

## Foreword

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[1] The Getty Research Institute (GRI) has long been an active proponent of provenance research, as well as a member of RIHA (International Association of Research Institutes in the History of Art) and editorial collaborator of the *RIHA Journal*. The GRI was an institutional partner of the German/American Provenance Research Exchange Program (PREP), co-organized by the Smithsonian Institution and the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, which in 2018 convened in Munich the session “The Fate of Antiquities in the Nazi Era” that inspired this special issue. We commend Dr. Irene Bald Romano’s work in organizing the Munich session and spearheading this volume.

[2] Many readers will know the Getty’s pioneering digital humanities project, the Getty Provenance Index®, which began over 30 years ago and currently provides access to over 2.3 million records from primary source materials such as archival inventories, auction catalogs, and dealer stock books, which document transfers of ownership of artworks and support research on provenance, collecting, and art markets. Now being transformed into Linked Open Data, the Getty Provenance Index® has grown over time thanks to a long history of collaborations with outside scholars and institutions, and more recently via projects that focus on material from our extensive archives related to art dealers, collectors, and the art trade. Current GRI provenance projects include the Pre-Hispanic Art Provenance Initiative, which focuses on ancient works from the Americas, and responds to the GRI’s continuous assessment of the needs in the field to access digital archives and provenance research resources. The present collection of essays testifies to the immediate relevance of this kind of digital research. That the Getty Museum’s Department of Antiquities has been conducting an intensive research campaign on the provenance of the antiquities collection since 2012 makes our participation in this publication the more compelling. A guide for such study is in preparation with Getty Publications, *Provenance Research for Mediterranean Antiquities: Methods and Resources*.

[3] Research on the provenance of works of art has often been instrumentally motivated. In the art market, an illustrious owner can lend prestige and may even elevate the price of a painting. In the case of antiquities, provenance research has helped uncover objects being looted from archaeological sites. In the context of Nazi-era looted art and forced sales, information discovered about the chain of ownership is frequently used as evidence in legal cases of competing claims of ownership. Provenance research can thus be complicated with an ethical coloring, but invariably, provenance research is a crucial step toward understanding the peregrinations of cultural objects and our shared heritage.

[4] The essays in this collection range widely to explore a surprisingly little-known terrain. While much has been published about the vicissitudes of European art from the Medieval period to “Entartete Kunst” during the World War II era, a focus on antiquities has been rare. Yet the contents of this issue make it clear that there are important areas to be explored in the fate of specific collections, in the main actors involved in their trade and translocations, and in the paradoxical attitudes of Hitler’s circle toward classical art in the abstract and in the material. The authors of these essays introduce fine-grained research into the contents and dispersals of

significant collections in locations ranging from Greek islands to occupied Poland. One can see the various stages of the accumulation and dispersal of collections, before and during the war and in the aftermath, especially in the Soviet-occupied zones. Inventories, photographs of displays, invoices, correspondence, and other documents are instrumental in telling these stories, in ways we hope will inspire researchers to take the study of this topic further or in different directions.

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