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PRESS RELEASE

The Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation Agrees to Second Just and Fair Solution with the Heirs of Prof. Curt Glaser

– Check against original text in German –

After a first restitution in 2012, the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (SPK; Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation) recently identified additional artworks from the former collection of Prof. Curt Glaser (1879-1943). Prof. Glaser, museum director and art collector, lost his position due to his Jewish ancestry and emigrated in 1933. The Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz has now reached an agreement with his heirs which permits the artworks to remain in the collection of the Foundation.

As a result of systematic provenance research regarding the holdings of the Kupferstichkabinett (Museum of Prints and Drawings), two drawings have been identified which the Nationalgalerie (National Gallery) had acquired in one of the two sales in which Prof. Glaser auctioned his art collection. In addition, 26 photographs were found in the Kunstbibliothek (Art Library), which also formerly belonged to Prof. Glaser. They are part of a collection of about 10,000 photographs which he gave to the Kunstbibliothek shortly before his emigration in 1933, most of which however must be assumed to have been lost.

Considering Prof. Glaser's persecution by the Nazi regime and in recognition of his great services for the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (National Museums in Berlin), the SPK and the heirs of Prof. Curt Glaser agreed as part of a fair and just solution under the Washington Principles that in consideration of a compensation payment, the artworks would remain the property of the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz.

Hermann Parzinger, President of the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, said: "I am delighted that as a result of the systematic research into the provenance our holdings more and more frequently we are able to approach possible former owners or their heirs and find fair and just solutions with them. In doing so, paying tribute to persons like Prof. Curt Glaser, whose life and work has fallen into oblivion because of the Nazi purges is also very important to us."

Attorney David J. Rowland, on behalf of the Glaser Heirs, said: "Without Prof. Curt Glaser's persecution by the Nazis, he would not have been forced to leave his home and give up most of his possessions. Against this background, the heirs of Prof. Dr. Curt Glaser are very grateful to the

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INGOLF KERN
DR. STEFANIE HEINLEIN (Stv.)

Von-der-Heydt-Straße 16–18
10785 Berlin

Telefon: +49 30 266-41 14 40
Telefax: +49 30 266-41 28 21

pressestelle@hv.spk-berlin.de
www.preussischer-kulturbesitz.de



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Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation for their independent research and their willingness to proactively contact the Glaser heirs. Such conduct is an example of the museum best practices.”

Prof. Curt Glaser

Prof. Curt Glaser, born in 1879 in Leipzig, rose to be one of the most prolific and best-known art historians of the Weimar Republic soon after completing his studies in medicine and art history. From 1909 on, he worked in the Berlin museums, initially at the Kupferstichkabinett, where he expanded the collection of modern and contemporary art through numerous acquisitions. In 1924 he was appointed director of the Kunstbibliothek, whose focus he shifted over the following years from being a design form and template collection to becoming an art history research library. In addition, he assembled a significant private art collection together with his wife Elsa Glaser (1878-1932). They had among others the most extensive collection of Munch paintings in Berlin. Finally, Glaser was also one of the leading art critics and publicists of the twenties. With the coming to power of the Nazis, Prof. Curt Glaser was persecuted because of his Jewish descent. In the spring of 1933 he was suspended from his post as Director of the Kunstbibliothek and had to vacate his residence. Before he was forcefully retired in September 1933, he went into exile with his second wife Maria Glaser in June/July 1933. Just prior to leaving Germany, he sold in two auctions at the Max Perl auction house in May 1933, much of his extensive art and print collection, his furniture, and his art library. He was able to take a small number of artworks with him abroad. During their emigration the Glasers passed through France, Switzerland, Italy and Cuba, and ultimately came to the U.S. in 1941. Prof. Glaser died in 1943 in Lake Placid, New York.

The Artworks

The two drawings are sketches for allegorical reliefs by Christian Bernhard Rode, both from 1796. Born in Berlin, Rode (1725-1797), a student of Antoine Pesne, was President of the Berlin Academy of Arts since 1783. By establishing a private classroom for drawing at his home, he significantly helped to promote the development of the art of drawing in Berlin. His ideas on art were influenced by the enlightenment-didactic principle of the “instructive historical painting”. Frequently Rode resorted to offbeat topics or interpreted them in an unusual way. Often criticized for this modern orientation by contemporaries, Christian Bernhard Rode is



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now considered to be Berlin's most important historical painter of the second half of the 18th century. The two works from the Glaser Collection reflect the art and the importance of the master for the city of Berlin. Drawn in the year of Rode's own death and the death of Friedrich Wilhelm II., the two sketches make a topical connection from the contemporary ruler's glory to the time of the ancient gods. The design featuring an urn with a portrait of Friedrich Wilhelm, accompanied by grieving figures, creates a direct link to Berlin's ruler. The second design with allegorical depictions of classical ruler virtues makes the connection to ancient mythology.

The photographs are documentary shots of works of art that Curt Glaser had given to the Deutsches Bildarchiv in der Staatlichen Kunstbibliothek (German image archive in the State Art Library). The Bildarchiv was founded in 1929 in order to create with the help of photographs, reproductions and printed images, the most comprehensive documentation of the arts, crafts and architecture possible. During World War II it was partly destroyed. After the dissolution of the Bildarchiv, its surviving inventory was divided among various museum collections. Thus it is not to be ruled out that in the future more photographs from the Prof. Curt Glaser collection may be identified.