

News Release

Collections confiscated by the Nazis now at Hebrew University

New exhibition at Hebrew U. Stern Gallery: 'Auktion 392 – Reclaiming the Galerie Stern, Düsseldorf'

Jerusalem, May 26, 2008 – When Max Stern fled the Nazi threat in Europe, he didn't think he'd ever see his art collection he left behind again. Now, more than seventy years after his escape, the Stern gallery at the Hebrew University is exhibiting part of his collection.

Dr. Max Stern was born in 1904 in Munich-Gladbach, Germany. After studying art history in Germany and Austria, he obtained a doctorate from the University of Bonn aged 24. In 1934 he took over the Galerie Stern that he inherited after his father's death.

In 1935, Stern's license to trade as Galerie Stern Düsseldorf was withdrawn because he was Jewish. In September 1937, his last appeal was rejected and he was forced to sell his artworks. The sale was arranged by him through Lempertz auctioneers in Cologne. The auction was titled 'Auktion 392'.

After being forced to liquidate the gallery collection, stripped of his livelihood, he fled to Paris before joining his sister in London. But with the outbreak of war, he was interned as an 'enemy alien'. He was further interned in Canada, but after nearly two years of confinement he was hired by the Dominion Gallery in Montreal.

At the end of the war, Dr. Stern managed to retrieve some of his London holdings, as well as part of his private collection of art confiscated by the Nazis. In 1946, Max married Iris Westerberg, and the two soon became owners of the Dominion Gallery.

Now, after an exhibition at the Ben-Uri Gallery in London, his works that were confiscated by the Nazis will be shown in an exhibition at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in memory of the public auction in which Stern was forced to sell his assets.

"Showing this detailed, personal story in Jerusalem, inside the Hebrew University art gallery named for Dr. Max and Iris Stern, is a singularly important vindication of his life," says Ahuva Passow-Whitman, senior curator at the Hebrew University.

The exhibition "Auktion 392 – Reclaiming the Galerie Stern, Düsseldorf", will feature just some of the many works that were forcibly auctioned off in 1937. Conceived and curated by Dr. Catherine MacKenzie of Concordia University, the exhibition will open with the Hebrew University's Board of Governors events which are taking place ninety years after the laying of the cornerstone of the university and sixty years after the establishment of the State of Israel. The opening ceremony will take place at 9 a.m. on June 1 in the Stern Gallery, on Mt. Scopus.

For more information, or for press contact with students, faculty or spokespersons from HU, please speak in the first instance to Mikki Saperia, on +44 (0)20 7691 1479 or email mikki.saperia@bfhu.org.



About the Hebrew University

With 24,000 full-time students, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem is Israel's pre-eminent institute of higher education. Its faculty members pursue projects that are both essential to Israel's future and the benefit of humanity. It is a centre of international repute, with formal and informal ties extending to and from the worldwide scientific and academic community. Students come from all over Israel and across the Middle East to study in an atmosphere of academic and research excellence.

About the British Friends of the Hebrew University

Established in 1926, The British Friends of the Hebrew University is the oldest established Jewish charity in support of higher education. The charity works to promote and enhance the reputation of the Hebrew University, ensure that underprivileged students are given the opportunity to complete their studies, and help HU to maintain its standard of excellence and worldwide reputation for research.

BFHU acts as the UK's gateway to Hebrew University research, expertise and faculty, and provides financial and pastoral support for prospective and current students at HU, as well as supporting visiting and sabbatical Hebrew University lecturers during their time in the UK.