

# Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen

## Press information

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### **The Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen returns the painting »Dämmerung am Gardasee« by Hans Thoma**

The Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen has restored a painting to the rightful heirs of the Jewish former owner of the work. On Tuesday, October 5, 2004, General Director Prof. Dr. Reinhold Baumstark turned over the painting **Dämmerung am Gardasee** (Twilight on Lake Garda) by Hans Thoma to Dr. Jost von Trott zu Solz, representative for the heirs of Ottmar Strauss, the original owner of the painting. On the occasion of the restitution, Professor Baumstark expressed his pleasure that it was again possible, despite a long interval, to help Jewish fellow citizens receive their rights and, at the same time, to set a symbol of remembrance against the atrocities committed during the tyranny of the National Socialists.

In 1909 the work was part of the Oskar Hermes collection. Already in 1922, it was listed among the works in the collection of Ottmar Strauss. The entrepreneur and prominent art collector of Jewish descent emigrated in 1936 to Switzerland in order to escape the racial persecution of the National Socialists. The emigration was preceded by the loss of almost all assets, including his art collection, which was auctioned off in 1934 and 1935 by the auction house Hugo Helbing in Frankfurt.

**Dämmerung am Gardasee** was thus auctioned as lot number 180 on May 24, 1935, found, however, no buyer. In February 1943, the painting was acquired from the gallery owner Brettschneider for 60,000 RM via an intermediary for Martin Bormann, Reichsleiter of the NSDAP. Bequeathed to the Free State of Bavaria in 1957 as alleged property of the former NSDAP party headquarters, the painting was included in the inventory of the Staatsgemäldesammlungen and given the number 12579.

Hans Thoma (Bernau 1839 – Karlsruhe 1924), know for his idyllic landscapes, painted the work on the occasion of one of his many travels to Italy, which he had been undertaking since 1874. Thoma became familiar with the countryside around Lake Garda in 1897 while visiting a friend, the publicist Thode, in Gardone, to which Thoma returned during the spring of 1905. The work, dated 1906 and marked with *HTh*, shows Gardone's terraced vineyards with a yoke of oxen being driven by two men.

Following the principles laid down at the Washington conference in December 1998 and the joint statement from the Federal Government, states and local authority districts in December 1999, the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen has acknowledged its responsibility to return unlawfully obtained cultural assets. Consequently, the painting has been turned over to the descendants of the art collector Ottmar Strauss.

Presseinformation:

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