

MEDIA INFORMATION

THE BAVARIAN STATE PAINTING COLLECTIONS HAVE RESTITUTED NAZI-LOOTED ART ORIGINALLY FROM THE FORMER MUNICH ART DEALER A. S. DREY.

MUNICH, 26 APRIL 2021



St Florian, 1480, softwood
125,3 x 65,2 cm
Photo: Johannes Haslinger,
Bavarian State Painting Collections

In April 2021 a late medieval wooden panel depicting Saint Florian, formerly in the ownership of the art dealer A. S. Drey, was restituted to the legal successors, i.e. to the community of heirs of the art dealer A. S. Drey. The work is to be handed over to a legal representative of the art dealer's on behalf of the community of heirs. This, the 21st restitution made by the Bavarian State Painting Collections in line with the 'Washington Principles', will take place in the Pinakothek Museum without a personal meeting due to the pandemic.

Quotation: Bavarian State Minister Bernd Sibler

"With the restitution of the Gothic wooden panel to the legal community of heirs, the great injustice that the Drey and Stern families had to suffer under the Nazis has been officially recognised and a step taken towards making amends. I would like to thank the Bavarian State Painting Collections, with its provenance research work, for their committed endeavour towards achieving justice."

Quotation: Director General Prof. Dr. Bernhard Maaz

“The restitution to the legal heirs is a further important step towards recognising the suffering the victims endured under the Nazi regime and our historical responsibility in shedding light on Nazi-looted art.”

Quotation: RA Dr. Imke Gielen

“On behalf of the Drey and Stern families we are grateful to the Bavarian State Painting Collections for carefully investigating the provenance of the painting and for establishing contact. The restitution is also the result of the continuous, systematic research carried out by the Bavarian State Painting Collections on their holdings.”

The Art Dealer A. S. Drey



The business premises on Maximiliansplatz in Munich based on plans by Gabriel von Seidl, 1911

The painting belonged to the stock on hand of the art dealer A. S. Drey that was founded in the 19th century and had offices in New York and London. The company's proprietors were Siegfried Drey, Ludwig Stern, Friedrich Stern, Franz Drey and Paul Drey. All partners were subjected to persecution due to their Jewish heritage. In 1935 the circular issued by the Reich Chamber of the Fine Arts announced their exclusion from the Chamber and ordered the dissolution of the company. An in-depth tax inspection in 1935/36, that is to be seen as preparation for 'Aryanisation', led to an exorbitant demand for back taxes. As a result part of the art dealers' stock, including the picture in question, was consigned to be sold at the Paul Graupe auction house in Berlin to commute taxes. The work was offered to the Bavarian State Painting Collections on 19 August 1936 by the Berlin art dealer Dr. Eduard Plietzsch in exchange for two works in the holdings of the Alte Pinakothek. The art dealer Plietzsch had acquired the painting in a sale following the Berlin auction that is to be deemed as a compulsory sale.

On the basis of the provenance report the Bavarian Minister for Science and the Arts, together with the Bavarian State Painting Collections, decided to re-stitute the painting to the heirs of A. S. Drey which will take place on 23 April 2021.

St Florian, 1480

Softwood, 125.3 x 65.2 cm (painted surface; the panel, cropped on all sides, has been added to on the left, right and bottom; original state 121.5 x 56.7 cm)

St Florian (of Lorch) was a Roman administration officer in the early 4th century. He suffered a martyr's death as a Christian; he was drowned in the River Enns. His grave is to be found in St Florian Monastery. His attribute, a bucket of water, hints at his function as a helper when there is a fire. The painting is a wing of an altarpiece, the other sections of which are unknown. Like most works from the Late Middle Ages this panel has not been attributed to any one artist.

Following a reassessment in 1974 this depiction in the Staatsgalerie Burghausen was attributed to a unknown Bavarian artist's workshop of the late 15th century, from where another painting of quality, showing the saints Acacius and Pantaleon, also comes and hangs on the same wall in the Staatsgalerie Burghausen (Bavarian, c. 1480, acquired in 1927 from a private collection in Munich, inv. no. 9457).

The Staatsgalerie Burghausen is a specialist gallery for paintings of the Late Middle Ages in Bavaria and the Austrian border region and, as such, is well known. Testimonies to the age of the great abbeys and monasteries in Bavaria – Tegernsee, Attel, Rottenbuch – are exhibited there in four rooms. Without exception these are works of great value that have survived to this day and provide a picture of the Late Middle Ages in the famous castle complex that attracts a large number of visitors every year.

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