

Presseinformation

Museum am Rothenbaum

Rothenbaumchaussee 64 | 20148 Hamburg Germany | www.markk-hamburg.de

Press release

Hamburg, June 10, 2024

Restitution of Nazi-looted Art

Museum am Rothenbaum (MARKK) restitutes Buddha head to rightful heirs of Berlin art collector Johanna Ploschitzki 83 years after seizure of property

The Museum am Rothenbaum (MARKK) today restituted the head of a Buddha figure that was confiscated in 1941 during the Nazi era and acquired by the museum. The restitution agreement had already been signed in March. It was handed over today by MARKK Director Prof. Dr. Barbara Plankensteiner and Commercial Director Marc von Itter to the legal representatives of the community of heirs, lawyer Dr. Louis Rösberg and lawyer Dr. Ewald Volhard.

The head comes from the estate of the Berlin art collector Johanna "Hansi" Ploschitzki, who emigrated to the USA in 1939. Her possessions destined for shipment were confiscated by the Secret State Police in the port of Hamburg in 1941 and auctioned off shortly afterwards by the Hamburg bailiff's office. The then *Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg* acquired seven East Asian art objects and twenty-eight books through this auction. Johanna Ploschitzki, who took the name Hansi Share after remarrying in the USA and lived in Los Angeles, filed an application for restitution through her lawyer in 1948, which was granted as part of a restitution process. In 1951, the objects and books in the museum were returned to her - except for the Buddha head, about whose whereabouts in Hamburg Hansi Share had no knowledge and the museum management at the time gave no honest information. In the correspondence between the city's restitution office and the museum at the time, the Buddha head was incorrectly listed as an "old pot", which is why the museum stated that it was "not identical".

When MARKK Director Prof. Barbara Plankensteiner began realigning the museum in 2017, systematic provenance research projects were initiated. The fact that the Buddha head was a case of Nazi-looted property already became clear in 2019 during preparations for the exhibition "Steppes and Silk Roads". Initial research into Hansi Share's biography and the question of why the head was not returned in 1951 confirmed the suspicion. With funding from Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste, the project "Provenance research on Nazi-looted property in the Museum am Rothenbaum: First systematic review of selected holdings" was launched in 2021 also to clarify the question of why the Buddha head owned by Mrs. Ploschitzki had remained in the museum. At the same time, the museum received inquiries about the Buddha head from legal representatives in 2021, whereupon the formal restitution process began.

Dr. Carsten Brosda, Senator for Culture and Media: "Part of coming to terms with National Socialist injustice is the unconditional and complete clarification of the origin of our museum holdings and the restitution of expropriated cultural property. I therefore very much welcome the fact that the historic Buddha head can now finally be returned to the descendants of the original owner. The fact that this restitution has now been made possible is also thanks to the tireless research work of the MARKK. The restitution of Nazi-looted property will remain an important task for our museums in the future."

Prof. Barbara Plankensteiner, Director of the Museum am Rothenbaum (MARKK):

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"I am very pleased that we have now been able to restitute this head of a Buddha sculpture and would like to thank Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste, whose funding allowed us to carry out the necessary research. I apologize to the descendants of Ms Share-Ploschitzki for the museum's concealment strategies in the 1950s and am very sorry that they had to wait so long for justice".

Steven Maass as spokesman for the descendants of Hansi Share: "We are very pleased that the city of Hamburg and the museum are returning the Buddha head that was confiscated by the Nazis' from my grandmother art collection. It's been a long time since her art work has been confiscated and most still has not been returned. Thank you for your cooperation in the matter of the Buddha head."

Pamela N. Emmerich, National President of American Friends of the Hebrew University: "American Friends of the Hebrew University is grateful for the restitution of this work of art seized from the Hansi (Johanna) Share Art Collection in 1941. After 83 years, its' just return to Ms. Share's heirs is a positive outcome to a very dark period of history. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the MARKK Museum am Rothenbaum, to Dr. Mara Wantuch-Thole, Dr. Ewald Volhard, Andrea Enderlein, and to all those who have worked to make this day possible. The resources provided by this restitution through the estate of Marion Tolnai, Ms. Share's daughter, will further scholarship, research, and academic excellence at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. It is an honor to witness the full realization of Ms. Tolnai's intentions."

For further information, please see our attached information sheet.

The results of the research will be published in the form of a research report on the MARKK website.

Funded by Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste.

