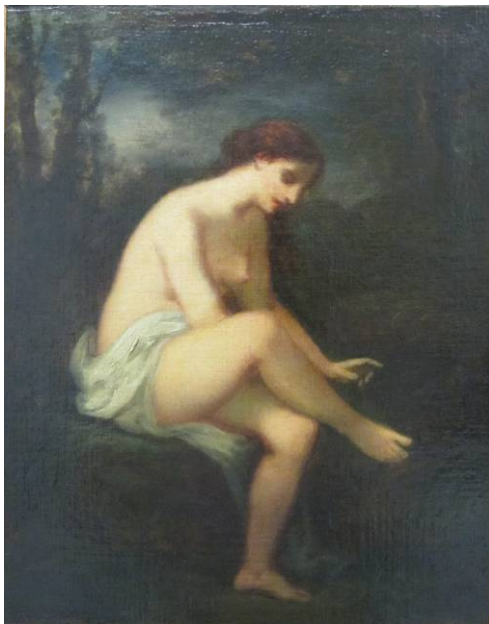


## Press Information

### Provenance Research

#### A Just and Fair Solution Reached by Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen and the Heirs of George Behrens

The Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen (Bavarian State Painting Collections) restitute the painting "The Wounded Eurydice" by Narcisse Virgilio Díaz de la Peña, once part of the art collection of Hamburg banker Eduard L. Behrens, to the heirs of George Behrens, the great-grandson of Eduard L. Behrens.



Left: Narcisse Virgilio Díaz de la Peña, The Wounded Eurydice, 1862 © Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen  
Right: George Behrens, 1955, photo and © G. Plass

### The Collector and Banker Eduard L. Behrens

The bank L. Behrens & Söhne was Hamburg's largest private bank and belonged to the Rothschild Group. When Eduard Ludwig Behrens (1824-1895), a grandson of the founder, took over the banking business in 1853, the family had already converted from the Jewish to the Protestant faith and was among the city's wealthiest residents. In 1884, Eduard Ludwig Behrens' two sons, Eduard L. Behrens, Jr. (1880-1923) and Theodor E. Behrens (1884-1921), joined the bank's management. By the mid-1850s, Behrens had begun to build an art collection of 19th century German and French genre painting, as well as landscape paintings of the Barbizon School. Behrens also owned a valuable porcelain collection.

Narcisse Virgilio Díaz de la Peña (1807-1876) was a member of the Barbizon School, which,

through its natural representation of simple landscapes, paved the way for Impressionism. Landscapes were a main subject in Díaz de la Peña's work, as well as figurative and mythological motifs in which the tradition of the French Rococo and its proponents, such as François Boucher, is evident. "The Wounded Eurydice" depicts a scantily clad young woman sitting in a forest clearing and attending to her injured foot. Eduard L. Behrens purchased the painting in 1865, at a time when only a few German collectors were interested in contemporary French painting. Thus, the work attests to this early phase of collecting French art in Germany and to Behrens' interests and connoisseurship. When he died in 1895, he left his painting collection to his eldest son, Eduard L. Behrens, Jr., and his porcelain collection and Menzel drawings to his second son, Theodore Behrens. Eduard Ludwig Behrens, Jr., from whose inheritance the painting in the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen came, did not significantly expand his father's collection. He bequeathed the collection to his son, George Behrens (1907-1956).

### **George Behrens - Escape and Expropriation**

In 1926, George Behrens entered a contract with the city of Hamburg, allowing the collection to be presented to the public in the city's Kunsthalle for a period of ten years, beginning at the time of Eduard L. Behrens Jr.'s death. By making the collection publically available, George Behrens was not required to pay an inheritance tax for the collection. On March 8, 1935, George Behrens told an employee at the Kunsthalle Hamburg that he intended to sell his paintings at home and abroad. The adoption of the "Nuremberg Laws" in 1935 resulted in the end of the bank's business activities. In December 1938, the bank was liquidated and the banking activities taken over by the Norddeutsche Kreditbank, later Bankhaus Berenberg, Gossler & Co. George Behrens was forced to appoint two fully authorized "Aryan" representatives in his place. Behrens was taken into protective custody in November 1938, and, in early 1939, he managed to emigrate to Belgium, from where he was deported to a camp in the south of France. From there he left Europe for Cuba in 1941. George's mother, Franziska Behrens, was a "1st degree Mischling (crossbreed)" and, as such, had provisional Reich citizenship and, thus, was able to remain in Hamburg. In October 1939, she arranged to have her son's painting collection moved into the safety vaults of the bank. Beginning in 1935, artworks from the collection were sold, including, in May 1941, a painting by Friedrich August von Kaulbach to the gallery Almas-Dietrich and, in September 1941, a work by Corot to H.W. Lange. Additionally, two further works from the collection, one by Böcklin and another by Achenbach, came - via Almas-Dietrich - into the collection of the Special Commission: Linz. All four works have since been returned to their rightful heirs.

Sometime after March 1935, the painting by Díaz de la Peña was sold to the Hamburg art dealer Brigitte Frauendorfer, who, on December 4, 1940, sold it to the art dealer Walter Andreas Hofer. On February 14, 1941, Hofer sold the painting for 9,500 reichmarks to the owner of the Henschel Flugzeugwerke AG Berlin, Oskar Henschel, who gave it to Hermann Goering. After 1945, the painting was taken to the Munich "Collecting Point". When the "Goering Collection" was divided up in 1961, the painting became the property of the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen.

Since research began in 2000 on the provenance of the works in Goering's collection and, since 2004, these findings have been reported to the database [www.lostart.de](http://www.lostart.de), the painting had been listed there as a found object. Research conducted by the Department for Provenance Research at the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen revealed that George Behrens had to sell the painting sometime between 1935 and 1940 because of his persecution as a Jew. The painting was restituted today to its rightful owners, the heirs of George Behrens.

The Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen are greatly indebted to the heirs for leaving the painting by Díaz de la Peña in its collections as a permanent loan for ten years. Thus, a just and fair solution has been found for both parties, as stipulated in the "Washington Principles".

### **The Washington Principles**

Based on the Washington Principles established on December 3, 1998 and on the "Declaration of the Federal Government, the German States and the Local Authority Associations on the Tracing and Return of Nazi-Confiscated Cultural Assets, Especially from Jewish Ownership" (Erklärung der Bundesregierung, der Länder und der kommunalen Spitzenverbände zur Auffindung und zur Rückgabe NS-verfolgungsbedingt entzogenen Kulturgutes, insbesondere aus jüdischem Besitz) of December 1999, German museums have been requested to examine their holdings in search of Nazi-looted art.

The Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen thank the Kunsthalle Hamburg and the Staatsarchiv Hamburg (Hamburg State Archives) for their assistance in the research of the Behrens Collection.

The Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen have their own department of provenance research and, by virtue of the "Joint Declaration", have been able to retribute ten artworks from former Jewish collections since 1999. Additional third-party funded research projects relating to the history of Jewish art dealers and collectors are affiliated with the work conducted by the museums' department of provenance research.

Further information and images are available under T 089 23805-280 or via Email at [presse@pinakothek.de](mailto:presse@pinakothek.de)

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