



lehmbruckmuseum

Restitution of the painting “Buchsbaumgarten” (Boxwood Garden) by Emil Nolde

The Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum Foundation has returned the painting “Buchsbaumgarten” (Boxwood Garden) by Emil Nolde to the heirs of the former owner. In the course of the restitution, the painting is to be offered for sale in the year end auction from 9 to 11 December at Ketterer-Kunst in Munich.

The City of Duisburg had acquired the oil painting “Buchsbaumgarten”, created by Emil Nolde in 1909, for the collection of the municipal art museum in 1956. In 1999, the heirs of Ismar Littmann, a lawyer and art collector from Wrocław who died in 1934, first submitted a restitution request to the Lehmbruck Museum in Duisburg into whose collection the work had since passed. In December 2019, the board of trustees of the Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum Foundation decided to grant the request. This is the second time in the Museum’s history and during the tenure of its director, Dr. Söke Dinkla, that a work of art from its collection is restituted in accordance with the provisions of the so-called Washington Declaration.

Crucial for the restitution is the historical recognition that Ismar Littmann, his widow and his four children were racially persecuted by National Socialist Germany after 30/01/1933 because of their Jewish ancestry and, due to this persecution, were forced to sell their art collection, including Emil Nolde’s painting “Buchsbaumgarten”. After Ismar Littmann’s death on 23/09/1934, the painting, along with a number of other artworks, had been consigned to the Max Perl auction house to be auctioned on 26-27/02/1935. While a number of the consigned works were removed from the auction as “degenerate art” by the Gestapo, the painting “Buchsbaumgarten” was sold for 350 RM – a sum far below the agreed minimum price. The buyer sold the painting via art dealers to the City of Duisburg in 1956.

For Sören Link, Lord Mayor of the City of Duisburg and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum Foundation, restitution is a logical step: “However hard this step may be, which means that we will no longer be able to show such a valuable and popular work at the museum, it is important and right to recognize past injustice and to draw the appropriate consequences.”

“With this restitution,” says Museum Director Dr. Söke Dinkla, “the Lehmbruck Museum is sending a clear signal that it fulfils its historical responsibilities. I want to thank the Board of Trustees of the Foundation for making it possible for us to follow the principles of the Washington Declaration on the identification and restitution of Nazi-confiscated cultural property, especially of Jewish ownership.”

The release date and contents of this press release correspond to an agreement between the Lehmbruck Museum and the heirs' representatives.

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