



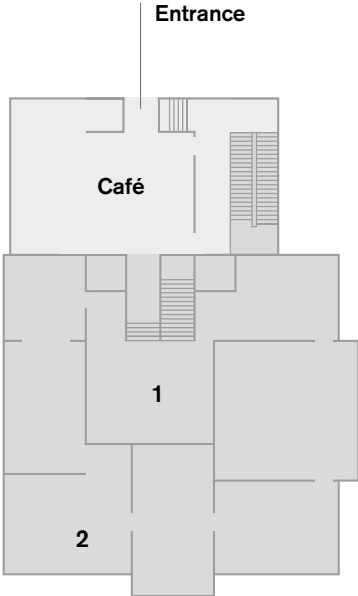
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The Question of Provenance – Unwrapping Collection History 1.12.2018 – 30.6.2019

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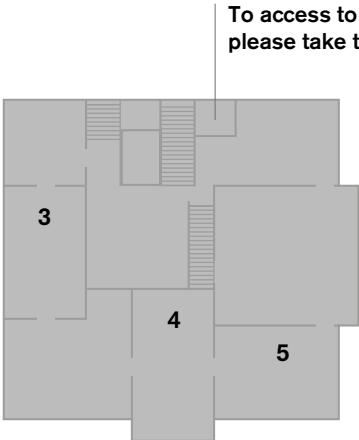
Exhibition plan

Villa Wesendonck

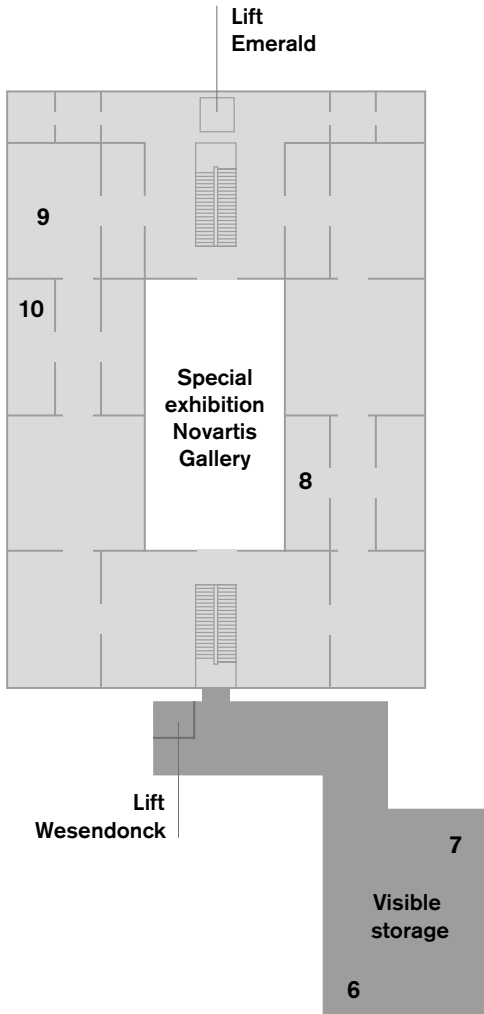


Collection Villa Wesendonck

- 1 From the archaeologist to trader and collector
- 2 Early private collections of Asian art in Switzerland
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- 4 Swiss collectors abroad
- 5 The value of provenance



Emerald



Visible storage

- 6 The context: Nazi injustice
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Collection Emerald

- 8 Knowledge and the market
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- 10 Is it all looted art?

Introduction

What is provenance research?

Provenance research deals with the origins of artworks. For this, certain provenance features of the work concerned are identified to help reconstruct the chain of ownership; files in various archives are studied, as are catalogues and secondary literature in libraries. The goal of provenance research is the most complete reconstruction possible of an object's history, from its creation and discovery to its present location.

This intervention has been conceived for the following reasons: firstly, provenance research at the Museum Rietberg has been undertaken for ten years; secondly, the Washington Principles on Nazi-confiscated art were adopted twenty years ago; and thirdly, the restitution of objects acquired during the colonial era is currently a matter of public debate.

Structured around ten stations, the following questions are addressed in the Museum Rietberg's permanent exhibition: who were the early collectors of non-European art in Switzerland? What were the historical conditions under which the Swiss collected abroad? What is the significance of us knowing nothing or only very little about the provenance of an artwork? What are 'sensitive objects'? How did artists

of the European avantgarde engage with non-European art? Which pieces originate from contexts of historical injustice and what are the repercussions of problematic acquisition circumstances? This tour through the museum collection offers answers to these questions, and so insights into the daily reality of research.

Why do we undertake provenance research?

Provenance research reflects a new understanding of museum work, raising issues about how a collection is managed that encompass history, morality and politics. The question of provenance is above all a question of the collection's history. It possesses social relevance, containing potential for conflict, yet also for rapprochement. It is frequently assumed the investigation of an object's provenance is primarily relevant in contested issues relating to ownership, and that it must result in the restitution of objects. However, provenance research has a much wider focus. It serves first and foremost the expansion of knowledge, exchange, education and transparency.

In 1998, 44 states adopted the 'Washington Principles'. These formulate 'just and fair solutions' for the return of artworks stolen or

sold under coercion during the Nazi rule of 1933 to 1945. Ten years ago, the Museum Rietberg initiated a project that aimed to examine more precisely the various provenances of the collection of Eduard von der Heydt, founder of the museum's collection. Among the 1,600 objects, four were identified as having been auctioned off by the Jewish owners as a result of Nazi persecution. The Museum Rietberg approached the heirs and paid them a compensatory sum in the amount of the object's current market worth.

Investigation of all the works is by no means complete. To investigate the origin is a lengthy process. There are many gaps in the object's history – and no doubt will remain so in future. Files are missing, or access to these is not guaranteed, as with private estates or gallery collections, for instance. Moreover, basic research into the history of the art market has only been established in recent years.

Also, with regard to objects acquired during the colonial period, systematic investigation into provenance is still in its infancy. Furthermore, no adequate international agreements for restitutions arising from this context exist to date. In 1970 the UNESCO adopted a Convention which aims at banning the illegal trade in cultural property

and which was also ratified by Switzerland through the Cultural Property Transfer Act of 2005. However, the Convention does not represent an agreement for restitution. Yet it would be important to formulate international standards so as to enable restitutions on a generally accepted basis.

Restitution may – but need not – result from research carried out into provenance. Returning stolen objects can, however, represent part of the process of making amends, even though historical injustice cannot be remedied. Yet restitution can also be used to shed the burden of history. It's about devising alternative solutions in the sense of a 'shared legacy', which flow into meaningful relations between societies and a collaborative knowledge production. The basis for this is transcultural cooperation on an equal footing, which takes account of both the past and present, as well as future perspectives.

Why do we discuss provenance?

Ownership of art is dynamic. Just as humans have migrated over centuries and millennia, so objects shift location, too: they come from the artist or country of origin into trade, and eventually reach scientific institutions and collectors. Museums

generally represent the final destination in an object's 'life story'.

Focusing on provenance means putting the spotlight on an object's history and those involved with the artefacts in the most varied ways. At the same time, research into provenance reveals the full range of effects on the trading in and collecting of art brought about by political upheaval, armed conflict and economic crises, as well as the thirst for knowledge, changes in fashion and trends in the art market.

No doubt, the current discourse around the world's cultural heritage has properly got underway due to new media and technologies: the internet, digitalisation and com-

munication capabilities. However, behind this lie the great themes of decolonisation, decentralisation and globalisation. As a result, museum collections have attracted public attention. In order to understand this discourse, we need insight into the complex contexts whereby cultural goods were transferred historically, as well as sensitivity towards the various interpretations of the law, and an awareness of the prevailing issues of cultural identity. Historical justice can be promoted through the telling of objects' stories, through a culture of memory and transparent teaching. This intervention in the collection contributes to this process.

1 From archaeologist to trader and collector

Archaeological research in southern India was shaped by the presence of the British and French colonial powers. These carried out systematic excavations in the 19th century and founded museums and research institutes: in 1898, the 'Mission archéologique de l'Indochine' was set up, which in 1901 was renamed the 'Ecole française en Extrême-Orient' and even today represents one of the most important archaeological institutes worldwide.

The 'Ecole française' cannot be thought of separately from the colonial government. It provided important foundations for the study of Indian art. In this context, the scientist Gabriel Jouveau-Dubreuil (1885–1945), who grew up in Saigon, Paris and Guadeloupe, played a key role as well. He taught for 27 years at the Collège Français in Pondicherry in today's Tamil Nadu, where he lived from 1909–1941 with quite long interruptions. Jouveau-Dubreuil began early on to occupy himself with Indian architectural history, studying temple complexes and becoming an important expert on Indian iconography.

Systematic research, teaching at universities, and publications led to an increased interest in Indian art, which showed on the art market, too. Even though trade with artworks from Asia had been carried out in Europe since the Renaissance, those set pieces of abandoned temple complexes, facades and archways or tombs, represented newly discovered treasures. In particular, the monumental figures, many of which went straight to museums, created a great stir.

Jouveau-Dubreuil, himself a collector, too, supplied the Parisian art market in the 1920s and 1930s. He was, moreover, an intermediary for the Parisian art dealer Ching Tsai Loo (1880–1957), one of the most important players on this new market. The art dealer with Chinese origins founded a gallery in Paris in 1908 and later served the American market, too, from New York. With taste and business sense, he contributed to the creation of numerous private and public collections.

C.T. Loo became an important buyer of Jouveau-Dubreuil's discoveries. Thus, he also sold this sculpture to the German-Swiss art collector Eduard von der Heydt, the founding donor of the

Museum Rietberg. At the time, only a few private collectors acquired monumental sculptures of this kind. Von der Heydt had this mounted in the entranceway of his art hotel located on the Monte Verità above Ascona, not far from a figure of Christ fixed to the wall. Entirely in the style of a private collector, he lived surrounded by his art. In the Museum Rietberg, the temple guard has greeted visitors to the Villa Wesendonck since the museum's founding.

Dvarapala

India, Tamil Nadu, Kanchipuram
9th/10th century, Chola dynasty, granite
RVI 107, Gift of Eduard von der Heydt

Provenance:

before ca. 1925: Gabriel Jouveau-Dubreuil, Pondicherry
ca. 1925/ 1929: C.T. Loo, Paris
ca. 1930 – 1952: Eduard von der Heydt, Ascona / Berlin / Zandvoort

Hindu temples are guarded by *dvarapalas*, fearsome guard figures. They stand at the entrance door to the building's interior. This figure comes from a temple in Kanchipuram; exactly which place of worship it once belonged to is unknown today.

With artworks such as this guardian figure, we are dealing with fragments; they are a part of a complete work of art. Detaching it in this way from the larger context turned this originally religious identification figure into an individual artwork.

If you look at the reverse side of the Hindu figure, an old inventory number from Eduard von der Heydt's collection can be seen, as well as the current inventory number and three Indian stamps. The latter was possibly assigned in a storage depot in India which is not known by name.

1.1
Indian storehouse,
around 1920, with
the dvarapala of
the Museum Rietberg
leaning to the left



1.2
Entrance to Hotel
Monte Verità in
Ascona, 1930s





1.3
TEMPLE GUARD, 9th/10th century, Chola Dynasty,
India, Tamil Nadu, Kanchipuram temple complex

2 Early private collections of Asian art in Switzerland

The first ethnographic museums in Switzerland were founded in the late 19th and early 20th century. At the same time, widely travelled Swiss people – industrialists, representatives of business and diplomats – set up private collections of Asian art. Points of contact with the ‘exotic’ art occurred not only on business trips, but also at the impressive world fairs. In this, private collectors both male and female pursued other motives than those of institutions such as university collections, ethnographic or anthropological museums. At the Museum Rietberg, founded in 1952 primarily on private collections, the main focus was always on the artistry of the artefacts and their aesthetic appeal.

Exhibitions are considered one the most important source for research into early art collectors. As early as 1915, the Kunstgewerbemuseum Zürich organised an exhibition titled ‘Asian Arts and Crafts’, which was provided with the collections of Werner Reinhart (1884–1951) from Winterthur and Charles Brown (1863–1924) from Baden, among others. In 1923, ‘Indian and Persian Miniatures’ from Werner Reinhart’s collection were on display in the Kunstmuseum Winterthur, as was ‘Asian Art’ from Georg and Werner Reinhart’s collections in 1936.

The most comprehensive show at the time took place in 1941 in the Kunsthalle Bern and subsequently in the Kunstgewerbemuseum Zürich. The exhibition was the result of a collaboration between the first sinologists and friends of Asian culture: Eduard Horst von Tschanner (1901–1962), the first full professor of Chinese Studies in Switzerland, Robert Fazy (1872–1956), president at the time of the Federal Supreme Court, and Martin Hürlimann (1897–1984), publisher and later president of the Rietberg Society, who took charge of the lavish catalogues. Tschanner and Fazy had founded the first Asian Society in Switzerland in 1939. Within a short period of time, the society had a membership running into three figures. The names on the member list reflect an impressive panorama of the enthusiasm for Asia at that time.

In their exhibition, the fledgling society offered a survey of Asian artworks to be found in Switzerland. The majority of exhibits

were on loan from private collectors. Later on, many of these loans became part of the Museum Rietberg's own collections through acquisitions, gifts or bequests. One is struck by the concentration of collectors representing Winterthur. Such names as Hasler, Reinhart, Schöllhorn and Sulzer deserve mention.

The eight objects selected from the public storage for this collection intervention reflect the history of European taste, as well as an outline of Swiss collectors. Mary Mantel-Hess, Gret Hasler and Kurt Schöllhorn, together with the artworks they loaned, are representative of the 1941 exhibition, as well as the early collections that came to the Museum Rietberg.

Buddha on Throne of Snakes

Khmer Empire, Bayon style
Cambodia, from Phnom Bakheri (Angkor)
12th century CE, sandstone, with traces of gold
RHI 110, Legacy of Mary Mantel-Hess

Provenance:

Collection Vicomte de Nazère
René Jacquerod, Lausanne
Up to 1968, Mary Mantel-Hess, Zurich

Lying lion, part of corbel

Gandhara, Pakistan
1st century CE, slate
RVI 10, Legacy of Mary Mantel-Hess

Provenance:

René Jacquerod, Lausanne
Up to 1968, Mary Mantel-Hess, Zurich

Ritual food receptacle of the *gui* type

Western Chou dynasty, ca. 10th century BCE
Bronze
RCH 33, Legacy of Mary Mantel-Hess

Provenance:

Mathias Komor (1909–1985), New York
Up to 1968, Mary Mantel-Hess, Zurich

Vase

North China

11th/12th century CE, Song dynasty, stoneware with white slip and transparent glaze, Cizhou ware
RCH 2411, Legacy of Mary Mantel-Hess

Provenance:

Louis de Hesselle, Zurich
1953, art auction, Galerie Fischer
Up to 1968, Mary Mantel-Hess, Zurich

Garuda

India

19th/20th century, bronze
RVI 604, Legacy of Mary Mantel-Hess

Provenance:

Up to 1968, Mary Mantel-Hess, Zurich

Tea bowl with drawing

Japan

20th century, clay, glazed
RJP 240, Legacy of Mary Mantel-Hess

Provenance:

Up to Mary Mantel-Hess, Zurich

Daughter of an industrialist, Mary Mantel-Hess (1895–1968) developed a passionate interest for Asia on trips undertaken with her husband Heinrich A. Mantel (1888–1960). She ran a salon in Zurich, at which experts and scholars could exchange views. She was the grand-daughter of the founder of the Embru Works (Iron and Metal Beds Factory) in Rüti. She was also in contact with Eduard von der Heydt and represented an important voice in the museum's development in the early years from 1952 following its founding. Furthermore, the Mantel-Hess married couple were members of the Purchasing Commission of the Museum Rietberg. They mostly acquired their artworks on the Paris and New York art markets, bequeathing numerous exemplars to the museum after their deaths.

Chaire, container for powdered tea

Japan, Seto

Edo or Meiji period, 19th century

RJP 271

Provenance:

Janette Ostier (1921–2014), Paris, gallerist for Japanese art, sculptress

24.10.1959–1980, Gret Hasler, Winterthur

1980 Charlotte Holliger-Hasler, Winterthur

Gret Hasler (1895 –1971) likewise came from a Winterthur family. With her collection, knowledge and contacts, she made a major contribution to the 1941 exhibition as a consultant. Her passion was for Chinese jade. She acquired artworks on the Paris art market, among others; the Chinese objects came from C.T. Loo, and Japanese pieces from Janette Ostier.

The Beauty and the Animal

India, Gujarat, Ahmedabad region

17th century CE, wood

RVI 401, Gift of Kurt and Claire Schöllhorn

Provenance:

Up to 1954 Kurt and Claire Schöllhorn, Winterthur

One of the oldest Indian wooden sculptures from the collection originates from the 17th century. As wood is particularly susceptible to destruction of all kinds and such building elements were exposed to the weather, only a few of them have been preserved. It came to the museum as a gift of the Schöllhorn family.

The Haldengut brewery in Winterthur had been run by the Schöllhorn family since the end of the 19th century. Together with Sulzer and Saurer, they were considered pioneering brewers in the areas of transport and heating / cooling technology. Fritz Schöllhorn (1863 –1933) was a collector who had undertaken several costly trips himself. He maintained a collection, about which little more is known. His son Kurt Schöllhorn (1894 –1966) loaned this impressive figure to Bern and Zurich in 1941. It has been housed in the Museum Rietberg since 1954.



2
THE BEAUTY AND THE ANIMAL, 17th century,
Ahmedabad region, India, Gujarat

3 Avantgarde and non-European art

Countless artists and art movements became involved in the 20th century in foreign artefacts, which were imported in large quantities to Europe, especially since colonisation. While African art was the focus for Picasso and the Cubists, the art of Oceania attracted the close attention of the Surrealists in Paris. Representative of this are the collections of André Breton (1896–1966) and Paul Eluard (1895–1952), which were auctioned in Paris in 1931; several of these artworks are on show today in the Museum Rietberg (for example RME 701). Non-European art also found its way into the repertoire of the 'Brücke' artists, the Expressionists and those artists associated with the 'Sturm' magazine, as well as those linked to Dadaism.

Dealers and collectors such as Alfred Flechtheim (1878–1937) and Nell Walden (1887–1975) moved in artistic circles. Both were early promoters of art from Africa, America and Oceania. While Flechtheim tried to deal in the objects and integrate 'exotic' art into his avantgarde gallery programme, Walden collected hundreds of ethnographical objects. Nell Walden moved in art circles around the 'Der Sturm' weekly, which her first husband, Herwarth Walden, had founded. He organised an Africa–Oceania exhibition in 1926 and focused on this in a special edition. In it he wrote, 'No spear, no comb, no plate, no apron that is not an artwork'. Later on, reception of Africa, Oceanic and American art suffered from the National Socialist art policies spreading in the German-speaking region. These artefacts did not conform to Nazi taste in art. National Socialism spelt an end to cultural diversity. Alfred Flechtheim emigrated, as did Nell Walden, and their collections came to Switzerland.

Between 1914 and 1932 Flechtheim exhibited art from the Asian, African, American and Pacific regions in his apartment and his galleries. He mixed these with the European avantgarde. He also frequently published these in his magazines 'Querschnitt' and 'Omnibus'. Among the exhibits were also objects Eduard von der Heydt had acquired from the Hamburg-based ethnographica dealer, J.F.G. Umlauff. Hamburg, as a centuries-old port and trading city, played a key role during the German colonial period from 1884 to 1914. While initially quaint objects were acquired from ships from

overseas that had docked, later on sailors, captains, scientists and merchants were specifically instructed to bring goods with them.

Von der Heydt's exhibition pieces were recorded by the art historian Carl Einstein and the latter's scientific descriptions of the same published in a gallery catalogue by Flechtheim. Flechtheim exhibited the art objects, yet von der Heydt always remained their owner; he had acquired them three months before the exhibition opening, on February 22nd, 1926 at the Umlauff company. Nevertheless, the objects have gone down in history as the 'Flechtheim Collection' (RME 11, RME 409, RME 431, RME 441).

Two headrests (RME 208, 246), a face mask (RME 10), a head joint (RME 4), as well as a particularly well preserved, large mask (RME 405) and a dance cane (RME 487) once belonged to Nell Walden's collection. How she came by her collection pieces is not known, with a few exceptions. Eduard von der Heydt wrote in early 1946 to Johannes Itten, when both men were still honing their concept of the Museum Rietberg: 'It's a very good thought of yours to put Mrs. Nell's collection in the Wesendonck Museum, too. It conveys a lovely, clear, complete picture of a particular period. This collection will maintain its permanent value. (Walden und Heydt go together well – we should then call the Wesendonck Villa, the Heydtsches Waldhaus):'

Plaited bracelet

Papua New Guinea, 19th/early 20th century

Plant fibre, Nassa snails

RME 1210, Gift of Eduard von der Heydt

Provenance:

1919–1926 with Umlauff

22.2.1926–1952, Eduard von der Heydt collection

3.1
Alfred
Flechtheim's
Berlin flat,
around 1930



3.2
Nell Walden's Berlin
flat, around 1930

4 Swiss collectors abroad

Swiss people spread all over the world and who were culturally interested, created collections art works too. In Peru, for example, a large Swiss community in Lima can be found, which has also left its mark on the Museum Rietberg. The textiles of pre-Columbian culture presented in drawers originate from the two Swiss collectors, Carmen Dolores Oechsle and Theodor Cron. Both appear to have developed a special interest in these objects on account of their occupations.

The design of these textiles allows for connections with painting and thus with Oechsle's own artistic activity. Also, analogies to abstraction in architecture can be deduced on account of the geometrical patterning, and so also to Cron's activities.

Pre-Columbian art passed through the process of being aestheticized and placed on display in museums at a later stage than the art of Asia or Africa. In Europe, the first encyclopaedic exhibitions on ancient Peruvian art took place in the 1950s, for example in Zurich in 1957, in Paris in 1958 and in Cologne one year later. As for Chinese art, wide-ranging presentations already took place in the 1910s, and more especially in the 1920s and 1930s.

Carmen Dolores Oechsle (1909–1987) was born in the residential district of Barranco in Lima, the daughter of a resident Swiss family. During the First World War, she moved to Switzerland with her parents. There Carmen Oechsle studied theatre, singing and painting, at the School of Arts and Crafts in Zurich, among other places. The family had been in the trading business since the end of the 19th century. Oechsle often returned to Lima to visit various family members.

She settled down at Trittligasse 4 in Zurich where she ran a studio and business. She organised exhibitions and sold her own artworks as well as those acquired in Lima. Her collection already came to the museum on loan in the 1950s.

The reception of Pre-Columbian art at the Museum Rietberg is for the most part thanks to Carmen Oechsle. She provided Elsy Leuzinger (1910–2010), art ethnologist and Director of the Museum Rietberg from 1956 to 1972, with the impetus for the groundbreaking 'Ancient Peru' exhibition in the Kunsthaus Zürich in 1957. From the beginning, Oechsle also sat on the Museum Rietberg's purchasing

committee. Her collection was one of the most important ancient Peruvian collections in Switzerland. After her death, the former Schweizerischer Kreditanstalt located at Zurich's Paradeplatz arranged an exhibition in 1990. The bank had led the sales negotiations for transferring ownership to Swiss museums. Besides the Museum Rietberg, one of the acquirers was today's Museum der Kulturen Basel, which likewise owns extensive correspondence between Carmen Oechsle and the important pre-Columbian expert Hans-Dietrich Disselhoff (1899–1975). Disselhoff was one of the important intermediaries supporting Oechsle in the acquisition of art. However, Oechsle had also inherited textiles from her mother Karolina Oechsle.

Theodor Cron's (1921–1964) interest in pre-Columbian textiles can ostensibly be explained by his artistic engagement as an architect in Lima. Abstract forms, a striking play of colours and design fascinated him. After studying architecture in Zurich, Cron moved to Lima, where he lived from around 1947/48 to 1962 and designed several private houses. He became a significant representative of Modernism in Peru. Other Swiss designers influenced modern Peruvian architecture, too. Cron was an admirer of the Bauhaus and was inspired by Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier.

Most textiles do not have any indication of their origin, meaning that no excavation findings exist. This unknown situation with regard to findings presents one difficulty in textile research. Another problem lies in the fact that antiquarians and dealers have cut up the materials for the purpose of marketing them in single pieces. The single parts, as we see them today in all the museums and collections of the world, present fragments of larger artworks, similar to albums with miniatures that have been taken apart, and to stone figures that have been cut from ensembles or spatial structures.

The small textile items exhibited here give an impression of the fascinating subtlety, quality and artistic variety of ancient Peruvian, pre-Columbian cultures.

Embroidery

Peru; Nasca culture, ca. 50–300 CE

Cotton, camelid hair

RPB 1014

Provenance:

Carmen Oechsle, Lima/Zurich

Knitwear

Peru, Sicàn; Late Intermediate Period, 11th–14th century

Camelid hair, cotton; chain vertically in the picture

RPB 1427

Provenance:

Carmen Oechsle, Lima/Zurich

Knitwear

Peru, north central coast, Huarmey Valley; Moche style, 7th–10th century

Cotton, camelid hair; chain vertically in the picture

RPB 1610

Provenance:

Carmen Oechsle, Lima/Zurich

Tunic

Peru, south coast; Late Horizon Period (Inca), 15th–16th century

Cotton, camelid hair; chain vertically in the picture

RPB 1603

Provenance:

Carmen Oechsle, Lima/Zurich

Double weave

Peru, central coast; Late Intermediate Period, 10th–15th century

Cotton; chain horizontally in the picture

RPB 1438, Gift of Elisabeth and Markus Redli-Cron in memory of Theodor Cron

Provenance:

Ca. 1950s–1964, Theodor Cron, Lima

1964–1999 Elisabeth and Markus Redli-Cron, Basel

Adapted woven knitwear

Peru, Chimù Inca; Late Intermediate / Late Horizon Period, 15th–16th century

Cotton, camelid hair; chain horizontally in the picture

RPB 1428, Gift of Elisabeth and Markus Redli-Cron in memory of Theodor Cron

Provenance:

Ca. 1950s–1964, Theodor Cron, Lima

1964–1999 Elisabeth and Markus Redli-Cron, Basel

Knitwear

Peru, central coast; Late Intermediate Period, 11th–15th century

Cotton, camelid hair; chain vertically in the picture

RPB 1433, Gift of Elisabeth and Markus Redli-Cron in memory of Theodor Cron

Provenance:

Ca. 1950s–1964, Theodor Cron, Lima

1964–1999 Elisabeth and Markus Redli-Cron, Basel

Knitwear with woven fringes

Peru, north coast; Late Horizon Period, 15th–16th century

Cotton, camelid hair; chain vertically in the picture

RPB 1431, Gift of Elisabeth and Markus Redli-Cron in memory of Theodor Cron

Provenance:

Ca. 1950s–1964, Theodor Cron, Lima

1964–1999 Elisabeth and Markus Redli-Cron, Basel

Knitwear

Peru, Chimù Inca; Late Horizon Period, 15th–16th century

Cotton, camelid hair; chain vertically in the picture

RPB 1439, Gift of Elisabeth and Markus Redli-Cron in memory of Theodor Cron

Provenance:

Ca. 1950s–1964, Theodor Cron, Lima

1964–1999 Elisabeth and Markus Redli-Cron, Basel



4.1
KNITWEAR, Peru, central
coast; Late Intermediate
Period, 11th-15th century



4.2
DOUBLE WEAVE, Peru, central
coast; Late Intermediate Period,
11th-15th century

5 The value of provenance

This Tlingit amulet with a simple shape and worn notchings and scorings shows a graceful orca. It comes from Eduard von der Heydt's collection. When it found its way into the collection cannot be established, but it came to the museum in 1965, one year after von der Heydt's death. It probably represented one of his favourite objects.

The well-worn condition suggests that this lovely, high-quality object was long in use. It is made from walrus ivory. This material travelled on trade routes from the Bering Sea coast as far as south-east Alaska. The bones of a stranded orca or some other species of whale were also frequently used for such pieces of jewellery. The design of the delicate pendant – a rather large head, an almost smiling mouth, and an impishly glancing eye made of mother-of-pearl haliotis – is of the highest quality. The object shows, precisely in its tiny size, the mastery in production and graceful language of form of the traditional cultures of America's north-west coast.

The object may have been part of a shamanistic healing ceremony. The shaman, provided with jewellery, an apron, ornaments, bangles and head attire, let an amulet fall at the conclusion of his healing ritual. This was intended to deliver the ill person from their suffering. The whale amulet may have been preserved in the healed person's family and then at some point discarded. In this kind of context, there is a lack of written sources. It could have ended up in the hands of travellers or researchers, through barter, a sale or a chance find. The increasing westernisation of the Tlingit may also have contributed to them giving away their old objects.

Time and again, the appeal of the Museum Rietberg draws on the notion of 'ars una.' Coined by the art historian and sinologist William Cohn, it was applied to the founding collection of the Museum Rietberg, that of Eduard von der Heydt. This focus on a universal understanding of art runs through the whole collection, regardless of how heterogenous its make-up. Eduard von der Heydt wanted to make world art accessible. It was the credo he lived by. He saw himself as a collector with obligations towards the general public.

By no means all objects exhibited in the museum are based on a thoroughly documented history. There will always be objects of which we know only a few – and mostly recent – owners. Prove-

nance research is a continuous process in efforts to analyse the object, to access the archive material, and to expand the current state of knowledge. In earlier days, questions of origin and changes in ownership were often not documented at all and there was a lack of historical awareness for the importance of an 'object's biography'. Art as a product hardly needed a 'pedigree' on the market at that time; since the UNESCO Convention of 1970, the due diligence is more rigorous when a purchase takes place.

Small objects, in particular – such as this amulet – leave hardly any traces behind. They are by definition easy to transport, perhaps achieving a value that is more immaterial than material, meaning they barely appear in files. Identifying them on early photographs or written sources can also be described as difficult. Moreover, they have rarely been provided with numbers or stickers by dealers and collectors due to a lack of space. In such cases, a plausible history can be reconstructed using objects of comparison and experience.

These days museums seldom collect objects without thorough evidence of provenance. The ethical guidelines set by the ICOM (International Council of Museums), the international agreements on combating the illegal trade in cultural goods and the collection policies laid down in-house by museums prescribe rigorous due diligence in the acquisition of art.



5
AMULET IN THE SHAPE OF AN ORCA
North America, Alaska, culture
of the Tlingit, 18th/19th century

6 The context: Nazi injustice

Individual life stories of collectors are often hidden behind the history of the artworks. National Socialism forced many Jewish collectors and dealers to flee. A market for art from Africa, America and Oceania hardly existed in Germany; the collections mostly went abroad, being considered 'degenerate'.

In contrast, Asian art was highly popular. Thus, Adolf Hitler opened an exhibition of Japanese art in 1939, and numerous dealers such as Ernst Fritzsche, Edgar Worch and Theodor Bohlken continued to be involved with the art of China. Asian art was also offered at the large auction houses in Munich, Frankfurt and Berlin, alongside European paintings, sculptures and arts and crafts. The collections of that period frequently covered more than just one art genre, being often established on universal, eclectic lines.

Eduard von der Heydt, who particularly invested in his collection during the 1920s and 1930s, acquired numerous artworks in the German 'Reich' after 1933. Although he mainly lived in Zandvoort and Ascona, he constantly travelled to his third residence in Berlin. In addition, he had significant financial resources in the German 'Reich' that could only be transferred abroad with losses incurred. Therefore, he decided to invest these funds in art. It was the re-appraisal of these acquisitions that began the process of provenance research at the Museum Rietberg.

On March 22nd/23rd, 1935, von der Heydt purchased two Neolithic ceramic vessels at auction in Berlin, as well as a fragment of a military official and a standing Bodhisattva. The auction was led by the Jewish dealer, Paul Graupe, who was granted a special permit to continue working as an art dealer. The 'assets of the Berlin Dr. Otto Burchard & Co in Liquidation' were auctioned off. The owners, the married couple Jacob and Rosa Oppenheimer, had to flee the country in 1933 as persecuted persons. The Oppenheimers owned a business empire no less, with various galleries, including the Galerie Burchard. Jacob died as an emigrant in 1941, while Rosa perished at Auschwitz.

In 2010, in the spirit of the Washington Principles, the Museum Rietberg paid out compensation for the four objects shown here. Taking the initiative, the museum reached a 'just and fair' solution with the representative of the original owners' heirs.

In numerous other museums the world over, there exist collections with this provenance, and similar cases, which have likewise been subject to compensation or restitution. Meanwhile, access has been granted to new files which enable debts incurred by the Oppenheimers' art empire to be traced back to the global economic crisis of 1929. Debts were cleared using the proceeds from the auction of March 1935, with the remainder taken by the German tax authorities; the original owners received nothing, however. It was not until after the war that fixed-sum payments were made as reparation.

Otto Burchard (1892–1965), the former managing director of the Galerie Burchard, lived in Beijing from 1932 onwards, where the art market was booming. In order to meet western demand, he settled there. In China, the period from 1911 to 1949 was marked by revolutions, wars and social upheaval. Numerous artworks left the country at the time. The German art market was also served by this. The sources for the art market during the Nazi era were therefore multifarious.

Statue fragment of a military official

China, Ming Dynasty, 13th–14th century CE

Limestone

RCH 158, Gift of Eduard von der Heydt

Provenance:

Up to 22./23.3.1935, Rosa and Jacob Oppenheimer, Berlin

Since 22./23.3.1935, Eduard von der Heydt collection

Two Neolithic ceramic vessels

China, Gansu Province and/or Qinghai, Neolithic period, Majiayao culture, Banshan phase, 2600–2300 BCE

Painted pottery

RCH 2001 and RCH 2003, Gift of Eduard von der Heydt

Provenance:

Up to 22./23.3.1935, Rosa and Jacob Oppenheimer, Berlin

Since 22./23.3.1935, Eduard von der Heydt collection

Bodhisattva

China, probably Shanxi Province, Taiyuan, Ming Dynasty, 1st half of 15th century CE

Lime wood with traces of paint

RCH 305, Gift of Eduard von der Heydt

Provenance:

Up to 22./23.3.1935, Rosa and Jacob Oppenheimer, Berlin

Since 22./23.3.1935, Eduard von der Heydt collection

At the auction of 1935, the Bodhisattva was not yet the fragment that is presented today. The base, halo and arms still existed. After von der Heydt had purchased it at the auction, the artwork came to the Staatliche Museen Berlin on loan. During the Second World War, it was evacuated to a forester's lodge in the vicinity. During the war there was a lack of firewood there, and so the Bodhisattva was decimated. The piece therefore not only tells the story of its changing owners – also of the hardships of war.



472

64.57
RCA 305

6
Illustration of the Bodhisattva
from the auction catalog, 1935

7 What are sensitive objects?

There are various views of what makes a 'sensitive object'. For example, objects with human remains such as bones, hair or skin basically belong to the category of sensitive objects, as do secret and holy artefacts. An object can also be 'sensitive' when the story of its origins is perceived as problematic. This depends on the ethical-political discourse concerned. The perception of objects can shift according to time and place, and the sensitivity of the same increase or decrease.

In the Museum Rietberg collection, a few objects with human remains can be found. These include human skulls from Papua New Guinea.

Over-modelled skulls from Papua New Guinea were put up in public for certain ceremonies and viewed in this context as artworks: the skull cleaned, over-modelled with clay, painted and decorated with flowers and plants. The objects served to commemorate deceased ancestors or in the case of skulls, as a war trophy of enemies who had been killed. It is not possible to distinguish between these types of using over-modelled skulls. Skulls that were no longer used were exchanged or sold, reaching the market as wares. Moreover, such exemplars were produced as export goods for the market and for western collectors.

The skulls are not shown in the museum collection. They lie in the display depot, wrapped in cardboard boxes. This in turn reflects the museum's sensitive handling of human remains. Nonetheless, one of the skulls has been exposed for this intervention in the collection – especially as it was regarded by the society of origin as a public, artistic artefact, too. Eduard von der Heydt, who had acquired these works from the Galerie Bernheimer in Munich, also considered this work to be objets d'art. He collected them in the same way as the other artworks, i.e. far removed from any goals based on racial ideology – which in the context of the time could frequently be a key collecting motive, however. Eckart von Sydow recorded the object in his seminal book 'Kunst und Religion der Naturvölker' of 1926. The skull's early base shows the aesthetic approach at that time.

Over-modelled skull

Papua New Guinea, Sepik

19th/early 20th century

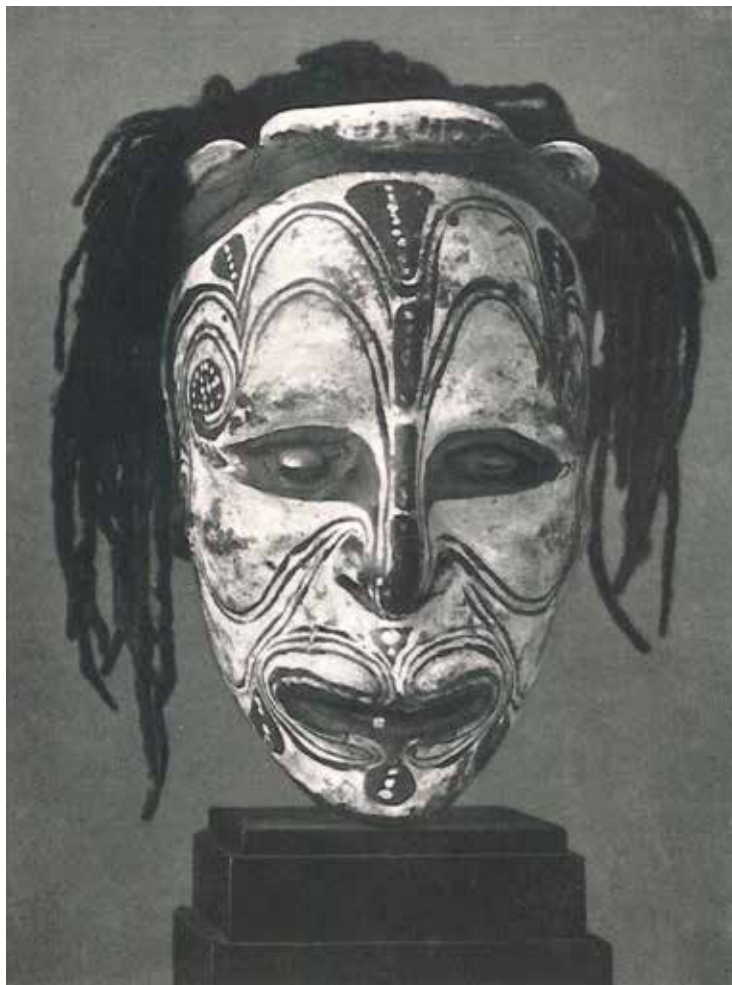
Skull, hair, clay mix, wood, bast, string, seeds, animal teeth

RME 302, Gift of Eduard von der Heydt

Provenance:

Until latest 1926, Bernheimer, München

Latest after 1926, Eduard von der Heydt collection



7

Reproduction of the over-modelled skull, 1926

8 Knowledge and the market

Eight Buddhist artworks from the cave temples of Tianlongshan can be found in the Museum Rietberg today.

Between the 5th and 8th century, wealthy benefactors had more than 20 caves hewn out of the rock on Mount Tianlong, located near the city of Taiyuan in Shanxi Province in China, and furnished with numerous figures that were mostly chiselled in relief from the cave walls. There is no clear evidence of how long these caves were used for religious purposes. In modern times, however, the caves seem to have fallen into decay. The first photographs of the caves from the 1920s show the entrances overgrown with thickets, chipped surfaces and floors covered with thick layers of clay.

At the beginning of the 20th century, both Japanese and western art historians and archaeologists developed an interest in China's Buddhist art. So, for example, the Japanese specialist for architectural history, Sekino Tadashi, travelled through all of China and systematically documented old buildings and Buddhist temples. The German architect Ernst Boerschmann studied religious buildings and the Swedish art historian Osvald Sirén researched Buddhist art and sculpture. In this way, information about the Tianlongshan caves reached an international public.

At the same time, the enthusiasm of western collectors for the art of East Asia continued to grow. Especially the 7th century figures from Tianlongshan, which with their intense physicality and elegance are among the most beautiful of Chinese sculptures from this period, must have aroused great interest among art connoisseurs. This demand led to the piecemeal destruction of the temple. While initially only the heads of the figures are knocked off, they soon began to chisel whole bodies and torsos from the wall. These chisel marks are still clearly visible on the figures in the Museum Rietberg, too. It is not known whether this looting followed as a result of direct instructions from art dealers, or whether the mere possibility of turning publicly accessible, no longer actively used objects into financial gain was the motive for looters. China at the time was in state of chaos, politically. People were threatened by acts of war and marauding gangs. There was no central government that could have protected such cultural property, and the local rulers all too often had no interest in doing so.

The photos and travel reports from the 1920s are impressive evidence of the rapidity with which the destruction of the figure ensembles occurred. After the first illustrated volume appeared in 1922 with photos of the cave walls, by 1925 several figures and most of the heads were already missing.

Eduard von der Heydt acquired his figures in the late 1920s and early 1930s from the Parisian art dealer C.T. Loo and Sadajiro Yamanaka (1866–1936), among others. The Japanese dealer Yamanaka had opened his first modest business in Manhattan in 1895. Decades later, he had achieved wealth and prestige and was considered one of the most important dealers in Asian art in the west. He visited Tianlongshan in 1924 and 1926 and published an illustrated book which boosted sales of the objects. Furthermore, in 1932 he published single works in a ‘private sales catalogue’ targeted at collectors, which Eduard von der Heydt also received. He purchased three figures from it.

Today, about a hundred objects from the cave temples are spread throughout the world in various museums. As early as 1965 a team of researchers published a first reconstruction of the caves based on the old photos. In 2013, the large-scale Tianlongshan Project of the University of Chicago, in collaboration with Chinese institutions, began to measure both the caves and all the accessible sculpture fragments, and to create a virtual reconstruction. The website is connected in English and Chinese and publicly accessible online.

Head of a Bodhisattva

China, Shanxi Province, from the cave temples of Tianlongshan, probably cave 8 or 16

Northern Qi Dynasty, around 570 CE

Sandstone

RCH 132, Gift of Eduard von der Heydt

Provenance:

Eduard von der Heydt collection

Head of a Bodhisattva

China, Shanxi Province, from the cave temples of Tianlongshan, probably cave 8 or 16

Northern Qi Dynasty, around 560 CE

Sandstone

RCH 150, Gift of Eduard von der Heydt

Provenance:

up to 23.9.1935, Theodor Bohlken, Berlin

from 23.9.1935, Eduard von der Heydt collection



8
Photograph of grotto temple 14 from
Tianlongshan with Bodhisattva, 1926

9 Ethnologists as collectors

Between 1933 and 1974, Hans Himmelheber (1908–2003) undertook 14 research trips mainly through West and Central Africa as a scientist, art ethnologist, collector and dealer. He interviewed, documented, photographed, collected. Copious notes were created in the course of his field research. He published numerous essays and books on various artistic practices and personalities, as well as on questions of authenticity and the market. His wife Ulrike, who frequently came along on the trips, was heavily involved in research and documentation, and also as an author publishing in her own right.

The Museum Rietberg safeguards around 750 objects acquired by him, more than 15,000 photographs and, as of late, the entire written estate of Hans Himmelheber. Using the Hans Himmelheber archive as an example, a joint research project between the museum and the University of Zurich addresses issues arising from the interconnected creation of knowledge on African art from a transnational perspective.

Hans Himmelheber began dealing in art in Paris even before studying ethnology in Berlin under Eckart von Sydow. The extent to which his network in the Parisian avantgarde is important for his later work is the subject of a research project. The foundation for his scientific work was laid in the period covering his four first research and collection trips from 1933 to 1938. His 1935 dissertation titled 'Negro artists' opened up new avenues for art ethnology. For this, he interviewed such artists as carvers and casters in workshops and village communities on various themes relevant to his research. For the colonial period, his approach, which entailed research into individual artists, was revolutionary. He thereby founded a new history of African art. Alongside his research, Hans Himmelheber acquired a multitude of artworks by means of purchase, barter and gifts. Himmelheber made acquisitions both for his own collection and for his customers, too: private collectors, dealers and public institutions, including numerous ethnological museums, in Switzerland, as well.

14 figures and jewellery for fortune telling

Côte d'Ivoire/Liberia, Dan

1st half of 20th century

Brass

2018.367, 2018.320-324, 2018.326, 2018.328-330, 2018.332, 2018.379,
2018.335 and 2018.337, Gift of Martin Himmelheber

Provenance:

1950–2003, Hans Himmelheber, Heidelberg,

purchased in Côte d'Ivoire/ Liberia

2003–2018, Martin Himmelheber, Schramberg (Ger)

Two heddle pulleys

Côte d'Ivoire/Liberia, Dan

1st half of 20th century

Wood, bast

2018.252, 2018.276, Gift of Martin Himmelheber

Provenance:

1950–2003, Hans Himmelheber, Heidelberg,

purchased in Côte d'Ivoire/ Liberia

2003–2018, Martin Himmelheber, Schramberg (Ger)

Three spoons, with fist, woman's head and ring

Côte d'Ivoire/Liberia, Dan

1st half of 20th century

Wood

2018.123, 2018.129, 2018.131, Gift of Martin Himmelheber

Provenance:

1950–2003, Hans Himmelheber, Heidelberg,

purchased in Côte d'Ivoire/ Liberia

2003–2018, Martin Himmelheber, Schramberg (Ger)

Hans Himmelheber had acquired these objects on his fifth scientific field trip in the Côte d'Ivoire und in Liberia. The files bear testimony to the purchasing conditions, the hardships of the trip and the recording of field notes.

Important carvings, besides masks, are the spoons, which are mostly more than half a metre long. The women used these to dole out rice on ceremonial occasions. The spoons end in a geometrical form or in an animal or human head. The exemplar with the fist comes from an artist friend, from whom Himmelheber had purchased the spoon in person.



9.1
Photograph of the acquisitions made by Hans Himmelheber on
the 5th research trip to Liberia/Côte d'Ivoire, 1949/1950



9.2
Photograph of the acquisitions made by Hans Himmelheber on
the 5th research trip to Liberia/Côte d'Ivoire, 1949/1950



9.3
MASK, bagle, workshop of the south-western
Dan region, Liberia, around 1900

10 Is it all looted art?

The art from the Benin kingdom is considered among the masterpieces of African art. The materials were reserved for the royal house, the objects being made of ivory and brass. The brass was imported by the Portuguese who had reached the Bay of Benin at the end of the 15th century. They introduced brass as a means of payment, along with copper. Thus, the so-called bronze plaques were cast, and other objects, too. The early global interrelations can be discerned not only in the material, but the pictorial language, too: time and again, the Portuguese are depicted.

The capture of Benin City by British troops in February 1897 and the looting of the royal palace constituted an unparalleled act of retaliation (known as a 'punitive expedition'). Reliefs and figures made of brass as well as carved ivory subsequently reached Europe as war booty and were sold there. The London dealer William D. Webster (1868–1913) was one of the most important vendors of plundered treasures. No less than a scramble for the acquisition of the objects broke out among Europe's leading museums.

Calls for reclamation from Nigeria have grown ever louder in recent decades. Since 2010, the so-called Benin Dialogue has been in place between representatives from Nigeria and those museums with the largest Benin collections. This discourse strives for an appropriate solution that includes restitution, future cooperation and transfer of knowledge.

Three of the 16 Benin artworks found in the Museum Rietberg collection can be verifiably traced back to the punitive expedition. So, for example, the hip mask bears a number from the London dealer William D. Webster (2011.9), who had put the objects from the punitive expedition on the market. It is believed that the powerful ivory tusk (RAF 607) was brought back to London by a British doctor at the beginning of the 20th century. The note 'from the period, 1897' was attached to the invoice of a Zurich art dealer, with which we have a reference to the punitive expedition. The second ivory carving in the form of a bracelet was illustrated in 1919 in the first comprehensive work on Benin art by Felix von Luschan, described as an object from the collection of General Harry Rawson (RAF 608). Rawson (1843–1910) was one of the generals primarily responsible for the punitive expedition.

Yet not all Benin objects originate from this act of plunder. Eckart von Sydow (1885–1942), art historian and ethnologist, travelled to Benin City in 1936 and 1939. On the first trip he acquired, among other things, a leopard head (RAF 623). He gave this to Eduard von der Heydt, who had helped finance his journey. Likewise, he handed over to his patron a photo album documenting his trip, showing conditions in Benin City, street illustrations, celebrations, altars to ancestors and the *oba* (king of Benin).

To date, all the other Benin objects can only be traced as far back as the art trade and European collectors. Issues of research thus remain open. Two pieces can indeed only be dated to the period following 1897 and so have no connection to the military conflict mentioned. It is indisputable that the objects are both witnesses to and ambassadors for the unique art of Benin; yet at the same time, they symbolise the looting of the royal palace and the major gaps in Benin City art, the reverse side to the artworks.

Hip mask

Workshop at the Benin court
17th/18th century CE
Brass, iron
2011.9

Provenance:

Around 1900 William D. Webster, London
1901–1929 Hans Mayer collection, Leipzig (1858–1929)
ca. 1930–1955 Ernst Heinrich, Stuttgart
1955–2009 Daughter of Ernst Heinrich, USA
2010/2011 Galerie Jacques Germain, Montreal

Bracelet

Workshop at the Benin court
Nigeria, Kingdom of Benin
17th/18th century CE
Ivory
RAF 608

Provenance:

1897–1919 (at least) Admiral Harry Rawson, looted in Benin City
1928–1979 Han Coray, Erlenbach/Agnuzzo
1979–1985 Hans Coray, Zurich
1985–2001 Hans W. Kopp, Zumikon

Carved tusk of an elephant

Workshop at the Benin court

Nigeria, Kingdom of Benin

17th/18th century CE

Ivory

RAF 607

Provenance:

presumably around 1902 J. B. Davey, doctor in British Central Africa

up to 26.11.1962 F. E. Davey, London

26.11.1962 auction at Sotheby's, London: Catalogue of African, American, Oceanic and Indian Art, lot. 105

26.11.1962–14.4.1993 presumably Kenneth John Hewett

14.4.1993–1993 Ernst Winizki, Zurich

Leopard head

Workshop at the Benin court

Nigeria, Kingdom of Benin

18th century CE

Terracotta

RAF 623

Provenance:

1936–1937 Eckart von Sydow, acquired in Benin City

1937–1962 Eduard von der Heydt collection



aus Benin City: Faule Kopf
der Tondelion nach aus He
(Sammlung E. v. Sydow)

10.1

Eckart von Sydow's photo album from his trip to Benin City, 1936

Dem Förderer seiner Reise nach Westafrika:
Beron u. d. Seydl, fand vor,
widmet diese Fotografien
aus Benin
in Dankbarkeit u. Verehrung

Eckart v. Sydow
Febr. 1937

10.2

Eckart von Sydow's photo album from his trip to Benin City, 1936

Picture captions

FRONT

- Rear side of the hip mask,
17th/18th century, Nigeria,
Kingdom of Benin, 2011.9, ©
Museum Rietberg Zürich, photo-
grapher: Rainer Wolfsberger
- 1.1 J.E. Van Lohuizen-De Leeuw,
*The Protector of the Mountain
of Truth, Artibus Asiae*, vol.
20, no. 1, 1957, 9-17, ill. 7.
- 1.2 ©Museum Rietberg Zürich
- 1.3 RVI 107, © Museum Rietberg
Zürich, photographer: Rainer
Wolfsberger
- 2 RVI 401, © Museum Rietberg
Zürich, photographer: Rainer
Wolfsberger
- 3.1 photographer: Marta
Huth, ©Landesarchiv Berlin
- 3.2 *Omnibus. Almanach für das
Jahr 1932*, Verlag der Galerie
Flechtheim/ Berlin and
Düsseldorf, p. 90.
- 4.1 RPB 1433, © Museum Rietberg
Zürich, photographer: Rainer
Wolfsberger
- 4.2 RPB 1438, © Museum Rietberg
Zürich, photographer: Rainer
Wolfsberger
- 5 RNA 309, © Museum Rietberg
Zürich, photographer: Rainer
Wolfsberger
- 6 RCH 305, in the Paul Graupe
auction catalog, *Die Bestände
der Firma Dr. Otto Burhard &
Co, Berlin in Liquidation*,
22./23.3.1935, Berlin 1935.
- 7 RME 302, Eckart von Sydow:
*Kunst und Religion der Natur-
völker*, Oldenburg 1926,
ill. 32.
- 8 RCH 134, from: Tokiwa Daijo
and Tadashi Sekino, *Shina
Bukkyo Shiseki (Chinese
Buddhist monuments)*, Tokyo
1926, vol. 3, plate 50.
- 9.1 FHH 207-31, © Museum Rietberg
Zürich, photographer: Hans
Himmelheber
- 9.2 FHH 201-7, © Museum Rietberg
Zürich, photographer: Hans
Himmelheber
- 9.3 EFA 19, © Museum Rietberg
Zürich, photographer: Rainer
Wolfsberger

- 10.1 Eckart von Sydow's photo
album from his trip to Benin
City, 1936, © Museum Rietberg
Zürich, photographer:
Rainer Wolfsberger
- 10.2 Eckart von Sydow's photo
album from his trip to Benin
City, 1936, © Museum Rietberg
Zürich, photographer: Rainer
Wolfsberger

BACK

Label of the ethnographica
dealer J.F.G. Umlauff
(Museum Umlauff, Hamburg),
RME 1210, © Museum Rietberg
Zürich, photographer:
Rainer Wolfsberger

'H. 25' refers to a former
deposit of Eduard von der
Heydt in the China-Institut
Frankfurt am Main; the
number CH 136 is the old
collection number and RCH
150 is the current inventory
number, © Museum Rietberg
Zürich, photographer:
Rainer Wolfsberger

Rear view of mask RME 11
with the current inventory
number of the museum, a
sticker from Galerie Flecht-
heim, second half of the
1920s, as well as the depot
number of the Musée d'ethno-
graphie du Trocadéro, Paris,
© Museum Rietberg Zürich,
photographer: Rainer
Wolfsberger

Purchase number of the art
ethnologist and collector
Hans Himmelheber, Heidelberg,
spoon with ring, 2018.131,
©Museum Rietberg Zürich,
photographer: Rainer Wolfs-
berger

Impressum

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