

Pressemitteilung vom 29.11.2019

The Lindenau-Museum Altenburg returns a painting by Wojciech Kossak from the Petschek Collection

With the help of a research project supported by the Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste, the Lindenau-Museum Altenburg has discovered that a work in its collection was confiscated by the Nazi regime as a part of its persecution of specific groups and individuals. Together with its governing agency, the Altenburger Land Administrative District in the state of Thuringia, the museum has decided to return the picture to its rightful owners.

More than 80 years after the painting *Polnischer Ulan auf Vorposten im Winterwald (Polish Lancer at an Outpost in the Winter Forest)* by Wojciech Kossak (1857–1942) was confiscated by the Nazi regime from the Petschek family, Aussig, Czechoslovakia, the Lindenau-Museum and its governing agency have decided to return it to the heirs of its previous owners. In doing so they are following the guidelines of the Washington Conference Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art of December 1998 and the Common Declaration of the German federal government, states and local associations of December 1999.

The painting once hung in the breakfast room of the Petschek family home in Aussig (now Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic). When they fled from the Nazi regime in September 1938, the Petscheks were forced to abandon virtually all of their personal possessions, including this painting. In 1939 the family was stripped of all of their property in the German Reich and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. The picture and other artistic objects and furniture were brought to Berlin, where in May 1941 they were auctioned “by order of the Authority” – meaning that the sale was required and the proceeds went to the German government – by the auction house “Union” (owned by Leo Spik).

The painting was bought by a bidder named Arnold, which in all likelihood was a pseudonym for the subsequent owner, Wladislaus Staniszewski, who ran a pension close to the Kurfürstendamm in Berlin. He died in 1943, bequeathing the painting to his wife, Frieda Staniszewski, who, after the war, moved from Berlin to Mehmels near Meiningen in the state of Thuringia. From there she began negotiations with the Lindenau-Museum Altenburg regarding the sale of the painting. In 1952, the museum acquired from her the painting *Polnischer Ulan auf Vorposten im Winterwald* by Kossak together with other works.



LINDENAU-
MUSEUM
ALTENBURG

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Öffnungszeiten

Di–Fr 12–18 Uhr

Sa, So, Feiertage 10–18 Uhr

Since April 2018, the Lindenau-Museum has been researching the provenance of works in its collection in the framework of a project supported by the Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste in Magdeburg. In this way the war-related history of this painting was uncovered, and, in intensive exchange with the previous owners' heirs, the work's provenance was verified.

Despite their extensive efforts to locate their pre-war Nazi-confiscated property, the Petschek family has had very few possessions returned, and they have received no compensation for their losses of personal property.

In view of the painting's history, the Lindenau-Museum Altenburg and its governing agency, the Altenburger Land Administrative District, feel morally compelled to return the oil painting *Polnischer Ulan auf Vorposten im Winterwald* by Wojciech Kossak to the heirs of the Petschek family of Aussig as a just and fair resolution.



Wojciech Kossak: *Polnischer Ulan auf Vorposten im Winterwald*
Foto: Bertram Kober, November 2019