

**Max Stern Art  
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## German auction house to proceed with sale of Nazi-tainted art despite objections

MONTREAL, CANADA/ Thursday, November 16, 2006-- On Friday November 17 th at 10 a.m. (German local time) the Van Ham auction house in Cologne, Germany has announced that it will proceed with the sale on behalf of a German client of two Old Master paintings sold under duress in 1937 by the late Jewish art dealer Dr. Max Stern. The works in question are titled *Market Scene in the Piazza Navona, Rome* (1691) and *Market Scene in the Piazza del Quirinale, Rome* (1698) by the Dutch Baroque painter Mathijs Naiveu (1647-1721).

This sale will proceed despite official requests to Van Ham on behalf of the Stern Estate beneficiaries (Concordia and McGill universities in Montreal, Canada and Hebrew University in Jerusalem) by the New York State Banking Department's Holocaust Claims Processing Office (HCPO). "This blatant refusal to acknowledge the forced sale that took place during the Nazi era is especially distressing because it comes on the heels of the Estate's first recovery through Sotheby's last month of a major work by Emile Lecomte-Vernet (1821-1900)" said Concordia University's Dr. Clarence Epstein who heads up the Max Stern Art Restitution Project.

On November 8 th , 2006, the HCPO requested the immediate withdrawal of the Naiveu paintings from the upcoming Van Ham auction. The Van Ham sale first came to the attention of the HCPO through the efforts of the Art Loss Register - the world's largest private international database of lost and stolen art. There are presently more than 250 Stern works listed on this database.

The Stern Estate has been pursuing the Naiveu paintings for several years, beginning when the German possessor of the works tried to sell them through Sotheby's in Amsterdam. After the refusal by Sotheby's to offer them due to the Estate's position, the possessor then asked the Cologne auction house, Van Ham, to undertake the sale. The Estate is most disturbed by the fact that Van Ham has accepted to offer these works without providing any provenance information whatsoever, in particular without noting the Stern restitution claim attached to them. Van Ham is well aware of the tainted history of these paintings.

Dr. Max Stern (1904-1987) was born in Germany, studied art in Cologne, Berlin, Vienna and Paris before returning to Düsseldorf to direct the Galerie Stern - which was founded by his father, Julius, in 1913. Under Nazi coercion he was forced to liquidate his gallery for a fraction of its true value and ultimately fled Germany in 1937 with just a suitcase in hand. In 1941 he moved to Canada and the following year joined one of Canada's most successful art houses, the Dominion Gallery of Fine Arts. He eventually became its sole owner.

It was just over two years ago that Concordia University launched the Max Stern Art Restitution Project. Since that time, the Project's international research team learned that at least forty Old Master and Northern European works owned by Stern had been re-offered on the art market in the last two decades - most of them at major auction houses in Germany.

<http://auktion392.com/>

<http://maxsternproject.concordia.ca/>

Source:

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