

AUKTION 392

Reclaiming the Galerie Stern, Düsseldorf



The London Jewish Museum of Art

PRESS RELEASE



Ben Uri launches European tour of ground breaking Nazi Spoliated Art exhibition



In 1935 Dr. Max Stern's licence to trade as *Galerie Stern, Düsseldorf* was withdrawn because he was Jewish. In September 1937 his last appeal was rejected and although the 17 days given to liquidate his gallery was extended, he was forced to sell his artworks under extreme duress. The sale was arranged by him through Lempertz auctioneers in Cologne. The auction was titled 'Auktion 392'.

This is the unique story of Max Stern, the aryanisation policies of Nazi Germany, the racial cleansing and economic strategy employed, the complex legal and moral issues of restitution and the practical difficulties in succeeding. This exhibition has been conceived and curated by Dr Catherine MacKenzie of Concordia University, Montreal. The Max Stern Art Restitution Project was initiated by the Estate of Dr. Stern. The most important work recovered to date '*Aimee, a young Egyptian*' (cover) by Emile Vernet-Lecomte, 1869, has been generously lent by the Estate from *The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts* for this exhibition.

Born in München-Gladbach, Germany, in 1904, Max Stern (above right in 1944) inherited his passion for art from his father, gallery owner Julius Stern. Max Stern studied art history in Germany and Austria, obtaining a doctorate from the University of Bonn at the young age of 24. He took over the Galerie Stern after his father's death in 1934.

After being forced to liquidate the gallery collection, stripped of his livelihood, he fled to Paris, reportedly carrying nothing but a suitcase, before joining his sister in London. Stern worked as a director in the West's Galleries she had co-founded in 1937 until wartime conditions led him to be interned as an "enemy alien". He was further interned in Canada, but nearly two years of confinement ended when he was hired by the Dominion Gallery in Montreal.

After the Second World War, Stern managed to retrieve some of his London holdings, as well as parts of his private collection art confiscated by the Nazis. In 1946 Max married Iris Westerberg, and the two soon became owners of the Dominion Gallery.

In Canada his career as an art dealer thrived, a pioneer in foregrounding contemporary Canadian painting, he also championed modern sculptors like Jacob Epstein, Henry Moore, Jean Arp, Aristide Maillol and Auguste Rodin.

Max Stern died of a heart attack in 1987.

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