into Egypt*, Netherlandish, sixteenth century, oil on panel, 33.7 x 48 cm, private collection (source and © Max Stern Art Restitution Project).



Figure 33: François van Knibbergen, *An Extensive Landscape with Travellers on a Track Near a Walled Town with a Castle and Church, a Village Beyond*, c. 1640, oil on canvas, 73.6 x 96.5 cm, private collection (source and © Max Stern Art Restitution Project).

Yet when Christie's approached the Stern Restitution Project about the provenance of the two works, its response was one of surprise. The organisation had neither been searching for *Flight into Egypt* nor *An*

Track Near a Walled Town with a Castle and Church, a Village Beyond will be referred to in an abbreviated form as: "An Extensive Landscape".

Extensive Landscape because they did not know that the paintings existed. This paper addresses the question: How do you determine the ownership of works of art you did not know were yours? In doing so, it will illuminate the complex nature of Nazi-era art restitution, the critical role that provenance plays in the return of cultural property looted during the Third Reich and the importance of the Max Stern Restitution Project. Finally, it will explore how changes in artistic attribution, collecting priorities and market conditions affect provenance.

Max Stern

Between the 1950s and the late 1970s Max Stern (1904–1987) became renowned as one of Canada’s most celebrated art dealers.⁴ After escaping from Düsseldorf to London in 1938, Stern, as other German-speaking men living in England at the outbreak of the Second World War, was arrested as an enemy alien and sent to an internment camp first in New Brunswick, then in Quebec.⁵ Upon his release, Stern moved to Montreal, where he became the owner of the Dominion Gallery of Fine Art, an establishment which sold European masters including Pablo Picasso, Henry Moore and August Rodin as well as contemporary Canadian painters.⁶

Famously loquacious Stern was known for talking to his clients about all topics except one: his life before arriving in Canada.⁷ Another matter that gave Stern pause was the subject of buying art at auctions where, as he told customers, provenance details were seldom fully revealed and often willfully obscured. “Pedigree,” he would warn, “is not only important in animals.”⁸ Little did Stern’s listeners know that they were being given a clue about the most defining moment in his life: when he was forced to end his family’s Düsseldorf business under Gestapo orders.

⁴ Desrochers 2004.

⁵ Max Stern, unpublished autobiography, c.1982. Also see: Angel 2014, 42–51.

⁶ *Ibid.* Also see the Dominion Gallery fonds, the National Gallery of Canada. The Dominion Gallery supported thirty-two Canadian artists including Emily Carr (1871–1945); Jacques Godefroy de Tonnancour (1917–2005); Paul-Emile Borduas (1905–1960); John Lyman (1886–1967); Stanley Cosgrove (1911–2002) and E.J. Hughes (1913–2007).

⁷ Angel 2014, 42–51.

⁸ Seligson 1972, 10 (Canadian Jewish Archives, Seligson Fonds no. P0138, file no. MC 29-03-62).

It was not until after his death in 1987 that documents came to light which revealed details of Stern's past.⁹ When the beneficiaries of his estate – Concordia University, McGill University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem – began liquidating the assets of the Dominion Gallery's European paintings, approximately 400 works, the sale caught the attention of Lucian Simmons, Senior Vice President of Provenance and Restitution at Sotheby's New York. He sent Stern's executors the 1937 catalogue *Die Bestände der Galerie-Stern-Düsseldorf* which listed 228 paintings that the Galerie Stern had sold under Nazi duress at Cologne's Mathias Lempertz auction house.¹⁰

Galerie Stern

In his personal papers, deposited in the National Gallery of Canada Library, Stern's beneficiaries then discovered the following facts: In 1934 Stern inherited from his father Julius the Galerie Stern, one of the Rhine Valley's most respected art dealerships established in the early twentieth century.¹¹ Three years later, the Galerie Stern was ordered to close after the Reich Chamber for Fine Arts declared that, as a Jew, Stern did not possess the necessary qualities to promote German culture.¹² In September 1937, he received notice to sell the gallery's entire inventory through a Nazi-approved dealer. On 13 November 1937, Stern held a forced sale at Lempertz (Cologne), still in business today.¹³

These revelations thrust Stern's executors into the international dialogue about Nazi-era art restitution which had taken the art-world by storm at the close of the twentieth century. The view that stolen art was the last prisoner of war gained significant ground as cultural institutions throughout Europe and North America began to recognise that there was a moral imperative to return Nazi-looted works of art to their rightful heirs.¹⁴ The year 1998 was a turning point as forty-four countries signed the

⁹ MacKenzie 2006, 1.

¹⁰ Lempertz 1937, 9–35.

¹¹ Dombowsky 2003, 6.

¹² Korte 2004: <https://www.concordia.ca/arts/max-stern/chronologies.html#tab1> (9 July 2020).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Karp 2008, 321. Elan Steinberg, the strategist and former leader of the World Jewish Congress first used the phrase “the last prisoners of war” in 1998, when Jewish groups sought restitution for art and property that had been looted by Nazi Germany.

Washington Principles, an agreement pledging to search their public collections for Nazi-spoliated art and to identify and resolve claims for their restitution collectively.¹⁵ President Bill Clinton stated that his administration was committed to “bring whatever measure of justice might be possible to Holocaust survivors, their families, and the heirs of those who perished.”¹⁶ Also in 1998, *Landscape with Smokestacks* by French Impressionist Edgar Degas (1834–1917) became the first case of Nazi-looted art to be settled in the United States.¹⁷ As attorney Thomas Kline pointed out with respect to the case, it became apparent that, “a lot of the Nazis’ loot moved into prominent museums through the regular, above-ground, art market.”¹⁸

The Stern Restitution Project

Against this backdrop of historic events, in 2002, the Stern Restitution Project was launched at Concordia University to reclaim what the Düsseldorf-born art dealer lost and to break his silence.¹⁹ From its inception, the organisation was unique in the world of Nazi-era art restitution: As a not-for-profit endeavour co-founded by the three universities who were Stern’s beneficiaries, it has no time limit nor monetary incentives to recover lost works other than to further the understanding of restitution.²⁰ Moreover, the Stern Restitution Project fills a void in the landscape of reclaiming Nazi-looted art because the type of paintings that the Galerie Stern sold were works the values of which appreciated only modestly with time. This counters the notion often fed by media that money rather than moral rectitude is at the heart of Holocaust-era restitution.²¹ The Stern Restitution Project’s goal is not financial but to

¹⁵ Washington Conference Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art, “*The Washington Conference on Holocaust Era Assets*”, Washington, DC (3 December 1998).

¹⁶ Clinton 1998, 225–26: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PPP-1998-book1/pdf/PPP-1998-book1-doc-pg225.pdf> (accessed 9 July 2020).

¹⁷ Dobrzynski 1998, 17. The heirs of *Landscape with Smokestacks* included Lili Gutmann, a 79-year-old resident of Florence; her brother, Bernard Goodman, who died in 1994, and his sons, Nick Goodman, and Simon Goodman, both residents of Los Angeles.

¹⁸ Grossman 1998, 1.

¹⁹ Angel 2018; digital issue: <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/ronald-lauder-takes-germany-task-lack-action-art-restitution-9747/> (accessed 9 July 2020).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Schultz 2006, 45. In response to the restitution of *Street Scene*, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner’s Expressionist masterpiece and its subsequent sale at Christie’s New York, Schultz wrote that the painting’s heir “revealed that she did not care a whit

place Stern and other Jewish art dealers who had been erased from history back into the cultural narrative from which the Third Reich expunged them.²²

By late 2016, the Stern Restitution Project has seen the recovery of 18 paintings – approximately one per year since the organisation’s inception.²³ Although every case has presented a different set of circumstances, one factor has been common to all of them: when recovering a work of Nazi-looted art the presentation of its provenance is essential. Yet, as the International Foundation for Art Research’s (IFAR) *Provenance Guide* states, while an ideal provenance history for a work of art includes documentary records of its owners’ names, dates of possession and means of transference from the time of its creation until the present day, finding complete records is extremely rare due to changes in attribution which constitute a major impediment to finding works.²⁴ When researching and resolving Holocaust art provenance, the challenge is particularly great, since as Monica Dugot, International Director of Restitution at Christie’s states, there is an “information vacuum.”²⁵ It is a void that is not only precipitated by a lack of documentation, but one complicated by the passage of time, multiple changes in ownership and questionable attributions to a work’s creator.

To start the process of restitution for Max Stern’s lost art, his beneficiaries had an invaluable asset: the 1937 Lempertz catalogue. Using the paintings listed in it, the organisation checked the name of each work against post-WWII art market records and museum holdings to see which works sold by Stern had been in circulation since the Lempertz auction. Following this method, it developed an inventory of approximately thirty paintings which it set out to find.²⁶ Yet since neither *Flight into Egypt* nor *An Extensive Landscape* had been part of the Lempertz sale, they were not part of the project’s search.

for her grandfather’s spiritual legacy and saw the painting as nothing more than an eighteen million dollar cheque.”

²² Angel 2018.

²³ For a complete list of works recovered by the Stern Restitution Project see <https://www.concordia.ca/arts/max-stern/recovered-works.html> (accessed 9 July 2020).

²⁴ International Foundation for Art Research (IFAR), *Provenance Guide*; Sharon Flesher and Lisa Duffy-Zeballos (Project Co-Directors); Victoria Sears Goldman and Julia May Boddewy. https://www.ifar.org/provenance_guide.php (accessed 9 July 2020).

²⁵ Dugot 2009, 4.

²⁶ Author interview with Philip Dombowsky, Archivist, National Gallery of Canada.

Christie's contacted the Stern Restitution Project about *Flight into Egypt* after it was consigned to them in 2006. The auction house checked the painting against its database of more than a thousand names of art dealers, paintings and victims who were forced to sell their property – or had it seized – in Nazi Europe. When Christie's research revealed that *Flight into Egypt* had been owned by Düsseldorf's Galerie Stern in 1936, the information was a red flag. However, although the auction house contacted the Stern Restitution Project, it would not withdraw the work from its sale until the organisation presented adequate evidence that *Flight into Egypt* had been lost due to Third Reich persecution. Moreover, the painting could only be recovered by the Stern estate when conclusive facts proved that the work left the Galerie Stern under Nazi duress.²⁷

Since *Flight into Egypt* was not part of the Lempertz catalogue, however, establishing its provenance posed a considerable challenge. The organisation began a study of the painting itself and an investigation into its creator; this yielded further questions. The verso of *Flight into Egypt* offered no identifying labels or marks about the painting's origins.²⁸ As for the front of the work, its linear quality, spacious landscape, detailed rendition of foliage and depiction of the Holy Family showed the influence of several Antwerp Mannerists which signaled that the work was more likely to be by a follower of Wellens de Cock rather than by the painter himself.²⁹

The Stern Restitution Project's next step was to explore the sales' history of the painting. Through transaction records, it discovered that the last time the work appeared on the market was in December 1992 at the Sotheby's London auction of Old Master Paintings.³⁰ In a catalogue for the

²⁷ Monica Dugot to Clarence Epstein, 2 June 2006. The Stern Restitution Project Archives. Also see, Monica Dugot to Clarence Epstein, December 2006, in which Dugot wrote on behalf of Christie's to the Stern estate, "If this picture is indeed one that you are claiming, please put together a letter to be forwarded to the consignee." While Christie's told the Stern Restitution Project that they believed *Flight into Egypt* once belonged to Max Stern, this did not mean that the restitution of the work was a foregone conclusion.

²⁸ Monica Dugot to Anna Rubin, 26 July 2006, The Stern Restitution Project Archives. Dugot wrote "as requested [attached] is an image of the reverse of Wellens de Cock, which as you will see unfortunately adds nothing to the provenance."

²⁹ This conclusion was supported by research on Jan Wellens de Cock by Friedlaender 1956, XI, 126 as well as Friedlaender 1918, 1918, 67–14.

³⁰ Willi Korte to Clarence Epstein, 23 December 2008, The Stern Restitution Project Archives. Also see Sotheby's 1992.

sale, the painting's provenance was attributed to two collectors: "a Lady of Title" and Konrad Adenauer, West Germany's first Chancellor after WWII.³¹ This led the Stern Restitution Project to investigate the painting's connection to Adenauer which at first seemed to provide a lead. The 1970 auction of his collection was expected to raise an unprecedented 1 million pounds, yet only 36 works found buyers (*Flight into Egypt* was not one of them) after media allegations surfaced that most of the paintings – mainly gifts to Adenauer – were forgeries and works of dubious provenance.³²

Despite the link between *Flight into Egypt* and the 1970 Adenauer sale, the Stern Restitution Project was no further along in its investigation. None of the problematic circumstances surrounding the auction offered evidence that *Flight into Egypt* was lost due to Nazi duress. By late 2006, six months had passed since Christie's first contacted the Stern Restitution Project and now the painting's consignor was pressing to resolve the matter.³³ It appeared that the restitution of *Flight into Egypt* might be a lost cause.

New Documentation

Then suddenly the situation changed. Documentation discovered among Stern's personal papers confirmed two key facts: sales accounts that *Flight into Egypt* was in the Galerie Stern's possession in 1936; a record that, in 1929, Stern bought the painting from the Galerie Caldenhof in Berlin.³⁴ When the Stern Restitution Project located a copy of the 1929 Caldenhof catalogue at the Frick Museum, it found the key to unlock the provenance of *Flight into Egypt*.

The Galerie Caldenhof catalogue included an illustration of *Flight into Egypt* that matched the painting consigned to Christie's. However, in the

³¹ Christie, Manson & Wood 1970, lot 32, 77.

³² Ibid.

³³ Monica Dugot to Sherri North Cohen, 5 December 2006. The Stern Restitution Project Archives.

³⁴ Philip Dombowsky to Willi Korte, 23 August 2007. The Stern Restitution Project Archive.

The Galerie Caldenhof catalogue information described the work as follows: NIEDERLÄNDISCHER MEISTER, um 1520–1530, 16 Die Flucht nach Agypten. Im Vordergrund auf einer Straße die heilige Familie. Joseph führt den Esel, auf dem Maria mit dem Kinde sitzt. Rechts Bauernhof, eine Frau schließt das Gitter des Zauns. Links Götzenbild (Amor), dessen Kopf beim Vorbeizug der heiligen Familie abgefallen ist. Landschaft. Eichenholz, Höhe 33,3 cm, Breite 48 cm. G.-R.

Caldenhof catalogue the work was attributed to the “Niederländischer Meister” rather than Jans Wellens de Cock. Using this acknowledgement – “Niederländischer Meister” – the Stern estate found *Flight into Egypt* in the records of The Hague-based Netherlands Institute for Art, the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (RKD).³⁵

This step led the Stern Restitution Project to take a more thorough look through the RKD archives, where it had discovered a cache of letters and photographs from Max Stern and his father Julius Stern to the RKD Director Hans Schneider about their acquisition of Dutch paintings.³⁶ One of the letters, written by Max Stern on 20 February 1936 was about *Flight into Egypt*.³⁷ Stern also wrote Schneider about his persecution as a Jewish art dealer and his attempts to halt the dissolution of his Düsseldorf gallery, demonstrating that the closure of his business was not a decision made by choice.³⁸ This documentation proved critical since it determined that Stern had *Flight into Egypt* in his collection after he received orders from the Nazis that he could no longer be an art dealer. A combination of the RKD letters, the Galerie Caldenhof catalogue as well as several photographs of *Flight into Egypt* found among Stern’s papers at the National Gallery of Canada collectively confirmed Stern’s ownership of *Flight into Egypt* and made its restitution possible.³⁹

The discovery of Stern’s letters to Schneider at the RKD also laid the groundwork for the recovery of *An Extensive Landscape*, attributed to Jan van Goyen, consigned to Christie’s Amsterdam in August 2007.⁴⁰ The auction house traced the painting to the Galerie Stern through a 1991

³⁵ Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (RKD) “De vlucht naar Egypte”, reference 26225.

³⁶ The correspondence included letters that Stern wrote Schneider in the 1930s and 1940s about Dutch painters including Philips Wouwermans, Jan de Cock, Meindert Hobbema, Pieter van de Plas, Adam Willaerts, Matthijs Naiveu. In 1936, Stern wrote Schneider the greatest number of letters; more than thirty in total. Nogrady 2007.

³⁷ Max Stern to Hans Schneider, 20 February 1936. Galerie Stern file, RKD.

³⁸ Nogrady 2007. Stern wrote Schneider: “Auf unsere Eingabe hin wird die Angelegenheit nochmals überprüft, ehe sie endgültig erledigt wird.” [on our petition the matter is being reviewed again before being definitively settled].

³⁹ Adams 2008, A7. The restitution of *Flight into Egypt* occurred at the start of a two-day symposium in Berlin called “Taking Responsibility: Nazi-looted Art-A Challenge for Libraries, Archives and Museum”.

⁴⁰ Clarence Epstein to Sherri North Cohen and Willi Korte, 15 August 2007. The Stern Restitution Project Archive.

publication on Van Goyen, *Künstler um Jan Van Goyen* by Hans-Ulrich Beck who revealed that, in 1937, *An Extensive Landscape* was with the Galerie Stern.⁴¹

Beck's book also highlighted two other important facts: It documented that François van Knibbergen, a contemporary of van Goyen, created the work; as well, it stated that when Stern purchased *An Extensive Landscape*, it was attributed to Knibbergen.⁴² Finally, Beck noted that the public display of *An Extensive Landscape* before it resurfaced at Christie's in 2007 was at the exhibition "Old Master Works from a Private Collection" held at the University of Mainz in 1968.⁴³ The Mainz exhibition catalogue recorded that *An Extensive Landscape* had been in Max Stern's possession, information that was corroborated by records in the van Knibbergen file at the RKD.⁴⁴

As with *Flight into Egypt*, RKD files played a critical role in determining the provenance of the painting. In the institution's files on van Knibbergen, the Stern Restitution Project found a black-and-white photograph of the work which Stern had sent to Schneider in 1937.⁴⁵ This image as well as a letter sent by Stern confirmed that the painting was part of his collection in 1937, the year that he was forced to flee Düsseldorf. In addition to the RKD records, the Restitution Project discovered photographs of the front and verso of *Extensive Landscape* in the Galerie Stern fonds at the National Gallery of Canada. The photos were annotated with handwritten notes in German about the painting's attribution to van Knibbergen. This confirmed the provenance information put forth in the 1968 Mainz University exhibition catalogue and laid a foundation for Christie's to

⁴¹ Beck 1991, 432, nr. 1226.

⁴² One of the most important painters of his time, van Goyen's low horizons and a loose handling of brushwork, ushered in a new phase of Dutch landscape painting, making him famous but also much emulated by many artists including François van Knibbergen.

⁴³ Monica Dugot to Willi Korte, 16 August 2007. The Stern Restitution Project Archives.

⁴⁴ Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (RKD), "François van Knibbergen *Landschap met reizigers op een weg bij een ommuurde stad*" Illustration number 0000132054:

[https://rkd.nl/en/explore/images/record?filters\[kunstenaar\]=Knibbergen%2C+Francois+van&query=&start=11](https://rkd.nl/en/explore/images/record?filters[kunstenaar]=Knibbergen%2C+Francois+van&query=&start=11) (accessed 9 July 2020).

⁴⁵ Dominion Gallery fonds, National Gallery of Canada.

withdraw *Extensive Landscape* from its sale as documentation confirmed that Max Stern lost the work under Nazi duress.⁴⁶

In December 2007, the ownership of *Extensive Landscape* was returned to the Max Stern estate at an assembly held at London's Ben Uri Gallery.⁴⁷ However, the discussion of the painting's provenance was not over. At the restitution ceremony for *Extensive Landscape* it was unveiled not as a work by van Knibbergen nor one by van Goyen, but as a painting by Jan de Vos I (1593–1649), i.e. another artist who was heavily influenced by van Goyen. The reattribution had been made by Christie's researchers after the work was consigned to the auction house.⁴⁸

Four years later, in early 2011, another reattribution of *Extensive Landscape* occurred when the Stern estate decided to sell it through Christie's New York which listed the painting – sold for USD 13,750 – as a work by van Knibbergen.⁴⁹ Then, just four months later in May 2011, the Madrid-based auction house Ansorena listed *Extensive Landscape* in its spring sale. In the catalogue information for the painting, Ansorena stated that the work had been with Galerie Stern Düsseldorf in 1937, although it did not mention that it had since been restituted. Moreover, Ansorena attributed *Extensive Landscape* to van Goyen, selling the work for USD

⁴⁶ Holocaust Claims Processing Office (HCPO) to Monica Dugot, 16 August 2007; The Stern Restitution Project Archives. The Stern estate successfully prepared a formal restitution claim for *Extensive Landscape* following the HCPO letter which stated “Thank you for withdrawing the Jan de Vos painting, formerly attributed to François Knibbergen, from Christie's September 5, 2007 Amsterdam sale. As discussed below, the estate asks the consignor to restate and return the de Vos picture because Dr. Stern sold it under duress and/or involuntarily lost possession of it in Düsseldorf in 1937 due to Nazi persecution.”

⁴⁷ Concordia University, “Dutch Old Master painting returned to Max Stern Estate with assistance of Christie's” (6 December 2007). The sale of *Extensive Landscape* had been scheduled for 5 September 2007. Also see: Renzetti 2007.

⁴⁸ Monica Dugot to Clarence Epstein, 15 August 2007; The Stern Restitution Archives. Also see: Concordia University 2007) and Renzetti 2007. At the painting's restitution ceremony, it was presented as Jan de Vos I, *An Extensive Landscape with Travellers on a Track Near a Walled Town with a Castle and Church, a Village Beyond*.

⁴⁹ Christie's (New York), Lot 136/ Sale 2511, *François van Knibbergen, “An Extensive Landscape with a Walled City and Travellers”*, Old Master & 19th Century Paintings, Drawings & Watercolours Sale (Part II), 26 January 2011. <http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/paintings/francois-van-knibbergen-an-extensive-landscape-with-5403442-details.aspx> (accessed 9 July 2020).

99,056, an 800-percent increase on what was paid just months earlier.⁵⁰

After considerable effort on behalf of the Stern estate to establish an accurate genealogy for *Extensive Landscape*, the market proved that when it comes to art's provenance, a critical factor in determining a painter's creator is what a buyer wants to believe and is willing to pay.

The cases of *Flight into Egypt* and *Extensive Landscape* reveal that when trying to reclaim works of Nazi-looted art determining the provenance of a painting is essential to the process of restitution. However, filling the information vacuum associated with Third-Reich spoliated art is a considerable challenge and one that may severely limit the possibility of determining a work of art's provenance and its subsequent recovery. Facts must be supplied where none readily exist because of an unclear path towards uncovering documentation; one complicated by the passage of time, multiple changes in ownership and various attributions to the work's creator. These circumstances are complicated further when, as with the Stern Restitution Project, one is not dealing with famous works of art the provenances of which have been recorded in books and museum registers.

As this paper demonstrates, in order to fill provenance vacuums the Stern Restitution Project's methodology involves a multi-pronged approach of following numerous research paths – some successful, others leading to dead ends. It is one that with *Flight into Egypt* and *Extensive Landscape* was largely self-taught and consisted of a process of sleuthing for art historical facts and details about all people associated with the works' scholarship and sales.⁵¹ Following this approach, the Max Stern Restitution Project found important new evidence about the former Düsseldorf gallery owner, i.e. the Stern-Schneider correspondence at the RKD. In time, this

⁵⁰ Ansorena, Madrid, 17 May 2011 auction, Lot 00143. The painting was sold as *Paisaje con personajes y vista de una ciudad* by Jan van Goyen.

⁵¹ Christian Fuhrmeister to Sara Angel, 6 January 2017, author's notes. Fuhrmeister, a professor at Munich's Central Institute for Art History stated, "Research on provenance is somehow at odds with the academic world, as it does not fit neatly into the traditional disciplines, and often requires a mix of methods, approaches, and competences." For this reason provenance responsibilities have been relegated to the domain of museum curators. Yet, as Nancy Karrell articulates, efforts made by museums to further this field remain inadequate because of museum staff limitations and financial constraints; Karrell 2014 29, 4, 297–310: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09647775.2014.934050> (accessed 9 July 2020).

evidence will likely yield further unanticipated results and allow the Max Stern Restitution Project to find more paintings that it did not know it was looking for.

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