

**MEDIA INFORMATION**

Munich, 31 May 2021

**THE BAYERISCHE STAATSGEMÄLDESAMMLUNGEN ARE RESTITUTING A  
WORK OF NAZI-LOOTED ART TO THE COMMUNITY OF HEIRS OF ITS FORMER  
OWNER, ALFRED ISAY**

The painting „Fishing Boats near Frauenchiemsee“ by Joseph Wopfner was formally restituted to the community of heirs of Alfred Isay in December 2019. It was planned for the work to be handed over in March 2020 in Munich but this was cancelled due to travel restrictions necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic. This, the 20<sup>th</sup> restitution made by the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen in line with the ‘Washington Principles’ of 1998 will now take place without the work being handed over personally because of the continuing pandemic and at the request of the community of heirs.

**Nathan Scheftelowitz, Advocate**, speaking on behalf of the community of heirs, explains: “We feel very obliged to all representatives of the Pinakothek Museums who, thanks to their hard work and research on the history and family, have now restituted this beautiful picture. We hope that news of this event is spread around the world so that future generations can find out about the history of the Adelsberger-Isay family during the horrific Holocaust, as well as the marvellous research work being carried out at the moment at the Freie Universität Berlin on the Abraham Adelsberger Art Research Project (AAARP). The Isay-Adelsberger Collection, after all, comprised a plethora of paintings and porcelain objects that, regrettably, have still not been restituted.”

**State Minister for the Arts, Bernd Sibler**, emphasises:

“I am pleased that we are able to hand the painting by Joseph Wopfner back to its rightful owners. The Adelsberger and Isay families suffered greatly under the Nazi regime: they were persecuted, driven from their homeland and deported to concentration camps. Through the restitution of this work of art, these unspeakable atrocities cannot be undone but a contribution made towards greater justice.”

**The Director General of the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen Prof. Dr. Bernhard Maaz**, adds:

“Every restitution serves to make us aware of the injustice done, of erstwhile personal fates and often of loss, persecution and murder. This has been shown in an impressive manner by reconstructing the biographies of the Adelsberger and Isay families in the course of provenance research by our colleague Dr. Johannes Gramlich. The Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen are pleased to be able to retribute the painting by Joseph Wopfner to the community of heirs of Alfred Isay. The availability of all holdings and historical documents online,

as well as the accessibility of all related material in the Bavarian State Archives, were helpful factors in this case, too, and represent important steps towards achieving maximum transparency. Research on works of art once in the possession of the Nazis and now in the holdings of the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen has made it possible for us to consolidate previous findings and, as a result, enabled the present case of restitution.”

### **On the factual background**

The painting once belonged to the Nuremberg toy manufacturer and art collector Abraham Adelsberger (1863–1940). As Adelsberger suffered financial difficulties following the Great Depression of 1929 he transferred ownership of the factory in 1933 to his son-in-law Alfred Isay (1885–1948) of Cologne as security for a loan. Alfred Isay’s family suffered persecution from the Nazis early on as a result of its Jewish origins and emigrated from Cologne to Amsterdam in 1933/34. They took the painting by Wopfner with them. Abraham Adelsberger and his family were also subjected to increasing pressure in the Third Reich on account of their Jewish heritage. They followed the Isay family to the Netherlands in 1939 where Adelsberger died on 24 August 1940 at the age of 77. Other family members were once again persecuted by the Nazis following the German occupation of the Netherlands from May 1940 onwards. They had to go into hiding or else were deported to concentration camps. It has not been possible to clarify when exactly Isay sold the painting by Wopfner. Evidence suggests that it was sold (under duress) at the time of the German occupation in the face of pressure brought on by the situation in the Netherlands. Other possible scenarios concerning the sale could equally well be seen in connection with the considerable level of persecution with which the Adelsberger and Isay families were confronted.

Martin Bormann acquired the picture in March 1942 for the NSDAP Chancellery at a sale at the Munich art auctioneer’s Adolf Weinmüller. After the end of the war it was seized by the US military government and sent to the Central Collecting Point in Munich. Based on directives issued by the Allied Forces, the Free State of Bavaria came into possession of the painting in 1956. From there, it subsequently entered the holdings of the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen with other works of art not considered at that time to be subject to restitution. The work is among those addressed in the current volume, no. 4, in the series of essays published by the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen: Johannes Gramlich: „Begehrt, beschwiegen, belastend. Die Kunst der NS-Elite, die Alliierten und die Bayerischen Staatsgemäldesammlungen“ (Coveted, unaddressed, encumbering. The art of the Nazi elite, the Allies and the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen). Information on the restitution of the Wopfner painting is dealt with in depth in the Annual Report of the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, 2019, Dr. Johannes Gramlich, pp. 100–111 and online <https://www.pinakothek.de/en/publications>].

### On the artist

The Austrian painter Joseph Wopfner arrived in Munich in 1860 where he matriculated at the Academy of Arts. He was a pupil of Karl Theodor von Piloty for a while, but also receptive to stimuli from plein-air artists such as Eduard Schleich the Elder.

In addition to other accolades he was awarded an honorary professorship in 1888 and received a gold medal at the exhibition at the „Glaspalast“ (Glass Palace) in Munich in 1890. Wopfner belonged to the circle of artists invited to hunt with Prince Regent Luitpold. He was also a friend of Wilhelm Leibl. The artist took on Bavarian citizenship in 1914.

In 1872 Wopfner discovered the Fraueninsel (Ladies' Island) on Chiemsee where an artists' colony had evolved around Karl Raupp. Until one year before his death he spent every summer there, drawing and painting the lake, the surrounding area and the everyday lives of the fishermen and farmers. His pictures were much sought-after and even marketed in the USA.

From 2005 until 2018 the painting „Fishing Boats near Frauenchiemsee“ was on permanent loan to the Bavarian Administration of State-Owned Palaces, Gardens and Lakes which exhibited it in the Old Palace on Herrenchiemsee (Augustinian Monastery, Herrenchiemsee).



Joseph Wopfner, „Fishing Boats near Frauenchiemsee“, 1884, oil on canvas, 50 x 72.8 cm, inv. no. 12589

---

**MEDIA DEPARTMENT**

Head of Press & Communication

Tine Nehler M.A.

Alte Pinakothek, Neue Pinakothek, Sammlung Schack and Staatsgalerien  
&

Pinakothek der Moderne (Art | Graphics | Architecture | Design)

T +49 (0)89 23805-280

[presse@pinakothek.de](mailto:presse@pinakothek.de)

[www.pinakothek-der-moderne.de/presse](http://www.pinakothek-der-moderne.de/presse)

[presse@pinakothek.de](mailto:presse@pinakothek.de)

<http://www.pinakothek.de/presse>

[www.pinakothek.de](http://www.pinakothek.de)

[www.facebook.de/pinakotheke](https://www.facebook.de/pinakotheke)

[www.twitter.com/Pinakotheke](https://www.twitter.com/Pinakotheke)

[www.instagram.com/pinakotheke](https://www.instagram.com/pinakotheke)