

Provenance Research and the Independent Commission SKKG

Provenance research has high-level priority at the Stiftung für Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte (SKKG) [Foundation for Art, Culture and History]. In an initial phase (July 2022 to December 2023), a team of seven researchers (([Link zu Anchor](#))) headed by Carolin Lange and Thomas Schmutz is examining up to a maximum of 700 paintings. The Independent Commission SKKG, presided over by Andrea Raschèr, will assess how to deal with the results of the provenance research. The Independent Commission's work is subject to the SKKG's principles for dealing with cultural objects lost due to Nazi persecution, as well as its procedural rules.

As its name states and in accordance with the purpose defined by its statutes, the Stiftung für Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte (SKKG) [Foundation for Art, Culture and History] is a foundation that cultivates art, culture and historical values, promoting reflection on the same and contributing to the communication of these values to the public.

The SKKG considers itself responsible for the goods it has received. It therefore investigates the provenance of the cultural goods in its possession and actively searches for potential former owners or their legal successors. The SKKG publishes the results of its investigations in conjunction with the basic information necessary for understanding them. In processing provenance, it also sees potential for social discussion on the issue of history and responsibility.

When cultural goods lost due to Nazi persecution have not yet been returned, claims are usually not enforceable from a traditional legal perspective. The SKKG feels ethically obliged to honor both the former ownership and the circumstances of the loss through fair and just solutions.

“By indexing the biographies of the objects and identifying possible cultural property lost due to persecution, the SKKG is creating added value for dealing with the works as well as for coming to terms with the history of the collection.”

Christoph Lichtin, Director of SKKG



A glimpse into an SKKG art depot © Bruno Augsburger

Two-Step Course of Action

The SKKG has chosen a two-step approach by designating two independent bodies for this purpose:

- Provenances are investigated by a team of in-house research employees, whose work is managed and reviewed by an external entity (SKKG Provenance Research Management Team). The latter submits results and their evaluation for possible further action to a commission appointed by the SKKG board.
- This commission, under the name Unabhängige Kommission der Stiftung für Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte zur Klärung NS-verfolgungsbedingter Ansprüche (independent SKKG-appointed commission for the clarification of Nazi persecution-related claims, hereafter the “Independent Commission SKKG”), is to be autonomous. It shall make its decisions independently of both the SKKG board and the in-house provenance research team. Its decisions, which are binding for the SKKG, are made ex aequo et bono within the framework of its guidelines.

Guidelines for the Independent Commission SKKG

- The Independent Commission SKKG is committed to the following principles: the “Washington Conference Principles” of 1998, the “Terezin Declaration” of 2009 and the “ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums” of 2004.
- The assessment of provenance and the search for just and fair solutions is a process within which the Independent Commission SKKG provides a hearing for former owners or their legal successors.
- Likewise, a just and fair solution must be found for both cultural goods lost due to Nazi persecution which are subject to a claim and those not subject to a claim or for which no heirs can be identified.
- Decisions with regard to cultural goods lost due to Nazi persecution may also be made based on findings leading to an incomplete state of evidence.
- In addition to its material value, a cultural good may also have a high emotional value as part of the cultural identity of its former owners – and since a loss due to Nazi persecution was accompanied by their degradation, exclusion, expulsion and, in the worst case, their death. This must be given special consideration in the context of just and fair solutions.
- Historical injustice cannot be undone, neither by restitution of cultural goods nor by other just and fair solutions. However, both the necessary encounters and exchanges with claimants, as well as the recognition of the history of suffering and persecution associated with restitution or other just solutions and a sustained confrontation with the past represent a commitment to willingly draw consequences from this for the future.

SKKG PROVENANCE RESEARCH TEAM

Provenance Research

The provenance research carried out in-house is managed and reviewed by an external management team made up of Dr. Carolin Lange and Dr. Thomas Schmutz. The team submits the results of the research and their evaluation for possible further action to a commission appointed by the SKKG board. The SKKG Provenance Research Team began its work in the summer of 2022.

SKKG Provenance Research Management Team

Dr. Carolin Lange, Head of SKKG Provenance Research (external)

Dr. Thomas Schmutz, Head of SKKG Provenance Research (external)

Rahel Urech, Assistant to Head of SKKG Provenance Research

SKKG Provenance Research Team

Nora Halfbrodt, Coordinator for SKKG Provenance Research

Dr. Nina Blum de Almeida, Research Assistant

Dr. Ylva Meyer, Research Assistant

Laura Studer, Research Assistant

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION SKKG

Independent SKKG-Appointed Commission for the Clarification of Nazi Persecution-Related Claims

The Unabhängige Kommission der Stiftung für Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte zur Klärung NS-verfolgungsbedingter Ansprüche (independent SKKG-appointed commission for the clarification of Nazi persecution-related claims, hereafter the “Independent Commission SKKG”), is autonomous. It makes its decisions independently of both the SKKG board and the in-house Provenance Research Team. The Commission has its own office, which reports directly to its president for technical matters and issues relating to human resources.

The Independent Commission SKKG will be composed of five to seven people per term, with the option of a one-time re-election for another three years.

Since the Commission's work deals with cultural property lost due to Nazi persecution, it is important for the Commission to be diverse in terms of religious as well as legal, ethical, cultural and historical background.

Independent Commission SKKG

Dr. Andrea Raschèr, President

Prof. Dr. Constantin Goschler

Dr. Claudia Kaufmann

Prof. Dr. Stefanie Mahrer

Olaf Ossman, Attorney-at-Law

For general questions about SKKG Provenance Research, please contact Severin Rüegg, Head of Collection: s.rueegg@skkg.ch

DOWNLOADS

Basic Principles

- [Principles of the Stiftung für Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte \(SKKG\) in dealing with the loss of cultural goods due to Nazi persecution](#)

Press Releases

- [The Foundation, Its Collection and Provenance](#)

CONTACTS

SKKG Provenance Research

For general questions regarding SKKG Provenance Research, please contact the Head of Collection.

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