Germany and France: Art Market and Art Collecting 1900–1945

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The international conference gave 12 researchers the opportunity to present their work on topics of art publishing, economics, networks and politics on the German-French market in the first half of the 20th century.
Organisers to the first of the two-part research programme “Art Market and Art Collecting from 1900 to the Present in Germany and France” were Dorothee Wimmer and Elisabeth Furtwängler, in collaboration with Xenia Schiemann from the Centre for Art Market Studies (FOKUM) at the TU Berlin. The programme is further supported by the Centre Georges Simmel at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in collaboration with the Deutsches Forum Kunstgeschichte Paris where the second part of the programme will take place in March 2019. [1]
The first section was dedicated to art book series and their marketing influence on the art trade and featured contributions by Friederike Kitschen, Chara Kolokytha as well as Kate Kangaslahti. Art book series in Germany and France were particularly popular and mainly published by gallerists, partly to promote and canonise the artists they represented but also to defend the revolution of modern art. Kolokytha and Kangaslahti focused on the series Cahiers d’art and pointed out that whereas German museum directors were very early advocates of French modern art and made acquisitions accordingly, the vast majority of French museums were neither interested in German nor in French modernism. The influence of art book series like Cahiers d’art on an official level was thus highly limited in France. The speakers laid out that the artistic and commercial value of the illustration layout of Cahiers d’art was conceived by Christian Zervos as editor whose motivation stemmed out of the love for modern art and the need to profit financially.
Léa Saint-Raymond initiated the second panel titled "Confrontations, Networks and Economics" with a presentation on the role German buyers played at Parisian auctions. Her findings are a by-product of her PhD thesis on the introduction of new artistic markets in Paris between 1830-1939 which analyses catalogues and the respective auction protocols, elucidating the evolution of the market and its protagonists. After the turn of the century, German and French buyers were in direct competition regarding Asian and Oriental art, however the increase in prices in the sector of modern paintings was mainly due to American acquisitions. A somewhat neglected topic within the research environment, Saint-Raymond set an interesting focus on pre-Columbian and primitive artefacts, stating that German sellers in that sector were highly active in Berlin and Hamburg in the interwar period. MaryKate Cleary followed the panel with a presentation on the art dealer Paul Rosenberg, classifying him as a transnational patron-entrepreneur as a new category within the already established art dealer types. Rosenberg had extensive ties to German gallerists like Heinrich Thannhauser and Alfred Flechtheim through whom he was also able to promote French art in Germany. Further bridging the influence of art book series to art dealer networks, Yves Guignard

traced a contribution to the popularisation of French modern art in Germany back to Wilhelm Uhde's network among German art collectors. David Challis finished the panel with showing the exemplary increase of American buyers of artworks by Paul Cézanne on the French art market and an explanation of the economic reasons behind it. His assertion - that through the appreciation of the Dollar against the Franc after the First World War, American art collectors made use of the favourable conditions when buying artworks in France - neatly interlaced with Saint-Raymond's analysis of the market situation.

The first day ended with the keynote lecture by Marek Claasen on the artist ranking system artfacts.net. This ranking is composed of a value system, that allocates points based on past and current exhibitions in which the individual artists were/are represented. Historically, the data used by artfacts.net goes back to 1850 but is still updated regularly on living artists as well. The results that Claasen presented for the time period of 1900-1945 regarding the ranking of the top 10 French artists were surprising, because Henri Matisse for example was at the top of the list concerning international exhibitions but only came 9th within France. Paradoxically, according to Claasen's data, the artists that exhibited the most between 1900-1945 in France performed the worst in the long run on an international level. This data was almost solely gathered via the internet and thus the question arises if it is representative considering that many historic catalogues can only be found in specialist libraries. Taking into account that the information on recent exhibitions is more readily available on the internet as a whole, the ranking system is set on a more complete basis for living artists. [2] The choice of dedicating the keynote lecture to a digital analysis tool broadened the scope of the traditional art market research presented at the conference, yet a deeper exploration of the significance of his data for the research topic in the relevant period would have been desirable.

"Politics and markets" was the title to the third section of the conference, initiated by Vérane Tasseau's presentation on the collection of Raoul La Roche and his connection to buyers at Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler's "enemy property" sequestration sales in Paris. La Roche started collecting around 1918, so when the sequestrated collection and stock of Cubist artworks from the German dealer Kahnweiler came on the market, he bought many works at decreasing prices through 'straw-men' like Amédée Ozenfant, Oscar Miestchaninoff and Le Corbusier at auction from 1921-1923. Tasseau identified the buyers at the first sequestration sales and notes that La Roche acquired the most artworks after Kahnweiler himself (who had created an association to save some of his former property).

The conference proceeded with lectures by Gitta Ho, Nathalie Neumann and Mattes Lammert, who explored the consequences on the French art market during the occupation of Paris between 1940-1944. Ho pointed out that several Jewish dealers were still active in France and furnished German officials with art works as well as sensitive information for varying reasons. Some of these dealers profited from this exchange but the trade worked vice versa too - as shown in the example of Bruno Lohse, who was deputy director of the art looting unit "Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg". Due to Lohse's affiliation with a Jewish art gallery, he could travel unencumbered to and from Switzerland, facilitating acquisitions.

After pointing out the desideratum on experts working as appraisers for the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg in Paris by Neumann, Lammert ended the conference with an appeal to the Berlin museums. He traced the provenance of more than 100 acquisitions made by the Berlin museums for the Islamic department during the occupation of Paris partly back to Parisian dealers with Armenian origins and now further endorses research into those works and the networks involved.

Lammert's presentation revealed that the acquisition policies and provenance investigations in the field of Islamic art and antiquities have been a neglected topic of research, which has gained focus only very recently. [3]

In conclusion, with this valuable addition to the much-discussed field of Franco-German relations in recent years [4] and in line with their general focus, the FOKUM and the EHESS have once more successfully shed light on the art markets of the period. The individual insights on specific topics create a more complete picture and thus facilitate a better understanding of the historic Franco--German art market on a larger scale. We await the contributions in the second part of the programme which will focus on the (post-)war period until today.

[1] http://centregeorgsimmel.ehess.fr/files/2018/09/cfp-german-french-research-programm-2018-2019-final.pdf

[2] Well researched critique on databases like artfacts.net and their effects on the art market was voiced by Jürgen Tabor. Tabor, Jürgen: Zur sozialen Logik der Kunstindustrie. In: Kunstgeschichte. Texte zur Diskussion, 2009-50. www.kunstgeschichte-ejournal.net/discussion/2009/tabor/ (consulted: 14.12.2018).

[3] The latest investigations by Meike Hopp and Laura Puritani give valuable insights into the fate of antiquities. www.kuk.tu-berlin.de/menue/forschung/forschungskolloquium/ (consulted: 14.12.2018) and Puritani, Laura: Antikensammlung: Antiken aus Carinhall aus dem Eigentum der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. In: Dokumentation des Fremdbesitzes. Bd. 3. Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2017.

[4] Cf. e.g. the following conference in recent years (consulted: 14.12.2018) www.kulturgutverluste.de/Content/01_Stiftung/DE/Veranstaltungsnachlese/2017/Tagungsbericht.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3
https://www.arbeitskreis-provenienzforschung.org/data/uploads/formulare/communique_patrimoines_2016-06.pdf
https://ciera.hypotheses.org/801

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