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Vienna's Leopold Settles With Heir on Nazi-Looted Paintings

By Catherine Hickley and Zoe Schneeweiss - Jun 20, 2011

Vienna's [Leopold Museum](#) said it paid an undisclosed amount to keep two paintings by Anton Romako in a settlement with the heir of a Jewish construction entrepreneur whose art collection was seized by the Gestapo before 1941.

The two paintings, "Greillenstein Castle" and "Countess Kuefstein at the Easel," were owned by Moriz Eisler, an art collector who lived in Brno, now in the [Czech Republic](#). He was arrested, together with two brothers, in 1939 for "lack of respect for the Fuehrer." He survived Auschwitz and returned to his Brno home in 1945 to rebuild his company.

"Although these works belong without doubt to the Leopold Museum Foundation, they were taken from Moriz Eisler and not returned, so it was important to the [Leopold Museum](#) to find a settlement," the museum said in a news release handed today to reporters in Vienna.

The Leopold Museum was founded by Rudolf Leopold, an ophthalmologist and art collector who died last year at the age of 85. During his lifetime, the museum argued that as a private foundation, it was not subject to [Austria's restitution law](#), which only applies to federal government museums.

After Leopold's death, his son Diethard Leopold promised to settle all outstanding claims for Nazi-looted art in the museum's collection as quickly as possible.

Romako was a 19th-century Austrian painter of portraits and landscapes whose works influenced later artists including Oskar Kokoschka.

Good Faith

"We understand that this was difficult because Professor Leopold had acquired the paintings in good faith," said Filip Marco, the lawyer representing the four heirs, all of whom live in the Czech Republic. "We are extremely pleased," Marco told reporters in Vienna.

The Leopold Museum is selling an Egon Schiele painting, "Houses With Colorful Washing," at a [Sotheby's \(BID\)](#) auction on June 22. The cityscape is expected to fetch as much as \$50 million, a record for the artist.

The revenue will help to pay for “Wally,” a portrait by Schiele that was the subject of a decades-long restitution dispute. In July last year, the museum agreed to pay \$19 million to the heirs of the Jewish art dealer Lea Bondi Jaray to keep the portrait, which was stolen by the Nazis in the 1930s.

Last month, the Leopold Museum agreed to pay \$5 million to the granddaughter of Jenny Steiner, a Jewish silk-factory owner, to keep in its collection “Houses by the Sea,” another Schiele painting that was stolen by the Nazis.

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