

A SEARCH FOR TRACES

The Arthur Feldmann Collection
and the Albertina

Contents

Exhibition facts

Press release

Origins and Holdings of the Feldmann Collection

Exhibition facts

Press conference	15 October 2015 10 am
Opening	15 October 2015 6.30 pm
Duration	16 October 2015 to 29 November 2016
Venue	Spanish Appartements Habsburg Staterooms
Curator	Dr. Achim Gnann
Exhibits	30
Catalogue	The catalogue is a publication of the Commission for Provenance Research. It is available for sale in the Albertina's museum shop and at www.albertina.at for €30 (German only)
Contact	Albertinaplatz 1 A-1010 Vienna T +43 (0)1 534 83-0 info@albertina.at www.albertina.at
Opening hours	Daily 10 am – 6 pm, Wednesdays 10 am – 9 pm
Press contact	Sarah Wulbrandt (press officer) T +43 (01) 534 83 - 511 M +43 (0)699.12178720, s.wulbrandt@albertina.at Barbara Walcher T +43 (01) 534 83 - 512 M +43 (0)699.109 81743 b.walcher@albertina.at Ivana Novoselac-Binder T +43 (01) 534 83 - 514 M +43 (0)699.12178741 i.novoselac-binder@albertina.at



A Search for Traces

The Arthur Feldmann Collection and the Albertina

16 October – 29 November 2015

The Albertina is mounting a small exhibition in honour of the exceptional gift of 30 master drawings from the collection of Dr. Arthur Feldmann (1877–1941).

During the 1920s, the Brno-based lawyer Feldmann began compiling a collection of drawings, a collection that would eventually number around 800 works and thus be one of the most important of its era. Following the Nazis' occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1939, Feldmann's villa was confiscated (along with the artworks he kept there) due to his Jewish origins; Feldmann himself was later taken into investigative custody, and it was only for a brief time that he was to survive the torture to which he was subjected there. His wife Gisela was deported to Theresienstadt in 1942, and 1944 saw her murdered in the concentration camp at Auschwitz. Feldmann's important collection, once expropriated, was broken up and dispersed. Part of it ended up in what was then the Provincial Museum in Brno, from where Arthur Feldmann's descendants managed to have it restituted in 2003 after a great deal of effort. And over the many years since then, the family's research has turned up further works on paper from the former collection—and in frequently arduous and difficult confrontations with museums and state institutions, they have managed to have these restituted, as well.

30 works on paper by German, Dutch, Italian, and French artists were generously given to the Albertina between 2011 and 2015 by Uri Peled-Feldmann, the collector's grandson. Arthur Feldmann himself had already maintained a close relationship with the institution. Otto Benesch, an art historian and former director of the Albertina, served as an advisor to Feldmann and also mentioned works on paper from his collection in various publications that discussed works by Dürer, Rembrandt, Annibale Carracci, Lorrain, Poussin, and Watteau.

The accompanying volume sheds light on this collection's special character as well as on its background and the situation in which it first came together, followed by a look at how it could be reconstructed via a database. An interview with Uri Peled-Feldmann provides insight into the family's situation back then and points out the difficulties that arose in finding and demanding the return of these drawings. And the book's final chapter is devoted to a discussion of the specific drawings that were given to the Albertina.

This publication, which is being published in cooperation with the department of Cultural Heritage and Art Restitution in the Arts and Culture Section of Federal Chancellery, as well as its presentation in the state rooms of the Albertina, are an expression of deep thanks for Peled-Feldmann's gift and arose from the desire to make the significance of Arthur Feldmann and his collection known to a broader public.

Origins and Holdings of the Feldmann Collection

Records indicate that Arthur Feldmann began his collecting activities in the early 1920s. And within a decade, his collection of drawings by old masters from the various Italian, French, Dutch, and German schools of the 16th to 18th centuries had come to number around 800 works.

But Feldmann had already been collecting paintings before he turned to drawings by old masters. A surviving catalogue of buyers from the Munich gallery *Heinemann* documents Feldmann's purchase of 18 artworks between 1923 and 1925. Among these acquisitions were several paintings by artists active in the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century. Little is known about this collection of paintings, and to this day, it remains unclear just what happened to it. The only documented case in which Feldmann parted with such a work is that of a tableau by the Italian baroque painter Domenico Fetti, which he sold to Count Antoine Seilern in London. The count also purchased drawings from the Feldmann collection when, in June of 1934, some of them were auctioned off for financial reasons by the antiquarian book and art dealers *Gilhofer & Ranschburg*.

Today, the auction catalogue put together for that sale can be viewed as a primary source for research on the former Feldmann collection. This catalogue contains a diverse wealth of information pertaining to these works on paper that permits conclusions about both their provenance and the collection's inventory. Citations of relevant literature and references to these works' provenance at the time make it possible for present-day researchers to at least partly ascertain from which art dealers the collector had made his purchases. Alongside Vienna, the German art market seems to have been a major source.

Feldmann's eclectic and individual orientation, combined with the expert advice to which he had access in making his purchases, soon gave rise to a distinctive collection that included drawings by artists including Dürer, Rembrandt, Poussin, and Titian. The renowned specialists supporting Feldmann in his choice of works included Otto Benesch, then a curator at the Albertina and later on its director. The fact that some of these graphic works came from other well-regarded collections can be attributed to their well-informed advice and support.

Several works sold at auctions, including one at the Berlin art auction house *Rudolph Lepke* (May 1911), can be traced back to the former collection of Baron Adalbert von Lanna of Prague, while certain others came from the Viennese collections *Artaria*, *Klinkosch*, and *Wurzbach-Tannenberg*. There were also several drawings previously owned by Dr. Stefan von Licht, whose collection had been auctioned in early December of 1927 by the art dealer *Hugo Helbing* in Frankfurt am Main. And finally, the drawing collection of Dr. Carl Gaa, who died in Mannheim in 1926, was the source for works on paper by figures including the Dutch artists Pieter de Molijn and Isaac and Adriaen van Ostade.

ALBERTINA

One drawing by Dürer, on the other hand, was acquired along with a work by the Flemish painter and draughtsman Joachim Patinir from the Viennese art dealer *Max Hevesi*; this Dürer had previously belonged to Prince Heinrich Lubomirsky of Lemberg (today's Lviv). One also sees the names of a number of well-known collectors including the Viennese Joseph Daniel Böhm, Carl König, and Wilhelm König, as well as Thomas Dimsdale (London), Edward Habich (Boston/Kassel), Reinhold von Liphart (Dorpat), and Arnold Otto Meyer (Hamburg).

In addition to his activities as a collector, Arthur Feldmann also participated in exhibitions of the Albertina as a lender. Autumn 1934 witnessed a presentation on *Watteau and his Circle* that included three works on paper from his collection. Shortly thereafter, in early 1935, a drawing by Hans Baldung was seen in the exhibition held to mark Baldung's 450th birthday. Moreover, the 1930s repeatedly saw works from Feldmann's collection, which was well known to that era's experts and museum curators, used as comparative examples. The art journal *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für vielfältigende Kunst* published several written contributions by Otto Benesch in which works from Feldmann's collection were discussed. And other former Albertina employees such as Director Joseph Meder, curator Heinrich Leporini, and researcher Lili Fröhlich-Bum likewise wrote about works on paper from the Feldmann Collection in their research.