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Natural History Museum Vienna

Common information

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Provenance research

Provenance researcher

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More than 20 million objects are stored in the Natural History Museum; the collections comprise specimens of animals, plants, minerals, rocks and fossils as well as anthropological specimens.

Since the enactment of the Art Restitution Act, 1998 (Federal Law Gazette I, 181/1998), the holdings of the NHM have been reviewed in search of objects which have come into the ownership of the Federation (Bund) during the course of or as a result of the National Socialist dictatorship, in order to return them to their original owners or their legal successors.

To date, the Art Restitution Advisory Board has recommended the return of objects in six cases; in five cases the Art Restitution Advisory Board decided against a restitution; in two further cases the Art Restitution Advisory Board recommended that the legal successors of the original owner be offered geological objects of the same category and comparable value.

Recommendations of the Art Restitution Advisory Board concerning Objects from the NHM

The Art Restitution Advisory Board recommended the restitution of objects formerly belonging to the Mission House St. Gabriel, to Ernst Moriz Kronfeld, Robert/Margarethe Piowaty-Lang, Moritz Rothberger, Siegfried Roubicek and Martha Schlesinger.

There was no recommendation for restitution regarding the objects of Martin Glaessner, Ernst Moriz Kronfeld, Georg Rosenberg and Robert Wadler.

With regard to the geological objects formerly belonging to Walter Hersch and Gertrude/Max Zarfl, which had not been inventoried but simply added to existing collections of similar objects and which were therefore no longer identifiable today, the Art Advisory Board deemed it appropriate to contact the descendants and offer to transfer to them individual pieces of comparable value according to their category.

Literature on the provenance research in the NHM

Claudia Spring, "So schön wie in Schönbrunn schneit es nirgends auf der Welt": Der Sammler, Forscher und Publizist Ernst Moriz Kronfeld, in: Eva Blimlinger/Heinz Schödl (HgIn), Die Praxis des Sammelns, Personen und Institutionen im Fokus der Provenienzforschung (=Schriftenreihe der Kommission für Provenienzforschung, Band V, Wien 2014, S. 31-70.)

Claudia Spring, Politische Brüche - Inhaltliche Kontinuitäten: Aspekte zur Bibliothek des Naturhistorischen Museums Wien. Ein Werkstattbericht, in: Bruno Bauer/Christina Köstner-Pemsel/Markus Stumpf (HgIn), NS-Provenienzforschung an österreichischen Bibliotheken. Anspruch und Wirklichkeit (=Schriften der Vereinigung Österreichischen Bibliothekarinnen und Bibliothekare 10), Graz 2011, S. 425-440.

Spring Claudia, NS-Provenienzforschung in den Bibliotheken des Naturhistorischen Museums Wien. Ein Werkstattbericht, in: Bruno Bauer/Christina Köstner-Pemsel/Markus Stumpf (HgIn), NS-Provenienzforschung an österreichischen Bibliotheken. Anspruch und Wirklichkeit (= Schriften der Vereinigung Österreichischer Bibliothekarinnen und Bibliothekare 10), Graz 2011, S. 425-440.

Gschiel Christina/Nimeth Ulrike/Weidinger Leonhard (HgIn), Schneiden und sammeln. Die Wiener Familie Rothberger, (Schriftenreihe der Kommission für Provenienzforschung, Band 2), Böhlau, Wien 2010, darin: insb. Ulrike Nimeth, Moriz Rothberger, S. 61-82.

Riedl-Dorn Christa, Von Leermeldungen zu achtzehn Dossiers - Zehn Jahre Provenienzforschung am Naturhistorischen Museum, in: Anderl Gabriele/Bazil Christoph/Blimlinger Eva/Kühschelm Oliver/Mayer Monika/Stelzl-Gallian Anita/Weidinger Leonhard (HgIn), „... wesentlich mehr Fälle als angenommen“. 10 Jahre Kommission für Provenienzforschung, Wien 2009, S. 176-194.