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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**The 6th PREP Exchange on Nazi-Era Art Provenance Research in Museums, Washington, DC
Concludes with Two Public Programs at the German Historical Institute,
October 25-26, 2019**

The German/American Provenance Research Exchange Program (PREP) for Museum Professionals, 2017-2019, will hold its 6th and final PREP Exchange from October 20-26, 2019, in Washington, DC. Organized and hosted by the Smithsonian Institution, this week-long program will bring together more than 60 museum professionals from 25 institutions in Germany and the US who specialize in World War II-era provenance research to better share provenance resources and expertise, and to accelerate and disseminate research results more broadly and with greater transparency. Five previous PREP Exchanges have been held in New York and Berlin (2017), Los Angeles and Munich (2018), and in Dresden (2019).

PREP is co-organized by the [Smithsonian Institution](#) and the [Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz](#) (SPK), in partnership with four major museums and research institutes in the US and Germany with important holdings of interest to Holocaust-era art provenance researchers: [The Metropolitan Museum of Art](#), New York; [Getty Research Institute](#), Los Angeles; [Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte](#) (ZI), Munich; and [Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden](#) (Dresden State Art Collections); with the [Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste](#) (German Lost Art Foundation, DZK), Magdeburg, as consulting partner.

As a facilitator of international collaborative research projects centered around Holocaust-era art looting, PREP is developing a growing network—a “provenance research *autobahn*”—of experts who can share improved methodologies, newly-digitized provenance resources, and research results with academic and professional colleagues, and with the public. To date, PREP’s network includes some 150 institutions and 400 individuals, with the aim of piecing together a more-complete picture of the movement of artworks and their owners, collectors, and dealers in Europe and the US from 1933 through the present. In service to the field, PREP and the Getty Research Institute are finalizing an online “PREP Resource for Nazi-Era Provenance Research in Germany and the U.S.,” and making it available to researchers and to the public.

During the week of the 6th Exchange, in the city that fostered the adoption of the 1998 Washington Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art, PREP participants will meet with archivists, curators, historians, researchers, collection managers, lawyers, and other experts at 12 museums, archives, and libraries in Washington, D.C. to hear presentations on the various institutional holdings and exchanges of information about research resources relevant to Nazi-era art looting. Meetings will take place at the Archives of American Art, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), National Gallery of Art, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Library of Congress, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, The Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, and The Phillips Collection.

The 6th Exchange also includes the colloquium, “PREP Talks: Interdisciplinary and Comparative Approaches and Case Studies on Provenance Research,” co-chaired by Jane Milosch of the Smithsonian and Christian Fuhrmeister of the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Munich. Seventy museum professionals and scholars will discuss joint research projects and exhibitions undertaken under PREP’s aegis, and to hear summations on comparative methodologies and new technologies for recording and sharing this research in Germany and the U.S.

Almost a year ago, the Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste hosted an international conference, “[20 Years of the Washington Principles: Roadmap to the Future](#),” in Berlin, and issued a [joint declaration](#) that

We note with satisfaction Germany’s funding and support of the German/American Provenance Research Exchange Program for Museum Professionals (PREP) for 2017-2019 to advance World War II-era provenance research in museums, archives, libraries, and research institutions in Germany and the United States, including the largest set of museums in the United States, the Smithsonian Institution.

In conjunction with this week-long program for specialists, the Smithsonian has organized two public programs in collaboration with the German Historical Institute Washington DC and the Goethe-Institut. Seating is limited, so RSVP is required. Both programs will be videotaped and posted online.

On Friday evening, October 25, PREP’s Public Program, “Nazi-Era Provenance Research: The Importance of Transnational Exchange,” will reflect on the historical development of Holocaust-era provenance research in Germany and the US over the past 20 years, highlighting hard-won accomplishments and persistent challenges. Speakers include, among others, **Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat, Expert Adviser to the Secretary of State for Holocaust Issues**, and **Simone Lässig, Director of the German Historical Institute, Washington, DC**. A panel, composed of six leaders from PREP’s institutional partners, will discuss PREP’s results, German and American approaches to this work, shared and online research resources, and the civic role museums play, as well as the impact of specific historical, political, and legal contexts on the work of World War II-era provenance research in museums.

On Saturday morning, October 26, in the PREP panel discussion, “Object Lessons: German and American Perspectives on Provenance Research of the Colonial and Nazi Eras,” experts from research institutions in the US, Germany, and Australia, including **Christine Kreamer, Deputy Director and Chief Curator, National Museum of African Art**, and **Hilke Thode-Arora, Curator for Oceania and Provenance Research Liaison Officer, Museum Fünf Kontinente (Five Continents Museum) Munich**, and **Bronwyn Campbell, Provenance Manager at the National Gallery of Australia**, will broaden the discussion of provenance to include the research of art and other cultural objects potentially misappropriated during the colonial era. They will consider how much the methodologies and challenges of museum professionals and researchers dealing with colonial and Nazi-era collections overlap, and the resulting insights that might be applied to advance scholarly discourse, public debates, and solutions regarding restitution of Nazi-era and colonial objects.

Learn more about [PREP and the PREP Public Programs](#), including a full list of speakers and their biographies and the [Panel Discussion](#)

BACKGROUND ON PREP

The German/American Provenance Research Exchange Program (PREP) brings together, for the first time, museum professionals from both sides of the Atlantic who specialize in World War II-era provenance projects for a three-year, systematic exchange that expands and elaborates on the methods and practices through which both countries have approached the issues pertaining to Holocaust-era art looting. PREP has widened the scope of WWII-era provenance research, which to date has prioritized painting, sculpture, and Judaica, by including Asian art, decorative arts, and works on paper.

PREP brings together researchers, curators, collections managers, archivists, lawyers, and IT specialists to establish a transatlantic network to accelerate research on WWII-era art loss. PREP introduces participants to resources and experts at institutions in both countries; provides a forum for professional growth and networking; facilitates collaborative research projects; and increases public awareness of the work of museum communities in both countries to widen access to provenance resources and results through the development of new technologies.

Major support for PREP comes from a German government grant funded by the [German Program for Transatlantic Encounters](#), with additional financial support from Germany’s Federal Commission for Culture and Media, the program’s seven PREP partners, and the Smithsonian Women’s Committee, and thanks to the generous support of: Norman and Suzanne Cohn, Howard and Roberta Ahmanson, James P. Hayes, Lois Jecklin, Jerry and Gwen Paulson, Ferdinand-Möller-Stiftung, Berlin, Eskin Family Foundation, Kathryn Hughes and John Christian, Brian Daggett and Franz Rabauer, Ruth Abrahams Design.

QUOTES BY PREP PARTICIPANTS available for interviews during the week of PREP-DC

Participation in the 2018 Provenance Research Exchange Program (PREP) was a high point of my career as an archivist and museum professional. It was a rare opportunity for me to interact intensively and purposefully with a research community committed to scholarship and knowledge-sharing that will advance the public trust mission of collecting institutions. I was inspired with new

ideas about how my institution can better support the work of the emerging international network of provenance experts.

James Moske, Head of Archives, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

In just five Exchanges so far, PREP has built a transatlantic network and a secure platform for sharing our resources and ongoing research—and we are discovering that we are researching, often unknowingly, the same/similar cases related to Nazi art looting. Through PREP I am in touch with researchers and archivists in the U.S. who helped me immediately with my research on complex case studies here in Dresden, and I am looking forward to helping the National Museum of American History with research on its Meissen collection when PREP comes to Washington, DC in October.

Barbara Bechter, Provenance Researcher, Dresden State Art Museums, Germany

In the two 2018 PREP Exchanges I was struck by the superb and innovative quality of the programs, which covered the most pertinent topics in the field from a variety of angles: digital resources for provenance research; state-of-the-art archiving; historical differences in provenance research in the US and Germany; legal differences; major collections and their approaches to provenance research in the United States and Germany; and strategies for increasing the visibility of this research—among many others. Both weeks very much felt as if I were immersed in a transatlantic think tank for provenance experts. All in all, the human factor and networking aspect among scholars and experts was the most precious resource we all gained, and I am tremendously grateful to PREP for having fostered such a community.

Iris Schmeisser, Head of Provenance Research and Archives, Städel Museum, Frankfurt

The [Smithsonian Institution](#) is the largest museum/research complex in the world. In order to aid in the identification and discovery of objects in its collections that may have been subject to questionable transfer of ownership or unlawful appropriation during the World War II Era, Smithsonian museums are working to identify all objects in their collections that were created before 1946, were acquired after 1932, that underwent a change of ownership during 1933-1945, and that were, or might have been, in continental Europe between those dates. The Smithsonian Institution is committed to making information on these objects available to the public, as for example, with its [Asian Arts Provenance Connections Project](#).

The [Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation/Berlin State Museums](#), with its museums, libraries, archives and research institutes, is one of the most important cultural institutions in the world. Its outstanding collections include all areas of worldwide cultural traditions: from archaeological and ethnological objects by way of the visual arts to literature and music. The combination of art and culture with science and research is an unmistakable hallmark of the foundation. The foundation supports in-depth scholarly and educational work, and the Central Archives of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (National Museums in Berlin) is a critical resource for provenance research.



Smithsonian Institution

