

Sammlung Emil Bührle

Emil Bührle Collection

Collection Emil Bührle

Provenance Research of the Emil Bührle Collection, Zurich, 2002-2021: Update 2023

On 15 December 2021, the E.G. Bührle Collection Foundation presented the final report on the provenance research carried out by the Foundation from 2002 to 2021 and made it public on www.buehrle.ch. The provenance histories of the 203 works in the Foundation's possession have remained unchanged on the Foundation's website since then.

The agreement of 22 February 2022 regarding the long-term loan between the E.G. Bührle Collection Foundation and the Kunsthaus Zürich stipulates that further provenance research on the Emil Bührle Collection is the responsibility of the Kunsthaus Zürich. Still, the Bührle Foundation is authorised to continue its own provenance research on the works in its holdings. In the meantime, the Foundation has gained new insights into the provenances of the following ten works in the collection:

- 1.) **Paul Cézanne**, *Landscape*
- 2) **Gustave Courbet**, *Louis-Joseph Lebœuf*
- 3) **Paul Gauguin**, *L'Offrande*
- 4) **Edouard Manet**, *La Sultane*
- 5) **Claude Monet**, *Field of poppies near Vétheuil*
- 6) **Pablo Picasso**, *La Sortie de l'église*
- 7) **Georges Rouault**, *clown*
- 8) **Georges Rouault**, *La Loge*
- 9.) **Peter Paul Rubens**, *St. Augustine*
- 10) **Salomon van Ruysdael**, *Riverbank with village*

The provenance histories for these works on www.buehrle.ch were updated in March 2023. The 2023 update of the 2002–2021 report was made public on www.buehrle.ch by the end of April 2023.

The new findings on the above-mentioned ten works from the Emil Bührle Collection:

1) Paul Cézanne, *Landscape*: Recently, a handwritten letter was identified in the Paul Cassirer/Walter Feilchenfeldt (Jr) Archive, Zurich, which Fritz Nathan – who eventually was to sell the painting to Emil Bührle – addressed to Walter Feilchenfeldt (Sr) from New York on 19 June 1947 and in which Nathan recorded: "I have definitely purchased the Cézanne Landscape from Frau Nothmann." This statement complements Fritz Nathan's earlier statement in a letter to Oskar Reinhart on 1 June 1947, in which he speaks of the Cézanne landscape he is negotiating for and "which used to be with Nothmann". The statement in the letter of 19 June 1947 is more precise in this respect, as it shows that Fritz Nathan was apparently aware that of the couple Bertold (†1942) and Martha Nothmann, only the wife Martha was still alive. This speaks just as much for a sale of the painting in New York by Martha Nothmann as does her statement in the letter to Oskar Reinhart in Winterthur of 10 August 1947, in which she refers to the Cézanne landscape as her "painting last sold". She had apparently learned that Nathan was the buyer and therefore mistakenly assumed that her painting was intended for Reinhart. A letter from Georges Seligman, New York, to his cousin Germain Seligman in

Paris, dated 23 June 1947, following a meeting of the sender with Fritz Nathan in New York (Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution Washington D.C., Jacques Seligmann & Co. Records, Box 137, Folder 7) contains the reference that the painting, "from the Nothmann Collection", had also been offered to the Seligmann Gallery in New York before its purchase by Nathan. Bertold and Martha Nothmann had settled in Great Britain in 1939 after being expelled from Germany. Martha Nothmann later moved from there to the USA. While there is the evidence as described here that Martha Nothmann sold the painting in 1947 after her relocation in the USA, there is no evidence of an earlier sale by Martha Nothmann or of a sale in the UK before the end of the war.

2) Gustave Courbet, *Louis-Joseph Lebœuf*: A recent consultation of the director's minutes of the Kunstmuseum Bern No. 47 of 16 October 1941 showed that the painting was sent to the Kunstmuseum Bern at the time by the Rosengart Gallery, Lucerne, and offered for purchase for CHF 24,000. This is evidence of the efforts made in the Swiss art trade to find a buyer for the painting at the best possible price for the benefit of the owner family, who had been persecuted by the Nazis but lived at that time in various places outside the Nazi sphere of power. The price demanded in Bern was exceeded some three months later by Emil Bührle with a purchase price of CHF 26,000.

3) Paul Gauguin, *L'Offrande*: According to the "Inventarbuch Leihgaben" (inventory of loans) recently consulted in the archive of the Kunstmuseum Bern, the painting was deposited at the Kunstmuseum Bern in 1950 by the Parisian art dealer Max Kaganovitch. There is to be found also the additional information that the painting was sold in September 1956, as well as an indication of its price: USD 80'000.

4) Edouard Manet, *La Sultane*, was listed in the report on provenance research of the Emil Bührle Collection, Zurich, 2002–2021 under section 9. "Inquiries and statements" as: "acquired by Emil Bührle 1952/53 from Paul Rosenberg in New York, formerly in the collection of Max Silberberg (?)".

Until 2022, the ownership of the painting by the Breslau entrepreneur Max Silberberg had to be considered unproven, as no sales documents had survived in the well-preserved and indexed archives of the Galerie Durand-Ruel in Paris as the owner and seller of the painting before Max Silberberg. All the more important was the declaration of the Durand-Ruel Gallery to the Bührle Foundation of 7 March 2022, according to which the painting had been consigned to a sales exhibition at the New York branch of the Durand-Ruel Gallery by the Paris dealer Paul Rosenberg in February 1934. This allowed the conclusion that Max Silberberg had actually acquired the painting around 1928, as otherwise the Durand-Ruel Gallery would have claimed ownership in 1934 and prevented the painting from being exhibited in their salesroom.

It is known that Max Silberberg ran into financial difficulties as a result of the Great Depression in 1929, which forced him to auction off some of the more valuable French paintings in his art collection, which he had built up in the years before. The auction took place in Paris in June 1932, but the painting *La Sultane* was not part of the sale.

Even if the assumption was obvious that *La Sultane* was sent to Paris at the same time as the works intended for auction and it was also known that Silberberg was no longer able or willing to lend the painting to a Manet exhibition in Paris in April 1932, the question so far remained unclear when the painting *La Sultane* had left Germany and had come to the Paris art dealer Paul Rosenberg, from whom Emil Bührle acquired it in 1952/53.

At the end of 2022, Laurie A. Stein, provenance researcher working for the Bührle Foundation, gained access to an inventory book from the years 1917-1939 in the archive of the Paul Rosenberg Gallery, which has been deposited in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, since 2011, but has not yet been digitized (Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Paul Rosenberg Archives, IV.A.1.a, "Liste de photographies, Paris"). The inventory recorded photographs taken after works that were received by the Paul Rosenberg Gallery, numbered consecutively, and identified by artist's name, image size and title. Listed under number 3079 is: "Manet / 92 x 73 / La Sultane".

The entries in the photo inventory are numbered but not dated. 50 numbers below the entry by *La Sultane* (on the opposite page of the inventory book), at numbers 3129-3131, there follows an entry entitled "Exposition Claude Monet Nymphéas / Février Mars 1933". This entry apparently refers to an exhibition held by the Paul Rosenberg Gallery in February/March 1933.

Although the photo inventory does not document the exact time at which the painting was handed over to Paul Rosenberg in Paris, it can now be said with certainty that the handover took place before 30 January 1933, i.e. before the Nazi seizure of power in Germany. It is highly probable that the painting reached Paris at the same time as the paintings from the Max Silberberg Collection sent to the French capital to be auctioned in June 1932.

In 1934 and 1935, Paul Rosenberg tried in vain to find a buyer for the painting by offering it first in New York at the Galerie Durand-Ruel and then in Paris at his own gallery. When the painting remained unsold, Paul Rosenberg acquired it from Max Silberberg in 1937 for USD 17,800.

Max Silberberg's intention to sell the painting *La Sultane* was the result of economic problems dating back to the time before Nazi persecution set in. The later sale of the painting by Max Silberberg took place outside the Nazi sphere of power and went to a buyer who soon afterwards, threatened by Nazi persecution, had to leave France himself, and whose moral integrity is beyond doubt. The sale of *La Sultane* by Max Silberberg did not happen as the result of Nazi persecution (NS-verfolgungsbedingter Entzug), nor was it a sale caused by the pressure of Nazi persecution.

Immediately before the outbreak of war in 1939, Paul Rosenberg had *La Sultane* brought to New York before he himself had to flee to New York, where he continued to run his gallery. 15 years after acquiring the painting from Max Silberberg, Paul Rosenberg sold *La Sultane* to Emil Bührle.

The information provided in the report *Die Provenienzforschung der Sammlung Emil Bührle, Zürich, 2002-2021* (published 15.12.2021) on the provenance of Manet's *La Sultane* from the Max Silberberg Collection is outdated.

5) Claude Monet, *Poppy Field near Vétheuil*: The dates for the purchase of the painting by Max Emden ("around 1928/30") and for its purchase by Emil Bührle ("before 2 May 1941") had to be revised.

The date "c. 1928/30" for the purchase of the painting by Claude Monet by Max Emden from the Munich Galerie Caspari in the provenance history was based on the information given by a lawyer entrusted in 1953 with researching the sale of the painting prior to its acquisition by Max Emden (cf. the correspondence in the archive of the Foundation E.G. Bührle Collection). These dates were initially adopted as they allowed the period of the purchase to be kept open.

Further research conducted by the Bührle Foundation has since suggested that Max Emden was severely affected by the Great Depression that began in October 1929. It must therefore be

considered unlikely that Max Emden would still have acquired expensive paintings in 1930. In the opinion of the Bührle Foundation, the date "c. 1928/30" can no longer be considered valid but must be replaced by the more precise date "1929". This date is also given by the inventory card of the Emil Bührle Collection, drawn up shortly after the purchase by Emil Bührle (Archive Foundation Collection E.G. Bührle), for the purchase of the painting by Max Emden from the Galerie Caspari in Munich,.

The statement that the purchase of the painting by Claude Monet by Emil Bührle took place "before 2 May 1941" also needs to be clarified. This statement was based on the notebook of Walter Feilchenfeldt (Sen.), in which the sale to Bührle and the sales prices set by Hans Erich Emden were recorded in a list of works of art seen by Feilchenfeldt on the island of Brissago, which preceded a next entry entitled "2 May 1941". An examination of the notebook in question showed that it does not bear the character of an agenda, or a diary, and that the entries bear no direct relation to the order in which they appear in the notebook.

In the opinion of the Bührle Foundation, it is therefore correct to use "1941" as the date of purchase by Emil Bührle, without reference to a date that has no connection whatsoever with the sale of the painting.

6) Pablo Picasso, *La Sortie de l'église*: According to the "Inventarbuch Leihgaben" (inventory of loans) recently consulted in the archives of the Kunstmuseum Bern, the painting was deposited at the Kunstmuseum Bern in 1951 by the Parisian art dealer Max Kaganovitch. There is also the additional indication that the painting's (co- or pre-)owner was the Carstairs Gallery in New York. That firm was under the management of Georges Keller, an art dealer with close ties to the Kunstmuseum Bern. Furthermore, there is an indication of the insurance value: CHF 10'000.

7) Georges Rouault, *La Loge*: According to the "Inventarbuch Leihgaben" (inventory of loans) recently consulted in the archives of the Kunstmuseum Bern, the painting was deposited at the Kunstmuseum Bern by the Parisian art dealer Max Kaganovitch from 1941 to 1945, with a brief interruption.

8) Georges Rouault, *Clown*: According to the "Inventarbuch Leihgaben" (inventory of loans) recently consulted in the archives of the Kunstmuseum Bern, the painting was deposited at the Kunstmuseum Bern in 1951 by the Parisian art dealer Max Kaganovitch. There is also the additional indication that the painting's (co- or pre-)owner was the Carstairs Gallery in New York. That firm was under the management of Georges Keller, an art dealer with close ties to the Kunstmuseum Bern. Furthermore, there is an indication of the insurance value: CHF 12'780.

9) Peter Paul Rubens, *St. Augustine*: Since 2022, the Bührle Foundation has been in exchange with the Friedenstein Castle Foundation in Gotha, where the painting was kept until 1945. A recent dispatch from Gotha brought to attention an article in the catalogue published for an exhibition that opened on 24 October 2021 (Mirko Krüger, "[...] vor dem Einmarsch der Russen nach Koburg zu transportieren [to be transported to Koburg before the Russians invade]", in: *Back in Gotha, The Lost Masterpieces*, Herzogliches Museum Stiftung Schloss Friedenstein, Gotha, 2021-2022, pp. 67-72.). This article made it possible to specify the information given in the previous provenance history on the transfer of the painting from Gotha to Coburg in March 1945.

10) Salomon van Ruysdael, *Riverbank with Village*: In February 2022, E.A. Veltman was successfully identified as Eduard August Veltman (1878–1965), a banker living in Bloemendaal, as the previous owner of the painting 1935-1950. Veltman was in close contact with the art historian and collector Frits Lugt, who was persecuted by the Nazis and had emigrated to the USA. Among other things, Veltman intervened on Lugt's behalf when Lugt's house in The Hague was broken into by the Gestapo. This leads to the conclusion that Eduard August Veltman himself was not threatened by Nazi persecution, and the Ruysdael painting from his collection no longer needs to be considered as a work that had belonged to a previous owner "possibly threatened by Nazi persecution" before Emil Bührle acquired it.

The number of works listed in the report *Provenance Research of the Emil Bührle Collection, Zurich, 2002-2021* (published on 15-12-2021) in Appendix E under "The works of the Emil Bührle Collection acquired after the end of the war in 1945 by owners who were threatened by Nazi persecution from 1933 to 1945 and who or whose heirs sold the works after the war" is thus reduced from 14 to 13 works.