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Concordia Commits to Seeking Restitution of Max Stern's Art Holdings Lost During the Nazi Regime

250 PAINTINGS ALREADY IDENTIFIED AND FIVE LOCATED

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Concordia University in Montreal (Quebec/Canada) - acting on behalf of the executors of the estate of Dr. Max Stern and its three university beneficiaries (Concordia, McGill University/Montreal and Hebrew University/Jerusalem) - has committed to seeking restitution of the art holdings that were either confiscated from the late Dr. Stern by the Nazis or sold by force in the 1930s. The official announcement will be made by Dr. Clarence Epstein, Concordia's Director of Special Projects, at a press conference on Thursday, April 28, at 11 a.m., at the Office of the Government of Québec, at 59 Pall Mall in London, UK.

From 1913 the Julius Stern Gallery in Dusseldorf specialized in Dutch and Flemish Old Masters and German painting. On the death of his father in 1934, Max Stern assumed ownership of the gallery just at the same time that the Nazi government and the Gestapo began harassing him to cease operations due to his Jewish status. Stern was forced to make irrational decisions concerning his business and was left no choice by 1937 but to consign most of his inventory and private collection to Lempertz auction house in Cologne and store the remainder of his collection with a local shipper.

He fled to Paris with only a suitcase in hand, and soon after sought exile in England, where, he operated West's Galleries in Duke Street in London. When Paris fell in 1940, German visitors in Britain were treated as enemy aliens, leading to Stern's internment in a refugee camp on the Isle of Man, followed by additional internments in Canada.

By 1942 he settled in Montreal, and soon after became involved with the Dominion Gallery, which he eventually purchased, and turned into the most important gallery in the country. In 1946 he returned to Germany to initiate procedures that led to the recovery of 14 paintings. On the same occasion, he went to England to regain possession of several works that had been stored at Barclays Bank. However the majority of his art possessions were never returned.

Concordia University is emerging as one of the institutional specialists in Canada regarding cultural property and believes it has an obligation to continue pursuing the restitution initiated by Max Stern himself after World War II. To this end, Concordia is working closely with the Art Loss Register in London, the New York State Holocaust Claims Processing Office, the Commission for Looted Art in Europe as well as the major international auction houses.

In the short time since Concordia launched this effort, 250 works of art have been identified including pieces by Brueghel, Bosch, Carracci and Winterhalter. Thus far, five works have been located in the United States, England, Holland and Germany. The executors and beneficiaries hope to avoid using the courts and instead use moral suasion to convince those institutions and individuals in Europe and abroad to return the works to the beneficiaries of one of the most important dealers and collectors in Canadian history.

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