

National Gallery of Art

NEWS RELEASE

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NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART TO RETURN PAINTING TO HEIRS

AS A RESULT OF GALLERY RESEARCH AND WEB POSTING

WASHINGTON, D.C. – After exhaustive research, the National Gallery of Art has concluded that a painting in its collection, Still Life with Fruit and Game (1615/1620) by Flemish artist Frans Snyders (1579-1657), is likely to have been confiscated by the Nazis from the Stern collection in Paris sometime before the German art dealer Karl Haberstock acquired it in 1941. By mutual agreement, the Gallery is arranging to return the painting to the authorized representative of the Stern family who learned about the provenance (history of ownership) from the Gallery's Web site (www.nga.gov).

"The Gallery has been doing extensive World War II-era provenance research on the European art in its collection for three years and posts the results of that ongoing effort for the world to see on its Web site. We believe that full disclosure of all available information about works in the Gallery's collection is of vital importance," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art.

Background on the Snyders Painting

The factors that led to the Gallery's decision to return the painting are as follows:

Provenance: Archival records discovered by Nancy Yeide, head of curatorial records at the National Gallery of Art, document that a still-life painting by Snyders was confiscated from the Stern collection in Paris, taken by Hermann Goering and traded by him to Haberstock (one of the Nazis' principal dealers, although he had many other clients) in 1941. By 1945 Haberstock is known

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to have given the painting to Baron von Poellnitz. Still Life with Fruit and Game was purchased from von Poellnitz around 1968 by Herman Shickman. The Gallery acquired the painting in 1990 as a gift of Herman and Lila Shickman in honor of the Gallery's fiftieth anniversary, which took place in 1991.

Dimensions: The dimensions of the Gallery's painting (94.5 x 143 cm) are virtually identical to the dimensions of the Snyders painting (95 x 141 cm) that passed through Goering/Haberstock/von Poellnitz.

Markings: The Nazis assigned the code "ST" to the Stern collection from which a Snyders was taken and wrote this code on the backs of the confiscated pictures. Archival documents refer to a Snyders painting, Still Life with Hares, from the Stern collection with the code "ST11." The Gallery's painting has "ST" written on the stretcher. An heir to the Stern collection provided the Gallery with photographs of the backs of other confiscated pictures that were returned to his family after the war. The mark on the Gallery picture is in a style similar to the marks on the back of the other Stern pictures.

Some contradictory evidence remains, although it is overwhelmed by evidence that indicates the Gallery painting was the one taken from the Stern collection. Archival documentation of the Stern picture repeatedly refers to "hares," while the animal in the Gallery painting is clearly a deer, albeit a small one. Also, the "ST" on the back of the Gallery's picture does not include a numeral, and the Nazi system was alphanumeric (ST1, ST2, etc.).

Nevertheless, when the trustees of the National Gallery of Art were presented with all of the research, they approved the return of the work immediately upon receipt of assurances that the claimant who came forward is representing all heirs.

World War II Provenance Research to Date

The Gallery has conducted extensive research into the provenances and other aspects of works in its permanent collection over the last two decades, with particular attention over the last three years to the World War II era. In addition to the Snyders painting, to date the Gallery has found 11 paintings in its collection that passed through Nazi hands. In each case, the Gallery has discovered archival documents proving that the painting was returned to its rightful owner after World War II. These paintings are as follows: Madame Stumpf and Her Daughter (1872) by Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot;

La Bretonnerie in the Department of Indre (1872) by Gustave Courbet; Portrait of a Man (1522) and Portrait of a Woman (1522) by Lucas Cranach; Self-Portrait (1861) by Henri Fantin-Latour; Portrait of a Young Man (c. 1520/1530), attributed to Hans Holbein, the Younger; Pianist and Checker Players (1924) by Henri Matisse; Place du Carrousel, Paris (1900) by Camille Pissarro; Tiberius and Agrippina (c. 1614) by Sir Peter Paul Rubens; Peasants Celebrating Twelfth Night (1635) by David Teniers II; and The Marriage of the Virgin (c. 1491) by Luca Signorelli.

National Gallery of Art's World War II Resources

From the home page of the Gallery's Web site (www.nga.gov), click on *Resources* and then *World War II Resources*, for a list of resources available at the National Gallery of Art in Washington and/or on its Web site as follows: *Finding Aid to World War II Research Information*, *Photographic Archives Resources*, *Munich Collecting Point Archive*, *World War II Provenance Research*, *Provenance Search*, and *Related Publications*.

In order to search for works in the Gallery's permanent collection by artist, title, subject, or accession number, click on *Search the Collection* from the home page. In order to do a provenance search by names of former owners or persons associated with a work of art, such as a dealer's name, click on *Search by Provenance* from either the *Search by Collection* page or the *World War II Resources* page. Provenance texts of all of the Gallery's 3,175 paintings (including the 1,600 European paintings that could have been in Europe between 1933 and 1945) contain all research to date, much of which includes detailed footnotes. Users will find an explanation of how to read the Gallery's provenance texts as a link from the *Provenance Search* page.

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