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German Auction House refuses to withdraw painting claimed by Stern Estate

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MONTREAL/November 20, 2009—

Lempertz auction house in Cologne, Germany is holding a sale Saturday, November 21, at 11am (CET), which will include the painting “Fish still life, shellfish, perch, pike, oyster and cat” by Alexander Adriaenssen (1587-1661), being claimed by the Estate of the late art dealer and collector Max Stern.



News of the painting's resurfacing was brought to the Estate's attention by the London-based Art Loss Register last week. Immediately thereafter, the Holocaust Claims Processing Office in New York contacted several leading authorities on the paintings of Adriaenssen. They believe this painting and the one sold in 1937 at an auction forced by the Nazis are one and the same. Furthermore, the Lost Art Database in Germany has also confirmed that it believes it to be one and the same. The Estate has asked Lempertz to pull the painting from sale in order to perform all of the required due diligence and confirm the validity of the research being compiled.

The painting was part of the 1937 forced sale of the Galerie Stern artworks by Lempertz, the same auction house holding the sale tomorrow. The estate has repeatedly pleaded with German auction houses to recognize the validity of the Estate's ownership of such looted artworks. This is not the first time that Lempertz has rejected the Estate's claims.

This despite the 2008 U.S. Federal Court ruling that the 1937 auction was indeed a forced sale and that all of the contents of that auction catalogue legitimately belonged to Stern and must be returned. Despite the ruling and enforcement of the decision by the U.S Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security, Lempertz continues to offer Stern artworks on the market.

The Stern Estate and its university beneficiaries (Concordia University and McGill University in Montreal, Canada, and Hebrew University in Jerusalem) have been actively seeking restitution for more than six years.

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Source:

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