This document provides full details of the OFP Project as published on the Project website <u>https://blha.brandenburg.de/index.php/the-ofp-project/</u> on 16.11.23. It is introduced by a description of the project specially written for <u>www.lootedart.com</u>:

<u>Electronic evaluation of the personal files of the Vermögensverwertungsstelle des</u> <u>Oberfinanzpräsident Berlin-Brandenburg (1933 to 1945) for the identification of art</u> <u>ownership and for the localization of Nazi looted art - Scientific indexing of a mass</u> <u>source to be digitized in the Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv, Potsdam</u>

The Brandenburg State Archives in Potsdam hold the personal files of the Oberfinanzpräsident (Chief Finance President, short: OFP) Berlin-Brandenburg, which also include around 42,000 personal files of the "Vermögensverwertungsstelle". This was established as a separate office at the OFP Berlin-Brandenburg on 01.01.1942 in connection with the start of the mass deportations of Jews to ghettos, concentration and extermination camps. In addition to the files on the disposition of the last possessions of the deportees, the file group also includes files on the confiscated property of emigrants. Numerous documents relate to the confiscation and utilization of art and cultural property during National Socialism.

The research project (OFP project for short) systematically investigates the utilization of looted art objects for the benefit of the state treasury. Essential to the project are the references to auctions or other sales as well as selections of art and cultural property documented in the files, which were prescribed by National Socialist laws and decrees. They make it possible to identify public institutions and museums as sites of Nazi-confiscated cultural property.

In order to achieve this, the previously digitized files of the Vermögensverwertungsstelle are systematically evaluated by the provenance researchers with the help of a document management system (DMS). An automated text recognition system (Optical Character Recognition) enables a full text search of the typewritten part in the files. Based on this various classifications and keywords, which are based on intensive basic research in the files, allow a targeted computer-aided search for the profiteers of the National Socialist art theft. The individual cases identified in this way are subsequently evaluated, processed and, if necessary, researched in greater depth by the provenance researchers in the project. The DMS as an evaluation tool for provenance research was specially designed and implemented in the course of the project and will be further developed during the project period.

In the current project, the results of the provenance research are to be passed on to the legal successors of the victims of National Socialist persecution (as far as known) and to the public institutions and museums which, according to the files, have acquired art objects from former Jewish ownership, so that a restitution process can be initiated.

In compliance with the provisions of archival law and data protection law, the digital copies of the files of the Vermögensverwertungsstelle and the research results obtained in the project are to be made available for public and scientific re-use.

The OFP Project is funded by the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media and the Ministry of Science, Research and Culture of the Bundesland Brandenburg.

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Contact: <u>ofp.provenienz@blha.brandenburg.de</u> Project duration: 01.10.2019 – 30.09.2026

THE OFP PROJECT (ENGLISH VERSION)

About the Project

The approximately 42,000 personal files of the record group *Rep. 36A Oberfinanzpräsident Berlin-Brandenburg (II)* document the work of the National Socialist "Vermögensverwertungsstelle" (Asset Realisation Office) and thus the systematic liquidation of assets of persons persecuted by the Nazis as Jewish or hostile to the Reich. In order to find references for the current locations of looted art and cultural assets, the files are restored, digitised and made searchable by means of OCR. Using a document management system adapted for this purpose, the provenance researchers employed in the project subsequently evaluate the files. In addition, the digitised files shall be made available online for international research to the fullest extent possible. The project is jointly funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM) and the Ministry of Science, Research and Culture of the State of Brandenburg (MWFK).

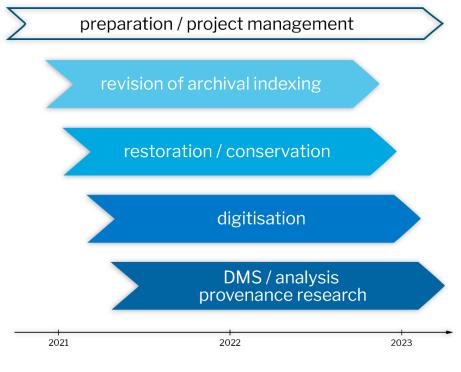
FIELDS OF WORK



Close cooperation between the different departments is necessary throughout the entire project in order to be able to evaluate the documents of the "Vermögensverwertungsstelle" using digital research tools.

The first step is <u>standardising the indexing information</u> of the files. Before treating the documents with the <u>necessary conservation measures</u>, an assessment of their condition is carried out by the conservators. The files are then <u>carefully digitised</u> and are further treated until they can finally be used for the project's actual purpose, the electronic <u>evaluation by provenance research</u>. In order to enable access to the documents for further historical inquiries and research in the long term, all digitised files will be published online. Continuous coordination ensures that the complex tasks carried

out in-house as well as by contractors are successful. Working in an interdisciplinary team is creating new challenges and tasks as well as a constant flow of communication.

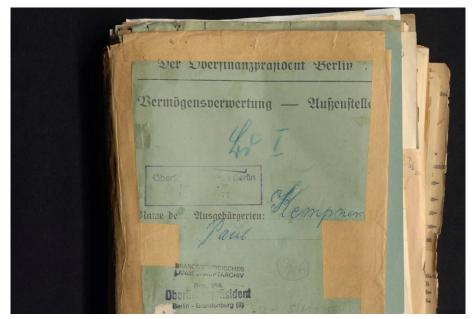


project timeline

Enlarged images with captions:



Die OFP-Akten im Magazin des Landeshauptarchivs OFP files in the archive



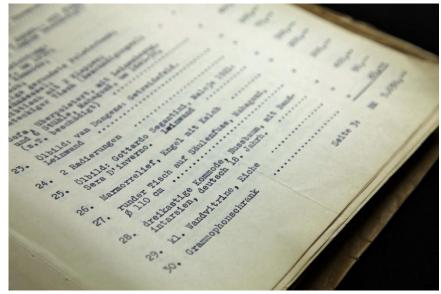
Die OFP-Akten im Magazin des Landeshauptarchivs

Akte zu Paul Kempner (1889–1956), der zunächst nach England, dann 1939 in die USA emigrierte, BLHA, Rep. 36A Oberfinanzpräsident Berlin-Brandenburg (II) Nr.19175

File on Paul Kempner (1889–1956), who emigrated first to England, then in 1939 to the USA OFP files in the archive



Zustandserfassung an der Werkbank im Landeshauptarchiv Condition assessment of the files



Ausschnitt einer Vermögensaufstellung aus der Akte zu Paul Kempner File on Paul Kempner, assets statement; BLHA, Rep. 36A Oberfinanzpräsident Berlin-Brandenburg (II) Nr.19175

CHECKING AND STANDARDISING DATA – THE INDEXING REVISION

We archivists guard archival treasures – with sleeve protectors and horn-rimmed glasses we dig our way through enormous stacks of paper in dusty cellars. So much for the cliché that still persists as the image of the way we work. The fact that we mainly sit in front of computers processing records in specialised databases is probably not (yet) part of the widespread image of archival work. However, this is exactly what the main task of the archivist working on the OFP project involves.

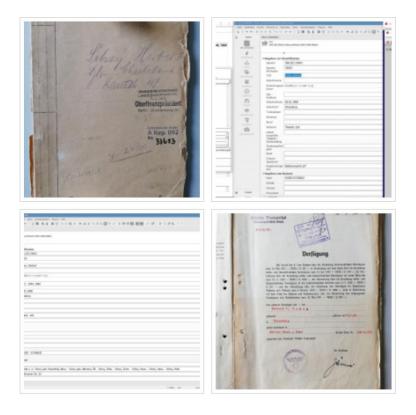
In this project, the archivist's primary goal is to review, revise and standardise data sets on the approximately 42,000 files. This is necessary for several reasons:

The files of the "Vermögensverwertungsstelle" were kept in the Landesarchiv Berlin until 2001 when they were transferred to the Landeshauptarchiv in the course of negotiations on the exchange of records. Initial indexing of the files was begun in the Landesarchiv Berlin and then continued in the Landeshauptarchiv. This resulted in different indexing standards within a database which is no longer in use today, and though needed to be automatically transferred to the archives current database. Formal errors that occurred during the process of migrating the data are now being corrected and the indexing information is standardised and verified. Consistent indexing of all files provides the basis for the implementation of restoration measures, digitisation and evaluation in the project.

Strasburg or Straßburg?

Plausibility of the indexing data is checked during record standardisation. With over 40,000 individual case files, inevitably errors will have occurred. Has the file's creation date been entered? Have the place of birth, name, family members and last place of residence been correctly registered? This is essential in order to make the data fully available to all potential users. In future, searches in the database will provide victims relatives and researchers with precise results and enable facetted search requests – for example, the search for persons with the same place of residence and place of birth.

In some cases, correct spelling of the place of birth determines whether a person or group of persons can be retrieved. Whether someone was born in Strasburg/West Prussia or in Straßburg/Alsace can make a considerable difference within the search query. The archivist verifies inconsistent information on the paper files themselves or matches them with the database of LIDOS-Gedenkbuchdatenbank for Berlin.



At the End of the Project

At the end of the archival work within the project, a well-structured data pool will be available online in accordance with the legal requirements for archives. The aim is to facilitate searching for and use of the files, digitised material and indexing data. In addition, the standardised structuring of the data will enable exporting and providing it to research platforms.

Contact: Dominic Strieder

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Enlarged images with captions:

RANDENBURGISCHES Oberfinanzpräsident Berlin Brandenburg (II) archiv Berlin A Rep. 092 Nr. 33653

Akte Schey, Herbert mit Registratursignatur (O 5205 – 37/208) und Archivsignatur im Brandenburgischen Landeshauptarchiv (Rep. 36 A (II) 33653)

File: Schey, Herbert with registry signature (O 5205 - 37/208) and archive signature in the Brandenburg Main State Archive (Rep. 36 A (II) 33653).

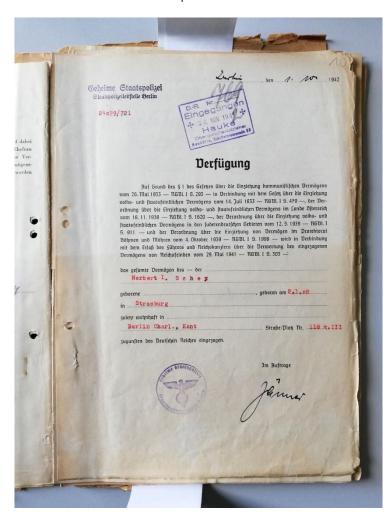
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Abgleich der durch automatischen Export aus Augias (links) generierten Datensätze in Scope (Mitte) und Überprüfung der Erschließungsangaben anhand der LIDOS 8 Gedenkbuchdatenbank (rechts) Comparison of the records generated by automatic export from Augias (left) in Scope (centre) and verification of the indexing information using the database LIDOS 8-Gedenkbuchdatenbank (right)

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Bearbeiteter, ergänzter und korrigierter Scope Datensatz. Der Geburtsort wurde korrigiert, die Wohnadresse ermittelt, die Laufzeit nachgetragen, Trennzeichen eingefügt und die weiteren im Akt vorkommenden Personen ergänzt.

Edited, completed and corrected Scope record. The place of birth was corrected, the residential address was identified, the date of creation was added, spaces were inserted and the other persons appearing in the file were complemented.

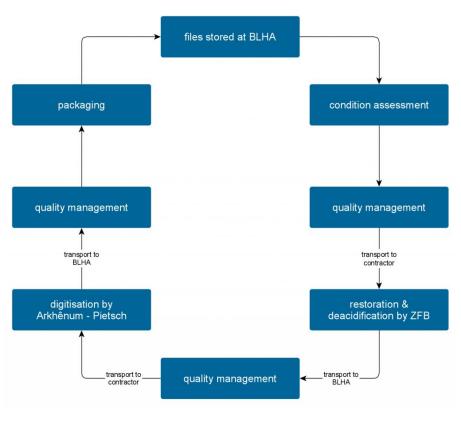


Einziehungsverfügung mit den wichtigsten personenbezogenen Daten. Wenn die Angaben aus den Datenbanken keine eindeutige Korrektur zulassen oder offensichtliche weitere Fehler enthalten, werden die Daten am Akt geprüft.

Collection order with the most important personal data. If the information from the databases does not allow for a clear correction or contains obvious additional errors, the data is checked on the file.

CLEANING PAPER AND MENDING TEARS – THE CONSERVATION PROCESS

After about eight decades of use, the approximately 42,000 files are showing various degrees of wear and tear. In addition to that, their acidic paper is at risk of accelerated decay, which can be slowed down only through chemical treatment. In order to preserve the historical documents and to enable their digitisation, the two conservators examined each one of the sheets (more than a million) and stipulated restoration and conservation measures. The cleaning, deacidification and restoration of the files are carried out in batches at the Leipzig Centre for Book Conservation (ZFB).



Preparation and Restoration of the Documents

the workflow

Condition Assessment at the Landeshauptarchiv

The serial assessment of the files provides a detailed overview of the existing damage and therefore allows the precise definition of the necessary restoration and conservation measures. The following data was recorded during the assessment:

- Number of sheets
- Are the sheets stapled together or are they bound?
- Which of the files contain material that requires special treatment?
- Oversized formats
- Mould
- Mechanical damage, e.g. tears, paper loss, folded sheets, adhesions
- Time required for the cleaning and removal of damaging materials
- Weight of the files
- Packaging requirements



Most of the paper was machine-made in the 20th century and its acidity is gradually destroying the files. In order to slow down this process the documents have to be deacidified. Due to the large number of files, they cannot be restored and deacidified inhouse. The archive has therefore assigned the necessary services to the ZFB after a Europe-wide tender.

Quality Management

By measuring the degree of acidity in the paper (pH-value) of randomly selected files as well as the amount of mould spores on their surface, the conservators are monitoring the success of the measures taken by the ZFB.

Restoration and Deacidification



At the ZFB, harmful materials such as staples or self-adhesive tapes are removed, tears are being mended and bindings are taken apart if necessary. Documents, which are not suitable for deacidification, are separated from the process. Following this preparation, the files are treated with a deacidification liquid, which penetrates deep into the paper and neutralises the acid.

After Digitisation

After digitisation, the files will return to the Landeshauptarchiv, where the conservators will

carry out a final assessment to ensure that the files are prepared in the best possible way for archival storage and future use.

Following this final quality management, the files will be repackaged into archival boxes made of suitable material, which will ensure the long-term preservation of the files. The files will then be placed in the archive's repository and will be ready for use in the reading room.

Contact: Sarah Waschke and Franziska Sommer

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Dokumente mit Beschreibstoffen, die nicht für die Entsäuerung geeignet sind

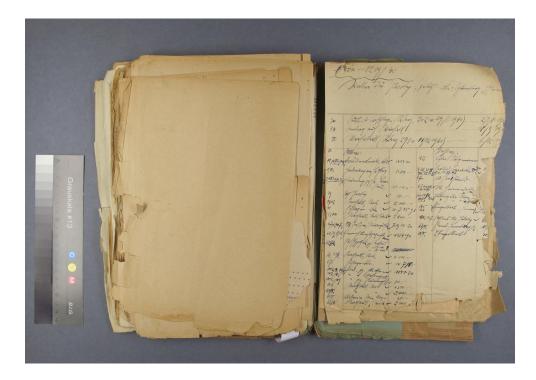
Documents with writing materials that are not suitable for deacidification



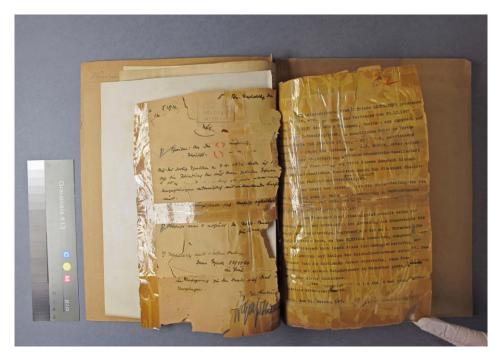
Beschreibstoffe, die nicht für die Entsäuerung geeignet sind Writing materials that are not suitable for deacidification



Dokumente mit sichtbarer Schimmelbelastung Documents with visible mould



Hier droht Informationsverlust durch Risse und Fehlstellen im Papier Imminent loss of information due to tears and paper loss

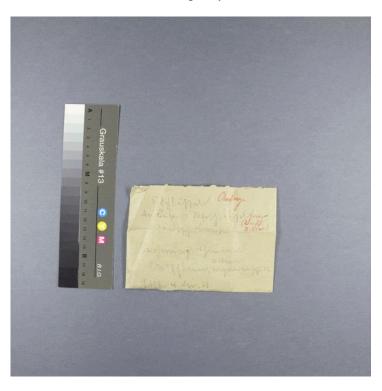


Drohender Informationsverlust aufgrund von säurehaltigem Papier, Rissen, Fehlstellen und einer beeindruckenden Anzahl an Selbstklebestreifen

Imminent loss of information due to acidic paper, tears, paper loss and an impressive amount of self-adhesive tape



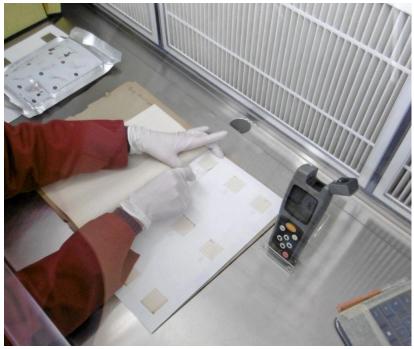
Akte mit Brandschaden File damaged by fire



Im Laufe der Zustandserfassung gibt es einige unerwartete Entdeckungen, wie hier ein Schlüssel In the course of the condition assessment, there are some unexpected discoveries, such as this key



Personalausweis von Frieda Freundlich Identity card of Frieda Freundlich



Measurement of mold spores on the paper surface

SCANNING AND PROCESSING - THE DIGITISATION PROCESS

In order to make the files available for current research methods and accessible to the public, they must be digitised in the most conservation-friendly way possible. To ensure that all of the more than two million pages can be digitised within the specified duration, the project is working together with a specialised service provider. Intensive preparation and cooperation with the archivists in charge of the inventory and with the restoration department, as well as targeted project planning, ensures a smooth process of digitisation. The quality of the scan images is guaranteed by, inter alia, compliance with ISO 19264-1, a standard that also applies to internal digitisation work at the Landeshauptarchiv.

Conservation-Friendly Digitisation using Archive Scanners



Only overhead scanners are used for the digitisation of the archival materials. They consist of an evenly illuminated support table for the archival files which is equipped with a tiltable glass plate that can be used to additionally secure documents. The camera module which includes a special sensor and a high-quality lens is mounted on a tripod above the table and allows distortion-free images to be taken.

Experienced scan operators trained in the careful handling of archival materials produce images of each individual file page and then export them as master files in the lossless TIFF format and as working copies in the compressed JPEG format. If required, further formats or resolutions can be exported from these formats, e.g. for web presentation or print reproductions.

Quality Check and Utilisation

As soon as the digital files have been transferred to the project, they are checked for completeness, integrity and compliance with the agreed digitisation requirements as part of the quality assurance process. After successful examination, they are uploaded into the internal working environment and converted as best as possible into computer-readable information, i.e. made searchable, by means of OCR (Optical Character Recognition). Difficulties for OCR are posed by the different fonts (Antiqua and Gothic fonts) as well as the diverse print images resulting from the various reproduction methods, paper types and ageing conditions. The quality checked and processed digital files are evaluated by the provenance research department using a DMS to be developed for this purpose in the Landeshauptarchiv. Furthermore they are made publicly available as comprehensively as possible via the archival database of the Landeshauptarchiv.

Contact: Tobias Gurok

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RECONSTRUCTION AND EVALUATION – PROVENANCE RESEARCH

Provenance Research is aiming to electronically search through the approximately 42,000 personal files of the "Vermögensverwertungsstelle" of the OFP Berlin-Brandenburg for evidence of Nazi-looted art. On the one hand, looted art and cultural assets shall be assigned to their former owners. On the other hand, a targeted search of the files shall determine which institutions and persons acquired art objects when they were expropriated for the benefit of the state treasury. If they are registered in the Lost-Art Database, descendants of victims of Nazi persecution or their representatives receive results on found locations. Public institutions are informed, if any Nazi looted art is suspected in their collection.

Systematic Expropriation and Monetisation of Jewish Property as a Field of Research

The Provenance research focuses on the official procedures in the files which – legitimised by the 11th Decree to the Reich Citizenship Law of November 1941 – served to fill the state coffers and to co-finance the war as quickly as possible and without further bureaucratic effort. The Nazi State aimed to completely monetise so-called Jewish property. This includes art and cultural objects documented as the last belongings of the deportees as well as "moving goods" (Umzugsgut) of refugees that had been confiscated and stored for years.

Who acquired Nazi looted art and where might these works be located today? In an attempt to track legal successors of buyers at the time and current locations of the art objects, the research concentrates on the Führermuseum Linz, the National Museums of Berlin, Nazi ministries and other actors who were privileged by laws and official decrees to obtain art objects from former Jewish ownership. One priority of research therefore is the "Verwertung durch Versteigerung" (realisation by auction) ordered by the authorities from March 1941 onwards and all related processes.



Defining Requirements for Electronic Evaluation

In order to be able to define requirements for the data management system to be developed, the provenance researchers are currently evaluating digital test files. Those are exemplary for the range of documents on art looting created at the "Vermögensverwertungsstelle".

Background

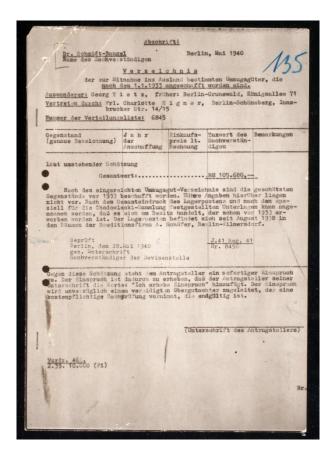
The Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media and the Ministry of Science, Research and Culture of the State of Brandenburg as funding institutions involved in the project wish to express Germany's moral obligation to restitute cultural

property looted or extorted during the Nazi era to the legal successors of victims of National Socialist persecution. There is no legal basis in Germany for this purely moral commitment made with the signing of the Washington Principles in 1998. Restitution is based on voluntary action. The project shall help to confirm art ownership and identify locations of looted art in order to specify Nazi art looting and close existing provenance gaps.

Contact persons for provenance research

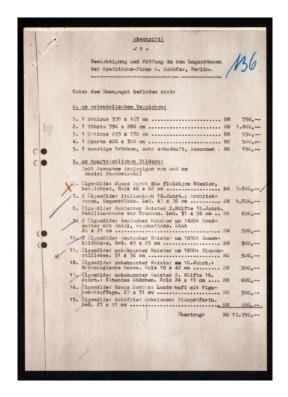
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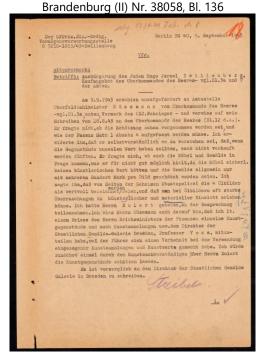


Auszug aus der Schätzung der bei der Spedition Schäfer eingelagerten beschlagnahmten Kunstsammlung des KaDeWe-Mitinhabers Georg Tietz, der 1935 aus Deutschland geflohen war

Extract from the appraisal of the confiscated art collection of the KaDeWe co-owner Georg Tietz who had fled Germany in 1935, stored at Schäfer haulage company; BLHA, Rep 36 A Oberfinanzpräsident Berlin-Brandenburg (II) Nr. 38058, Bl. 135



Auszug aus der Schätzung der bei der Spedition Schäfer eingelagerten beschlagnahmten Kunstsammlung des KaDeWe-Mitinhabers Georg Tietz, der 1935 aus Deutschland geflohen war, S. 2 Extract from the appraisal of the confiscated art collection of the KaDeWe co-owner Georg Tietz who had fled Germany in 1935, stored at Schäfer haulage company, p. 2; BLHA, Rep 36 A Oberfinanzpräsident Berlin-



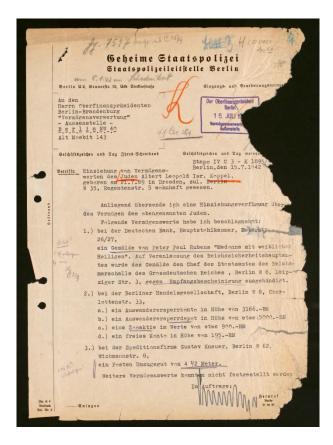
Einige Kunstobjekte aus dem beschlagnahmten Eigentum des KaDeWe-Mitinhabers Hugo Zwillenberg, der während einer Haft im November 1938 im KZ Sachsenhausen Einige Kunstobjekte aus dem beschlagnahmten Eigentum des KaDeWe-Mitinhabers Hugo Zwillenberg, der während einer Haft im November 1938 im KZ Sachsenhausen zwangsenteignet, besteuert und zur Auswanderung gezwungen wurde, fanden das Kaufinteresse des Oberkommandos des Heeres, mussten aber zunächst hinter das Führermuseum Linz zurücktreten

A couple of art objects from the confiscated property of KaDeWe co-owner Hugo Zwillenberg who, during imprisonment in Sachsenhausen concentration camp in November 1938, was expropriated, taxed and forced to emigrate found the interest of the "Oberkommando des Heeres" which, however, initially had to step back behind the Führermuseum Linz; BLHA, Rep 36 A Oberfinanzpräsident Berlin-Brandenburg (II) Nr. 41516 Bl. 18



Empfangsbestätigung der Nationalgalerie zu einer Menzel-Gouache aus dem Eigentum von Marie Busch, die nach dem Zwangsverkauf Ihres Landsitzes 1939 nach London fliehen musste

Acknowledgement of receipt from the National Gallery for a Menzel gouache owned by Marie Busch who had to flee to London after the forced sale of her country estate in 1939; BLHA, Rep 36 A Oberfinanzpräsident Berlin-Brandenburg (II) Nr. 5203 BI. 255



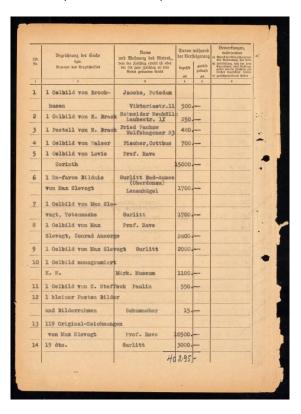
Aushändigung eines Gemäldes aus dem früheren Eigentum von Albert Koppel, einem ehemaligen Mäzen der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin und Mitglied des Kaiser Friedrich Museums Vereins, an das Staatsamt des Reichsmarschalls Herrmann Goering

Handover of a painting from the former property of Albert Koppel, a former patron of the National Museums in Berlin and member of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum Association, to the State Office of Reichsmarschall Herrmann Goering; BLHA, Rep 36 A Oberfinanzpräsident Berlin-Brandenburg (II) Nr. 20075



Auszug aus der Versteigerungsniederschrift von Objekten aus der Sammlung des Kunstbuch-Verlegers Bruno Cassirer, geflüchtet nach dem Pogrom 1938

Extract from the auction record of objects from the collection of the art book publisher Bruno Cassirer who fled after the pogrom in 1938; BLHA, Rep 36 A Oberfinanzpräsident Berlin-Brandenburg (II) Nr. 6227, Bl. 131



Auszug Versteigerungsniederschrift Bruno Cassirer, S. 2 Extract from the auction record Bruno Cassirer, p. 2; BLHA, Rep 36 A Oberfinanzpräsident Berlin-Brandenburg (II) Nr. 6227, Bl. 131v

- A.	Absch		and the grant of	ales see an estimation from					
Dr. Scht	idt-Bangel Sachverständigen		n, Mai 1940	100					
Yerreichnie 115)									
	der sur Hitnahne ins Augland bestimmten Ussugsgüter, die noch dem 1.1.1323 angeschaft worden sinde Auswandergri Georg T i et z, frühze: Berlin-Grunewald, Königsallee 71								
Vertreten du	Vertreton durch: Fri. Charlotte % i g n e r, Berlin-Schüneberg, Inne- brucker Str. 14/15								
Nummer der Ve	Nummer der Vertallungslister 6845								
Gegenstand (gannue Beis:	Lennung) Jahr der Anschaffung	Sinknufs- preis lt. Rechnung	Taxwert des Sachverstän- digen	Benerkungen					
Laut umsteher	ader Schlitzung								
	Gesamtwert:		.RM 105.680						
Gegenstände nicht vor. N ziell für di nommen werde worben worde	a eingereichten Umsug vor 1933 beschaft wo sch dem Gesamteindruc e Chodowiecki-Sammlur , daß es sich um Bes ist. Der Lagerposte ar Speditionsfirma A.	rden. Nilhere k des Lagerp g festgestel itz handelt, n befindet s	Angaben hier ostens und na lten Unterlag der schon vo ich seit Augu	ber liegen ch den spe- en kann ange- r 1933 er- st 1938 in					
gez. L	t , den 28.4ai 1940 nterschrift rotändiger der Devis	enstelle	J.41 Reg. 41 Nr. 8450						
antersenritt	Schlitzung sicht im A pruch int dalurch zu die Worte: "Ich erhe glich einen ver digg tige Wachgrüfung vorr	m Obergutag	hter succleit	er Sinspruch aller seiner Der Sinspruch et, der eine					
11		TUnter	schrift des A	ntragstellers)					
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Vordr. 465. 2.39. 10.000	(P1)	1							
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				The los					
		A DESCRIPTION OF THE OWNER		and the second se					

Auszug aus der Schätzung der bei der Spedition Schäfer eingelagerten beschlagnahmten Kunstsammlung des KaDeWe-Mitinhabers Georg Tietz, der 1935 aus Deutschland geflohen war

Extract from the appraisal of the confiscated art collection of the KaDeWe co-owner Georg Tietz who had fled Germany in 1935, stored at Schäfer haulage company; BLHA, Rep 36 A Oberfinanzpräsident Berlin-Brandenburg (II) Nr. 38058, Bl. 135

DAS TEAM DAS TEAM



Julia Moldenhawer Projektleiterin Project manager +49 (0)331 5674 245 julia.moldenhawer[@]blha.brandenburg.de



Dominic Strieder Archivar Archivist +49 (0)331 5674 201 dominic.strieder[@]blha.brandenburg.de



Stella Baßenhoff Provenienzforscherin *Provenance research* +49 (0)331 5674 206 <u>stella.bassenhoff[@]blha.brandenburg.de</u>



Dr. Thiago C. Junqueira Entwickler Developer +49 (0)331 5674 205 thiago.junqueira[@]blha.brandenburg.de



Sarah Waschke Restauratorin Conservator +49 (0)331 5674 204 sarah.waschke[@]blha.brandenburg.de



Thomas Ulbrich Bestandsverwalter Archivist +49 (0)331 5674 246 thomas.ulbrich[@]blha.brandenburg.de



Tobias Gurok Projektkoordinator Project coordinator +49 (0)331 5674 202 tobias.gurok[@]blha.brandenburg.de



Johanna Stauber Provenienzforscherin Provenance research +49 (0)331 5674 208 johanna.stauber[@]blha.brandenburg.de



Franziska Sommer Restauratorin Conservator +49 (0)331 5674 131 franziska.sommer[@]blha.brandenburg.de



Vanessa Müller Restauratorin Conservator +49 (0)331 5674 203 vanessa.mueller[@]blha.brandenburg.de



Dr. Irena Strelow Projektinitiatorin und Leiterin der Provenienzforschung / Former Head of Provenance Research (2020–2023)