

Berlin, 25. Oktober 2019

PRESS RELEASE

GERMAN SALES – A new dimension in transparency

- check against original text in German –

The Kunstbibliothek of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Art Library of the National Museums in Berlin), Heidelberg University Library, and Getty Research Institute are publishing 9,000 historical auction catalogs online – a gain for provenance and art market research.

About 9,000 catalogs published by more than 390 auction houses in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland between 1901 and 1945 have been completely recorded, digitized, and indexed since 2010 in two projects supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation, DFG). Subproject 1 (funded also by National Endowment for the Humanities and the VolkswagenStiftung) covers the years 1930-1945 and Subproject 2, the catalogs from the years 1901-1929. These sources, which are indispensable for provenance and art market research, are now available with open access for the first time. A total of 650,000 pages can now be researched in full texts across catalogs. Up to 10.6 million page-views of the digitized auction catalogs have been recorded so far.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the German-language auction market with centers in Berlin, Frankfurt, Munich, Vienna, and Zurich was one of the world's most expansive hubs for art. The auctioning of numerous private collections, the activities of museum directors and curators in the art trade, the Great Depression, and the confiscation and expropriation of art by the Nazi government mark its varied and complex history. "German Sales" makes it possible to identify and reconstruct the object biographies, actors, and places involved in unheard-of clarity. The bibliography of Subproject 2, which has just been completed, contains registers linked to the auctioned collections, the auction houses, and the writers of the introductions along with a list of all catalogs. It includes major art historians such as Wilhelm von Bode, Max J. Friedländer, Julius Meier-Graefe, and Otto von Falke, making new information on the auction market and its protagonists available. The value of the bibliography is enriched by a first quantitative evaluation of the collected data with regard to the German auction market of the years 1901 to 1929.

DER PRÄSIDENT
MEDIEN UND KOMMUNIKATION

INGOLF KERN
DR. STEFANIE HEINLEIN (Dty.)

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

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

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



DR. MARTIN NISSEN
ÖFFENTLICHKEITSARBEIT UND KOMMUNIKATION

Plöck 107-109
69117 Heidelberg

Telephone: +49 6221 54 2581
nissen@ub.uni-heidelberg.de
<https://www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de>

The project *German Sales 1901-1929 / Art – Auctions – Provenance*. German art sales as reflected in auction catalogs from 1901 to 1929 was supported by the Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft.

Berlin, 25. Oktober 2019

DER PRÄSIDENT
MEDIEN UND KOMMUNIKATION

Exemplary transatlantic collaboration

In order to carry out the extensive digitization and indexing project, the Kunstbibliothek of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Heidelberg University Library, and the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles have collaborated.

The auction catalogs were first collected in a variety of libraries: approximately 2,380 are from Heidelberg and around 2,600 come from the Kunstbibliothek in Berlin. The remaining 4,000 catalogs were compiled in 58 other libraries and museums. Scientists at the Kunstbibliothek of the Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin conducted the time-consuming research and also produced the bibliography of the catalogs. The catalogs were scanned at the Heidelberg University Library and saved as searchable OCR files. Finally, the individual entries of paintings, drawings, and sculptures were edited for the Getty Provenance Index and made available there. Every data set in the Provenance Index is permanently linked to the corresponding digital reproduction on the Heidelberg website, which is particularly practical for users.

Additional Information:

German Sales on arthistoricum.net:

<https://www.arthistoricum.net/en/subjects/thematic-portals/german-sales/>

Joachim Brand and Britta Bommert on „German Sales 1901-1945“ (in German only): <https://www.preussischer-kulturbesitz.de/newsroom/dossiers-and-news/all-dossiers/dossier-provenienzforschung/potential-for-art-market-research/?L=1>