

The Berlin Galerie Dr. Wilhelm August Luz during the Nazi Regime and in the Postwar Years

The Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte in Dortmund and the Museum Folkwang in Essen have been examining the provenance of all paintings from the nineteenth century acquired between 1935 and 1945, or which came to the collections in Essen and Dortmund in one way or another during this period. The project is supported by the Arbeitsstelle für Provenienzrecherche/-forschung, Berlin (Berlin Provenance Research Office).

Galerie Dr. W. A. Luz

Galerie Dr. W. A. Luz was founded in Berlin in 1935, where it operated without interruption until 1959. Its focus was on German art from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including works by Andreas and Oswald Achenbach, Rudolf von Alt, Carl Blechen, Heinrich Bürkel, Karl Gustav Carus, Caspar David Friedrich, Philipp Hackert, Johann Erdmann Hummel, Wilhelm von Kobell, Friedrich Loos, Christian Nerly, Ludwig Richter, Johann Wilhelm Schirmer, Carl Spitzweg, and Ferdinand Waldmüller.

Locations, 1931–1959

Within Berlin, the gallery repeatedly changed location. Until now, there is evidence of the gallery being located at the following addresses:

- Am Hegewinkel 106 (as of June 1931, “freelance commission work” at the Luz family home until ca. November 1934)
- Cooperation with Galerie Peri-Ming, Lennéstraße 4, Berlin (beginning at the start of 1934 or earlier–end of 1935)
- Viktoriastraße 26a (May 1935–sometime before January 1938)
- Kurfürstenstraße 127 (March 1938–January 1945) and Am Hegewinkel 106 (January–November 1944)
- Kurfürstenstraße 132 (mid 1945/early 1946–before February 1949) and at the same address Haus “Artibus” (May 1946)
- Kurfürstenstraße 55 (starting in February 1949–December 1949)
- Augsburger Straße 61 (April 1952–August 1959)

Biography

Wilhelm August Luz (* 1892, Göppingen/Wuerttemberg) studied art history in Munich and completed his dissertation in 1921 under Heinrich Wölfflin. After holding a position as an assistant at Aachen's Reiff Museum, from 1922 onwards he worked as an art dealer, initially for Galerie Ludwig Schaller in Stuttgart and the company Heinrichshofen in Magdeburg, later for Galerie Carl Nicolai and Galerie Van Diemen und Benedict & Co in Berlin. In 1931, he began working as a freelance art dealer (what he called "freelance work on commission") and represented the interests of German art museums at Berlin auctions. In 1934, he realized several sales exhibitions in cooperation with the Berlin art dealer Peri Ming. Finally, he achieved a reputation of his own when he opened a gallery in Berlin's Tiergarten neighborhood. He offered art works from private collections and from German aristocratic houses (Kaiser Wilhelm I, King Ludwig I of Bavaria, King George of Saxony, Schloss Buch, Schloss Reinhartshausen near Eltville). He had access to artists' estates by way of their inheritors.

Dr. W. A. Luz repeatedly purchased several works by individual artists in a group, works that he later sold individually. In so doing, he often offered one and the same painting over a longer period of time to various museums. References to a particular painting in question thus have to be searched in correspondence now located in many different places.

The customer basis of the gallery included important art museums in Germany and the neighboring countries. As early as 1938, Luz already wrote in his sales catalog "In neuen grösseren Räumen" (In a New, Larger Space) the following in lieu of a long preface:

"In place of a recommendation:

The following public art collections have acquired works from me: Berlin, Bremen, Breslau, Chemnitz, Coblenz, Cottbus, Danzig, Düsseldorf, Duisburg, Eckernförde, Eisenach (Wartburg), Essen, Flensburg, Frankfurt/Main, Greifswald, Halle (Saale), Hamburg, Hannover, Heidelberg, Karlsruhe i. B., Kiel, Köln/Rhein, Köslin, Konstanz, Lübeck, Marbach, München, Münster, Nürnberg, Oldenburg, Potsdam, Saßnitz, Speyer, Stralsund, Stettin, Strelitz, Stuttgart, Trier, Ulm a. D., Weimar, Wernigerode, Wuppertal, Zittau."

Luz found also found purchasers among private collectors from the world of business and politics. There is proof that high-ranking functionaries of the Nazi state, including Adolf Hitler and Hermann Göring, purchased art works from Luz. Heinrich Hoffmann, Hitler's photographer and fervent acolyte, claimed at an interrogation by the US Army in 1945: "Luz Gallery, Berlin, Kurfürstenstrasse. One of the few dealers who worked directly with Hitler." But usually, the Munich gallerist Maria Almas-Dietrich served as mediator: After Hitler had created "Sonderauftrag Linz" in 1939, an informal organization, responsible directly to Hitler,

charged with building the so-called Führermuseum in Linz, the Reichskanzlei continued to purchase paintings from Galerie Luz. In 1943, when Hermann Voss was named "Sonderbeauftragter des Führers" after the death of Hans Posse, Luz even had a direct contact: for he already had established business relations with the Wiesbaden museum director.

Alongside his activity as an art dealer, from 1937 Luz worked as an art expert for the Reichskammer der bildenden Künste (Chamber of Fine Arts). In this role, estimating the value of art objects in Jewish possession was among his primary tasks. Luz also worked as an expert in court cases and was an expert on bomb damage in the last years of the war.

The building Kurfürstenstraße 127 was totally destroyed by a bomb attack on November 23, 1943. Luz had already moved his inventory beforehand, but he lost "all his documents" in the fire that ensued. He then continued operating his gallery at his home located at Am Hegewinkel 106 until the end of the war (or at least until January 1945).

In mid-1946, Luz was verifiably working at Haus Artibus, located at Kurfürstenstraße 132. According to an eyewitness, Artibus was an institution established by the occupying powers for which Luz was active as a hired expert. The gallerist, in contrast, characterized this location in an undated document on the occasion of moving to a new space at Kurfürstenstraße 132 (the relevant entry in the Berlin Commercial Register is dated April 1, 1947) as follows: "With the four exhibition spaces in the first floor of an old Berlin town house I returned to the building in which I tried to establish my first place of business with Artibus." The term "Artibus" can be found in the 1930s to the 1950s in the telegram addresses from art dealers and galleries, for example, Artibus Köln (Aenne Abels, Kunst-Galerie Alter und Neuer Meister, Köln) and Artibus (Galerie für alte Kunst (previously A. S. Drey) G.m.b.H., Munich).

The gallery program at Kurfürstenstraße 132 now not only included "old masters," but also "degenerate art ... only by leading masters," non-European art ("negro sculptures," "Ancient China"), decorative drawings and prints, arts and crafts, carpets, small furniture, jewelry, and clocks. At least when it came to trading with works of classical modernism, this was just an intermezzo, for from the later years of the gallery there is a letter in which Luz declares "I do not traffic in expressionism, but in the realm of the old masters, I have done quite a great deal."

It is today impossible to say whether and when the Galerie Dr. Luz was able to take up normal business again at this address (and as of 1952 at Augsburgsberger Straße 61). Individual works from the inventory stored in various sites were at any event not yet present in Berlin in 1949. On August 20, 1959, Galerie Dr. W. A. Luz, now located at Augsburgsberger Str. 61 in

Berlin-Schöneberg, was removed from the business registry (by whom?). Just before, its sole owner Wilhelm August Luz died at the age of 67 on July 25, 1959, in Berlin.

Purchases Made through Galerie Dr. W. A. Luz Included in the Collection Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte der Stadt Dortmund

The cultural policy of the Nazis forced art museums in Germany to take on a new orientation. Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte began in 1933 purchasing numerous paintings, prints, and drawings from the nineteenth century. More works were purchased at Galerie Dr. W. A. Luz, with its specialization in the realm of the Old Masters, in the years until 1945 than from any other source.

Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Dortmund

(Erwerbungsjahr)

Heinrich Dreber gen. Franz-Dreber, *Iphigenie am Meeresstrand*, o. J. (1942)

Bernhard Fries, *Italienische Landschaft*, o. J. (1948)

Heinrich Ferdinand Grünewald, *Amor überrascht eine Nymphe*, 1838 (1940)

Heinrich L. Th. Gurlitt, *Monte Pellegrino*, 1852 (1939)

Carl Georg A. Hasenpflug, *Klosterruine im Schnee*, 1849 (1941)

Philipp Hoyoll, *Der gestörte Maler*, um 1840 (1939)

Johann Heinrich Ramberg, *Das Friedensjahr 1763*, 1834 (1937)

Friedrich Wilhelm von Schadow, *Bildnis einer Dame*, um 1822 (1939)

Johann Wilhelm Schirmer, *Waldlandschaft mit Eisenhütte*, um 1835/38 (1941)

Joseph Schuster, *Stilleben mit Sittich*, 1849 (1941)

Conclusion

As of 2009, for none of these paintings has prior Jewish ownership or a sale due to persecution been established (as of June 14, 2011).

We would be thankful for any additional information.

Provenance research was entrusted by both museums to Dr. Ulrike Gärtner. From October 2009 to September 2010, Ms. Gärtner was assisted by Dr. Sibylle Ehringhaus, Berlin.

Essen, June 14, 2011