

Press Release

5 June 2023

Restitution of a Sketchbook by Max Liebermann

A mutually agreed settlement between the Akademie der Künste and the heirs of Max and Martha Liebermann on the restitution of a work

A sketchbook by Max Liebermann (1847–1935) from the Akademie der Künste's Art Collection, containing drawings the artist made in beer gardens and cafés along Wannsee has been restituted to the artist's descendants on 5 June 2023. Thanks to their kind cooperation, the sketchbook can subsequently be reacquired in exchange for payment of a compensation sum.

During provenance research on works in the Akademie's Art Collection, it was discovered that the inside cover of the sketchbook bears an estate stamp with a facsimile of Max Liebermann's signature. The sketchbook was acquired at auction in 2005 from an auction house in Munich. After Liebermann's death on 8 February 1935, his widow, Martha Liebermann, used this stamp to mark the artist's unsigned works. The sketchbook dates from the early 1930s; thanks to the stamp it can be documented in Martha Liebermann's possession in 1935.

The Akademie der Künste feels a particularly strong bond to Max Liebermann's cultural legacy. As President of the Prussian Academy of Arts in Berlin (the Akademie's forerunner), a post he held for 13 years beginning in 1920, he opened the institution's doors to Modernism. Liebermann simultaneously transformed the Prussian Academy into a powerful voice for art and culture in the Weimar Republic. This political orientation continues to have an impact to this day. In 1933 the Prussian Academy of Arts allowed itself to fall into line with the National Socialists with very little resistance. Six months after his appointment as Honorary President, Liebermann felt compelled, in May 1933, to declare his resignation publicly and thus pre-empt mandatory expulsion. In the autumn of 1935, his widow, Martha Liebermann, moved out of their house on Pariser Platz into an apartment in what is now Hiroshimastraße in the Berlin-Tiergarten district. She was forced to surrender all her assets. Her daughter and daughter's family emigrated to the United States in 1938. In 1943 Martha was supposed to be deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto. Shortly before, she took her own life. Her apartment was sealed by the Gestapo in 1943, and its inventory, including the art collection, was recorded on confiscation lists, which also include "3 sketchbooks".

Whether or not this sketchbook was still in her possession at that time remains unknown. However, it can be assumed that under the pressure of National Socialist persecution Martha Liebermann had to hand it over sometime between 1935 and 1943. This restitution is essential to the Akademie der Künste to acknowledge the injustices perpetrated during that period.

Press and
Public Relations

Pariser Platz 4
10117 Berlin
T +49(0)30 200 57-15 14
F +49(0)30 200 57-15 08
presse@adk.de
www.adk.de

Until 22 January 2023, Liebermann's sketchbook was on display as one of the main focuses of the exhibition *Spurensicherung. Die Geschichte(n) hinter den Werken (Provenance Research)*. In this show, presented in the historic halls of the Akademie venue on Pariser Platz, the Archives of the Akademie der Künste dedicated itself to central topics concerned with provenance research and the institution's history.

For Inquiries:

Werner Heegewaldt, director of the Archives, Tel. +49 (0)30 20057-3101,
archivdirektion@adk.de

Doris Kachel, provenance researcher, Tel. +49 (0)30 200 57-4036,
kachel@adk.de

**Press and
Public Relations**

Pariser Platz 4
10117 Berlin
T +49(0)30 200 57-15 14
F +49(0)30 200 57-15 08
presse@adk.de
www.adk.de