

## Press Information

### The Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen are restituting a Still Life of Willem Kalf

The Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen are restituting a still life by Willem Kalf to Peter Block from Hamburg, the grandson of the painter and art collector Josef Block. In the law governing the state's supplementary budget of 24th April 2008, the Bavarian Landtag has empowered the State Ministry of Science, Research and Art to hand back gratuitously the art piece in question to Herr Peter Block. The restitution is in accordance with the reconciliatory gesture of the German Länder to fulfil the »declaration of the Federal government, the Länder and leading local organisations to seek out and return cultural items wrongfully removed as a result of NS persecution«. In doing so, the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen is concluding a process that endeavours to rectify injustices perpetrated under National Socialism.

»It gives me great pleasure that after so many decades it is still possible to acknowledge the rights of victims of the National Socialist regime with the restitution of an artwork« announced Prof. Dr. Reinhold Baumstark, General Director of the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen

The painting was acquired for the Alte Pinakothek as part of an exchange in 1940. It came originally from the collection of Berthold Richter in Leipzig, who left it to his nephew Josef Block (1863-1943). He was a scholar of the Breslau and Munich Academy and in 1892 one of the founding members of the »Association of Fine Arts, Munich«, the subsequent Munich secession, whose members met in his studio. From 1896 onwards, Block lived in Berlin, where he took part in the Grand Berlin Art Exhibition and became one of the founding members of the Berlin secession. From his uncle, the banker and art collector Berthold Richter from Leipzig, he inherited the above-mentioned collection of Old Masters. As a result of his Jewish background Josef Block was persecuted from 1933 onwards and forced to sell the still life by Kalf. It found its way into the hands of Adolf Hitler's chief purchaser, Andreas Walter Hofer, who in turn passed it on to the General Director of the Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Ernst Buchner, in exchange for two Dutch genre paintings.

Thanks to the generous support of the Pinakotheks-Verein (Friends of the Pinakotheken) this significant painting by Kalf is to remain under the auspices of the Alte Pinakothek:

The Pinakotheks-Verein is acquiring the work from Peter Block and handing it over to the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen on permanent loan. The Pinakotheks-Verein, the association to promote the Alte and Neue Pinakothek, has achieved abundant merits for the Munich Pinakothek museums since its founding in 1953. It is particularly worth mentioning the significant support it gave to the reconstruction of the war-damaged Alte Pinakothek in the years up to 1964.

Recent decades have seen numerous acquisitions of important works of art, which have enriched the collections of the Alte and Neue Pinakothek.

The »Still life with porcelain jug« by Willem Kalf shows one of the outstanding still life painters of the Dutch 17th century at the height of his artistic powers. The few, yet precious objects are highlighted against a dark background in a masterly way. As in all in his works, Kalf focussed here on observing and subtly reproducing shining reflexes of light on differentiated surfaces. The still life with porcelain jug is the only work by the master in the Alte Pinakothek and among the most treasured gems in the rich stock of Dutch cabinet painting. .

»It means a lot to me that the injustice suffered by my grandfather has been recognised and, in so doing, the crimes of the NS regime have been called to account. It was vitally important to me that Kalf's wonderful still life should continue to be accessible to the viewing public at the Alte Pinakothek« is Peter Block's response.

Further information and images are available from  
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**Further information and images:**

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