

The Lepke Auction

The auction of the Rudolf Mosse collection, which was held on May 29–30, 1934 in the packed ground floor hall of the Mosse-Palais at Leipziger Platz 15, was not only significant in terms of the German art trade, but was a Berlin society event as well. The directors of museums from Hamburg, Essen, Barmen (now part of Wuppertal), and Dresden were present, as well as art dealers from Amsterdam and Vienna, representatives of the Reichsbank and the Deutsche Arbeitsfront and numerous private collectors. On the first day, paintings and sculptures were on the block; the second day followed with Egyptian and Greco-Roman antiquities, furniture, porcelain, tapestries, East Asian art, and Benin bronzes. The auction of the 337 lots brought in around a quarter of a million Reichsmark, whereas the 128 paintings alone—109 works from the nineteenth century and 19 works by old masters—brought in more than 150,000 RM. The low estimates were sometimes exceeded by bids equal to twice or three times the amount. In July 1933, the collection had been estimated as having a value of 600,000 RM.

The Rudolf Mosse Treuhandverwaltung GmbH, responsible for liquidating the private estate of Hans and Felicia Lachmann-Mosse, had assigned the art dealer Karl Haberstock and the co-owner of the auction house Lepke Hans-Carl Krüger with the task of holding the auction. Both then officially commissioned Lepke with holding the auction. The auction house made a total profit of around 40,000 RM from the commission; 35 percent went to Haberstock. Additional profits were made as well, since both Haberstock and Lepke acquired works from the auction offerings, either for themselves or in commission for private collectors or art dealers from abroad.

Not all works that can be associated with Rudolf Mosse were put up for sale at the auction. As a comparison of the four extant catalogues from 1908, 1915, 1921, and 1929/32 with the auction catalogue shows, the auction included no paintings, drawings, or sculptures that show members of the Mosse family; these remained in family possession, as stipulated by the agreement. In addition, of the more than 30 visual works of the collection, many of which were mentioned in the preface of the auction catalogue, only seven mid-sized and smaller works were up for sale. The location of most of the large sculptures in the collection, with the exception of works by Begas and Gaul that have already been restituted, remains unknown to this today. It is also still not clear why the three paintings by English masters of the 17th and 18th centuries were listed, but not offered for sale at the auction.

Finally, the auction catalogue also includes numerous works and objects that cannot be traced back to Rudolf Mosse, since they are not included in the collection catalogues. These include several paintings by old masters, almost all East Asian objects and Benin bronzes, which were acquired either by Felicia and/or Hans Lachmann-Mosse for their home at Maaßenstraße 28 or the family's summer residence at Gut Schenkendorf near Berlin. Most of these items of décor and art were auctioned on June 6–7, 1934 by Auktionshaus "Union" at the Lachmann-Mosse residence at Maaßenstraße 28 and brought in around 150,000 Reichsmark.

Research and text: Claudia Marwede-Dengg

Anonymous, "Beginn der Mosse-Versteigerung," *Berliner Tageblatt Morgen-Ausgabe* (May 30, 1934), 6; C. G. H. (Carl Georg Heise), "Randbemerkungen zur Mosse-Auktion," *Frankfurter Zeitung Reichsausgabe* (June 6, 1934).

Ibid.

“Abrechnung Rudolfs Lepke’s Kunst-Auctions-Haus v. 23.6.1934 für Karl Haberstock,” KMA-HB 3/BE/470.4; Anonymous, “Eine Viertelmillion für die Sammlung Mosse,” *Weltkunst* 22 (June 3, 1934), 1.

“Rudolf Mosse Stiftung GmbH Vergleichsvorschlag v. 12.7.1933,” sheet 6, BArch R/109/1 No. 413

“Abrechnung Rudolfs Lepke’s Kunst-Auctions-Haus v. 23.6.1934 für Karl Haberstock,” KMA-HB 3/BE/470.4.

See the notes in the auction catalogue, KMA-HB 3/BE/470.1.

See the auction catalogue, Nos. 120-122, p. 33, KMA-HB 3/BE/470.1.

Auktionshaus “Union,” Besitz L.-M., Maaßenstraße 28, KMA-HB/3/BE/ 523.1