

PROVENANCE RESEARCH AND THE ART TRADE

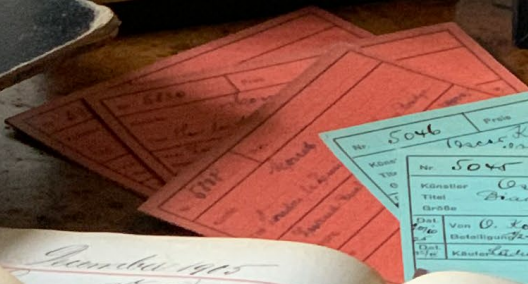
Ed. Peter Wehrle

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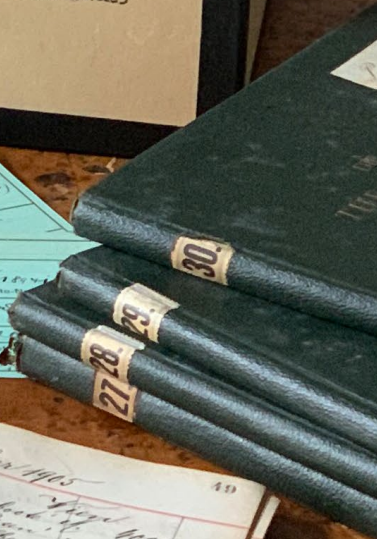
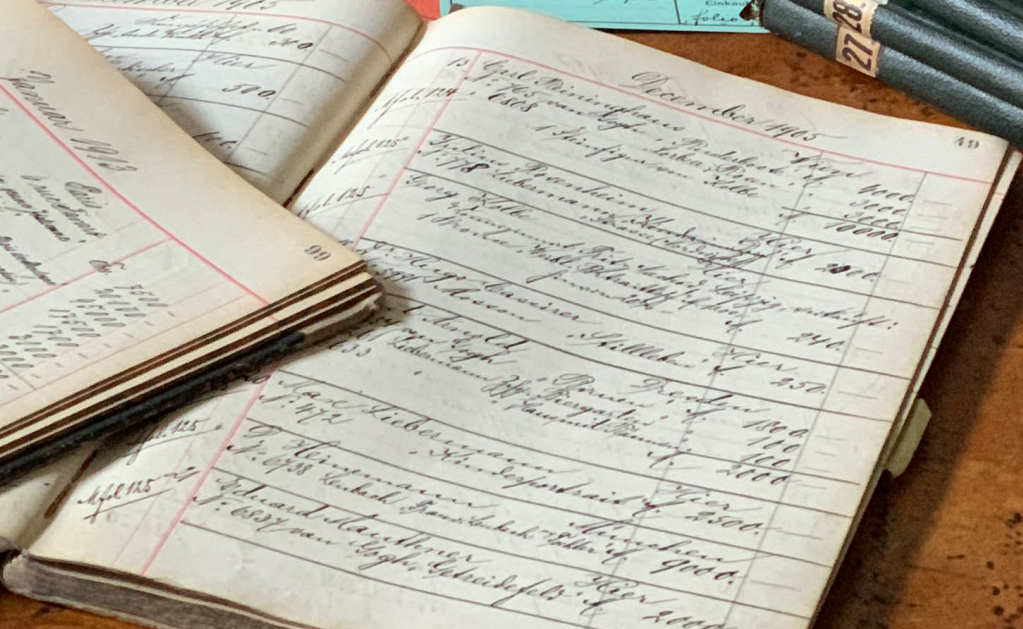
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Oscar Kokoschka (Oscar Kokoschka, Brunn, Wien 1895)			
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Künstler	Oscar Kokoschka	Preis	
Titel	Brunn, Wien (1895)	Photo	
Größe	10x15 cm		
Dot.	Von O. Kokoschka	Preis	100,-
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THE PAUL CASSIRER & WALTER FEILCHENFELDT ARCHIVE, ZURICH

The makings: Paul Cassirer, Berlin

Walter Feilchenfeldt (1894–1953) and Grete Ring (1887–1952) were partners of the Berlin Kunstsalon Paul Cassirer from 1924. The art dealer and publisher Paul Cassirer (1887–1926) had recruited them for his company in 1919: Grete Ring, the art historian with a Ph.D., was to assist him in all academic matters relating to the gallery business, while Walter Feilchenfeldt first took up a position in the associated publishing house before he also joined the art dealership in 1923. On January 7, 1926, Cassirer died as a result of a gunshot wound he had inflicted on himself in the divorce lawyer's office in context of his separation from the actress Tilla Durieux (1880–1971).

Paul and Bruno Cassirer (1872–1941) founded their art salon and the publishing house in 1898. The two cousins had the professed aim to present the art of French Impressionism to a wider audience in Berlin. As managing directors, they also had decisive influence on the founding process of the Berlin Secession, which was established the same year. As a consequence, many of the artists who showed their works in the Secession's shows also exhibited at the Cassirer gallery.

The six volumes published by Walter Feilchenfeldt and Bernhard Echte at Nimbus Verlag in Switzerland on Kunstsalon Cassirer between 2011 and 2016 provide information on these exhibitions. On the one hand, they illustrate Paul Cassirer's original mission to introduce Impressionism to Germany; on the other, they reflect the lively interaction between the Berlin Secession and his gallery.

In these six volumes, Echte systematically analyzed the information in the exhibition catalogs, which are still kept at the Paul Cassirer & Walter Feilchenfeldt Archive today, supplemented by entries in the account books and – where possible – enhanced with additional catalogs from other storage locations and with reviews found in the Berlin and sometimes Hamburg daily press. This meticulous work allowed for the identification and documentation of a considerable number of works exhibited in the gallery up to 1914 (*fig. 1*).¹

Fig. previous page: detail from fig. 6, p. 89.

Photo: © Petra Cordioli

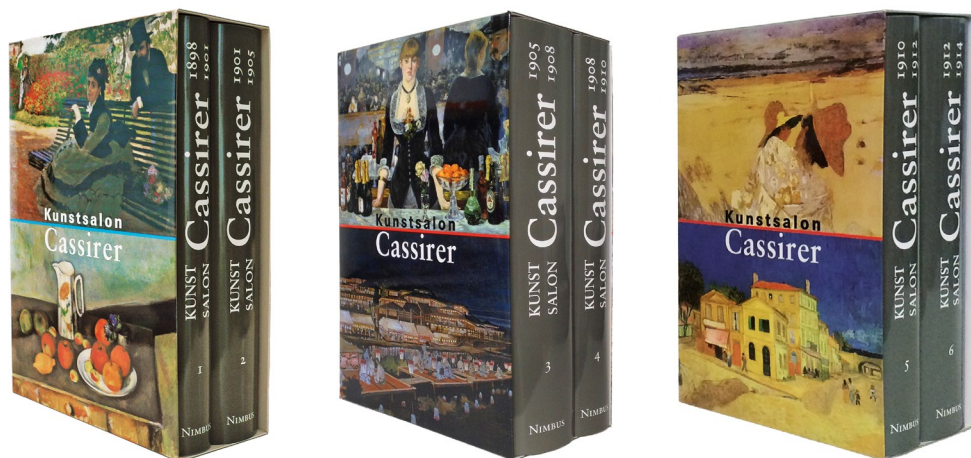


Fig. 1: Publication by Bernhard Echte and Walter Feilchenfeldt on the Kunst Salon Cassirer in a total of six volumes, published in Wädenswil 2011–2016.

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In 1901, disagreements between Paul and Bruno Cassirer led to the separation of the two cousins, both in terms of business and private affairs. They agreed to Paul taking over the art dealership while Bruno ran the publishing house. After a vesting period of seven years, Paul Cassirer founded a new publishing house. However, the Paul Cassirer & Walter Feilchenfeldt Archive in Zurich does not hold any records.

A case study on archival research: Max Liebermann

With over 2,500 references, Max Liebermann (1847–1935) is the artist with the most entries in the books of the Cassirer gallery. The entries in the purchase and sales books and on the index cards in the Paul Cassirer & Walter Feilchenfeldt Archive, illustrate the research potential for specific works (*fig. 2*).

On September 26, 1898, Liebermann wrote to his collector, the ophthalmologist Max Linde (1862–1940) in Lübeck: “Dass ich von Cassirer ‘gegründet’ bin, hat Ihnen Rosenhagen gewiss geschrieben.” (“Rosenhagen must have certainly informed you that I was ‘founded’ by Cassirer.”)² At this time, he had already become a celebrated artist and a member of the Preußische Akademie der Künste. Liebermann had excellent connections in Berlin society and was an ardent admirer of Edouard Manet. After all, it was partly due to him that the Cassirers took the risk of showing works of French Impressionism in Berlin against the art doctrine of Anton von Werner, who, as chairman of the Verein Berliner Künstler and the Berlin section of the Allgemeine Deutsche Kunstgenossenschaft, had great influence on the city’s art scene and enjoyed the support of Emperor Wilhelm II.

Nr.	Preis	
Künstler	Max Liebermann	
Titel	Mädchen mit Kuh	
Von Ad Rothemann	Datum 13. 12. 19	Preis 40000.-
Beteiligung		
Käufer	Datum 24. 10. 19	Preis 60000.-
	Einkauf	Verkauf
	fol. 29	fol. 49

Jah. 282.1000.

Fig. 2: Index card on Max Liebermann, Paul Cassirer Archiv, Zurich.

© Paul Cassirer & Walter Feilchenfeldt Archive, Zurich

A letter in the archive of Galerie Durand-Ruel in Paris documents the first contact between Paul and Bruno Cassirer and Paul Durand-Ruel (1831–1922) at Max Liebermann's initiative on October 9, 1898. The latter had seen some works by Edouard Manet during a visit to Durand-Ruel in Paris together with Hugo von Tschudi (1851–1911), director of the Nationalgalerie Berlin. In this letter, the Cassirers asked whether there was any chance for a cooperation. They would very much like to show Manet's art in Berlin and were also confident that they could sell some of the works.³

Not only this one letter, but also numerous other documents and transport lists in the archive of Galerie Durand-Ruel document the successful cooperation that Paul Cassirer maintained with his Parisian colleague until the beginning of World War I in 1914.⁴ With the help of the documents from Paris, information gaps can be closed today. For example, Claude Monet's *Soleil dans le brouillard* is noted on one of Durand-Ruel's transport lists with the inventory number 2265.⁵ The painting was sent to Berlin on January 3, 1899, where it was shown in a 'collective exhibition' together with other works by Monet, Manet and Giovanni Segantini at the Cassirer gallery from March 2 to April 6. It returned to Paris on April 25 where it was sold by Durand-Ruel (fig. 3).⁶ Max Liebermann contributed to the success of the exhibition by lending four works by Edouard Manet from his own collection.⁷

In the first exhibition at Kunstsalon Cassirer from November 1 to December 1, 1898, Liebermann himself had been represented with 55 works – along with 27 works by Edgar Degas and 26 bronzes by the Belgian artist Constantin Meunier.

There are no business records in the Paul Cassirer & Walter Feilchenfeldt Archive from before 1903, so that both purchases and sales can only be traced from this year onward. As can be seen on the website <https://www.walterfeilchenfeldt.ch/de>, three purchase



Fig. 3: Claude Monet (1840–1926), *Impression soleil levant*, 1872, oil on canvas, 48 x 63 cm, Paris, Musée Marmottan.

Image credits: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impression,_Sonnenaufgang#/media/Datei:Claude_Monet,_Impression,_soleil_levant.jpg (last accessed on September 29, 2023)

ledgers and two sales ledgers of the Cassirer Gallery survived the war – one sales ledger was lost in London during the bombings. The information on the index cards and in the account books was successively transferred to a database and provides an overview of purchases and sales, as well as information regarding the gallery's clients.

The earliest entry for a work by Max Liebermann in Cassirer's preserved business records is Cassirer's number 401: the painting *Bauer mit Kuh* was sold to Max Cassirer for 5,000 Reichsmark on November 16, 1903.⁸ Further information is provided by the Liebermann catalogue raisonné, which shows that there are gaps in the provenance of this painting. It exemplifies the difficulties involved in provenance research, especially when an artist produced different versions of the same motif.⁹ In the case of Kunstsalon Cassirer, the emigration of almost all of their predominantly Jewish clients makes it difficult to trace the works. Today the painting *Bauer mit Kuh* from Max Cassirer's former estate is considered lost.

The case of a work by Max Liebermann with the Cassirer gallery inventory number 424 is different. In the database, it is mentioned as *Die Bleiche* and is marked with an 'O', indicating an oil painting. The picture was sold to the Berlin collector Eduard Arnhold for 40,000 Reichsmark on February 20, 1905. In this case, the provenance of the painting has been clarified; it is part of the collection of the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne today.¹⁰

Auctions at Cassirer: 83 auction catalogs with records and annotations from 1916 to 1932

In addition to the account books and index cards, 83 auction catalogs from the years 1916 to 1932 form an essential part of the Paul Cassirer & Walter Feilchenfeldt Archive. These were recently digitized in the Heidelberg University Library and are now publicly accessible.¹¹ They are annotated copies of the gallery's employees, but it is the protocol catalogs that are particularly revealing, as they not only provide the estimates and hammer prices, but also the names of the buyers.

On May 22, 1916, the estate of the collector Julius Stern was sold in an auction at Paul Cassirer in collaboration with the Munich auctioneer Hugo Helbing (1863–1938).¹² In this auction catalog, each work featured was annotated by hand with the price by an employee of the gallery. The second auction catalog for the sale of the Dresden Schmeil Collection is marked as a copy of the general manager 'Dr. Wallerstein'. Not only did he write down the hammer price of each sold work next to the lot number, in many cases he also specified the buyer and his address, making a significant contribution to provenance research.¹³

In 1928, the collection of the entrepreneur and Old Master collector Oscar Huldshinsky (1846–1931) was put up for auction. The auction catalog anticipated the large and lavishly designed publications for today's evening sales and featured an etching by Max Liebermann with a portrait of the collector. The auction was an important event for Berlin society and was held in two parts in the ballroom of the Grand Hotel Esplanade on May 10 and 11, 1928. It attracted collectors from all over the world and confirmed the international status of Kunstsalon Cassirer.

The year 1933 – Emigration: Paul Cassirer, Amsterdam

In December 1932, Grete Ring and Alfred Flechtheim (1878–1937) organized the first of three highly acclaimed exhibitions entitled 'Lebendige deutsche Kunst' at the Cassirer gallery. The final instalment of the series was shown in Berlin in March 1933. At the same time, Flechtheim had planned a comprehensive auction of Old and New Masters under the direction of Hugo Helbing at Parkhotel Breidenbacher Hof in Düsseldorf on March 11. Prior to the auction, the works were shown in a preview exhibition at Galerie Paffrath from March 6 to 10. However, the auction had to be canceled due to massive disruptions by the SA, which led to Flechtheim's financial ruin and emigration.¹⁴ Walter Feilchenfeldt also decided to leave the country after this incident and continued to run the business from Amsterdam, while Grete Ring held the fort in Berlin until the firm's closure in Germany four years later.

From 1933, the center of all transactions of the Paul Cassirer art dealership was the Dutch branch N.V. Amsterdamsche Kunsthandel Paul Cassirer & Co. at Keizersgracht 109, which had been founded in 1923 for the sole purpose of tending to Franz Koenigs (1881–1941), German banker and collector of Old Master drawings, who had founded his banking house 'Rhodius Koenigs Handel Maatschappij' just a few doors down on Keizersgracht 117–121 in 1920. The German art historian Helmuth Lütjens (1893–1987) had been entrusted with the

management of the Dutch branch. He had joined the Berlin company as an employee in 1923 and moved to the Netherlands the same year in order to run the Amsterdam branch.

On June 3, 1935, Walter Feilchenfeldt received a Dutch residence permit. Just three months later, on August 20, Grete Ring converted the general partnership Paul Cassirer, Berlin into a sole proprietorship, which she managed until the business was liquidated on June 24, 1937. The art historian then emigrated to England, where she ran the Paul Cassirer Ltd. branch in London from 1938 until her death in 1952, first on Cleveland Row and later on South Street.

However, after the National Socialists had come into power in 1933, the art dealership's business transactions had long been shifted from Berlin to Amsterdam. The fact that Helmuth Lütjens had acquired Dutch citizenship in 1939 even before the war broke out, enabled him to continue the business affairs in the Netherlands during the war years. Feilchenfeldt spent these years in Switzerland with a so-called 'tolerated residence permit' excluding a work permit.

Fig. 4: Grete Ring, Helmuth Lütjens and Walter Feilchenfeldt on the crossing to Dover, 1935.

Image credits: Marianne Breslauer © Walter & Konrad Feilchenfeldt/ Courtesy Fotostiftung Schweiz





Abb. 5: Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), *Paysan assis*, um 1900, Aquarell auf Papier, 45,5 x 30,7 cm.

Image credits: Kunsthau Zurich, Prints and Drawings Collection, 1935



Fig. 6: Account books and index cards in the Paul Cassirer Archiv, Zurich.

Photo: © Petra Cordioli

In the 1930s, the residential and commercial building of the Cassirer gallery in Amsterdam became a temporary refuge for German emigrants. Among them were celebrities like the art historian Max J. Friedländer (1867–1958), who lived at Keizersgracht 109 for some time, as well as Max Beckmann (1884–1950) and his wife Mathilde, known as Quappi (1904–1986) in the winter of 1944/45. Above all, Walter Feilchenfeldt and Helmuth Lütjens ensured that the artworks of Paul Cassirer's customers in Berlin that had been exported from Germany, would be either delivered to their rightful owners living in emigration or sold on their behalf.

The stock-in-trade of the Paul Cassirer company in Amsterdam is documented on data sheets that are now part of the Paul Cassirer & Walter Feilchenfeldt Archive in Zurich. They cover incoming and outgoing artworks for the period between 1932 and 1965: from Jan van Amstel to Anders Zorn, works by artists from all periods, but mainly from the French 19th century, were stored, sold or dispatched to their owners in the premises on Keizersgracht 109 during the 1930s. The largest number of works by a single artist was by Paul Cézanne. Cassirer himself had collected the artist's work with great passion, and it was his daughter Suzanne Bernfeld-Cassirer (1896–1963) who gave twelve watercolors from her father's former collection to Walter Feilchenfeldt for sale in April 1935 in order to finance her emigration from France to the US (fig. 5).

Fearing attacks by the German occupying forces and out of concern for the safety of his collectors, Helmuth Lütjens burned the entire correspondence of the Berlin Kunstsalon in Holland during the first years of the war. Twenty-five photo albums from the years 1927 to 1935 were sent directly from Berlin to Amsterdam and later to Zurich. They document a large proportion of the artworks that passed through the hands of the owners of the Kunstsalon Cassirer and often contribute to clarifying difficult provenance issues.

The Walter Feilchenfeldt Archive, Zurich (1948 – 2011)

When the war broke out on September 1, 1939, Walter Feilchenfeldt was staying in Switzerland with his wife Marianne (1909–2001). He was granted a Swiss work permit in 1946 and opened his gallery at Freiestraße 116 in Zurich in 1948. The consignment of the drawing collection of Franz Joseph II, Prince of Liechtenstein, enabled him to resume business activities after the war and brought renowned collectors and museum curators to Zurich. The largest lot of 80 drawings was acquired by the Rijksprentenkabinet of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Between 1948 and 1949, the art dealer successfully sold 289 drawings from the prince's collection.

After Feilchenfeldt's death on December 9, 1953, his widow Marianne continued to run the business until 1966, when their son Walter (*1939) also joined the art dealership. He managed the company on his own after 1990 and transformed it into Walter Feilchenfeldt AG Kunstvermittlung und Kunstforschung (Art Education and Research) in 2011. The Walter Feilchenfeldt Archive contains account books, photographic material and correspondence from the business in Zurich and complements the information in the Paul Cassirer Archiv with documentation of the post-war years (*fig. 6*).

ANNOTATIONS

- 1 Echte, Bernhard/Feilchenfeldt, Walter (ed.): *Kunstsalon Cassirer*, 6 vols. (= Quellenstudien zur Kunst. Eine Schriftenreihe der International Music and Art Foundation, ed. by Walter Feilchenfeldt, vol. 4–10). Wädenswil 2011–2016.
- 2 Braun, Ernst (ed.): *Letters. Volume 2: 1896-1901* (= Schriftenreihe der Max Liebermann-Gesellschaft Berlin e. V., ed. by Martin Faass, vol. 2). Baden-Baden 2012, pp. 234f., letter no. 230. In the same letter, Liebermann expresses his enthusiasm for Edouard Manet: “But while you may have too many Manets, they are never enough.” (ibid., p. 235).
- 3 Copy of the letter in the possession of the Paul Cassirer & Walter Feilchenfeldt Archive.
- 4 We are grateful to Sylvie Durand-Ruel for her most helpful assistance; <http://www.durand-ruel.fr/> (last access on July 9, 2023).
- 5 Claude Monet, *Impression, Sunrise*, 1872, oil on canvas, 48 x 63 cm, Paris, Musée Marmottan.
- 6 Entry from the Durand-Ruel transport list, copy in the Paul Cassirer & Walter Feilchenfeldt Archive, Zurich.
- 7 Hedinger, Bärbel/Diers, Michael/Müller, Jürgen (eds.) with Hau, Steffen/Zielke, Susanne: *Max Liebermann. Die Kunstsammlung. Von Rembrandt bis Manet*. Munich 2013, p. 273, SL 109: Edouard Manet, *Frau im Garten*; p. 273f., SL 112: Edouard Manet, *Die Melone*; p. 274, SL 113: Edouard Manet, *Henri Rocheforts Flucht*; p. 274, SL 116: Edouard Manet, *Kristallvase mit Rosen, Tulpen und Flieder*. Ibid., p. 282, SL 176: Claude Monet, *Windmills near Zaandam* was also shown in this exhibition, but was only purchased by Liebermann later.
- 8 Eberle, Matthias: *Liebermann. Werkverzeichnis der Gemälde und Ölstudien. 1865–1899*, vol. I. Munich 1995, p. 460, no. 1897/2: *Bauer mit Kuh*, 1897, oil on canvas, 63 x 88 cm.
- 9 Eberle 1995 (see note 8), p. 460: “According to documents in the Stadtarchiv Berlin-Charlottenburg, a ‘Bauer mit Kuh’ was in the luggage of city councillor Max Cassirer when he left Germany in 1939. Other sources state that the painting was in the Galerie Durand-Ruel, Paris, in 1931. The two statements do not match, unless there is another version of which we know nothing. The Galerie Aktuaryus in Zurich also exhibited a painting with this title in 1933 (Max Liebermann, Sept. 1933, no. 8). Perhaps this was the study 1896/9.” (Translated for this article)
- 10 Eberle 1995 (see note 8), p. 241: 1883/1; ill. p. 243: *Die große Bleiche - Die Rasenbleiche*, 1883, oil on canvas, 109 x 173 cm.
- 11 <https://www.arthistoricum.net/themen/portale/german-sales/auktionskataloge/>: 89 entries are listed under ‘besitzende Einrichtung’, which can be accessed individually (last access on July 9, 2023).
- 12 Annotated catalog *Kunstsalon Paul Cassirer: Sammlung Julius Stern, Berlin: Versteigerung: 22. Mai 1916*, see DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.48614>.
- 13 Annotated catalog: *Sammlung Schmeil, Dresden: Versteigerung 17. Oktober 1916 in der Galerie Paul Cassirer, Berlin*, see DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.48615>.
- 14 Dascher, Ottfried: “*Es ist was Wahnsinniges mit der Kunst*”. *Alfred Flechtheim. Sammler, Kunsthändler, Verleger* (= Quellenstudien zur Kunst. Eine Schriftenreihe der International Music and Art Foundation, ed. by Walter Feilchenfeldt, vol. 6). Wädenswil 2011, p. 296.

PROVENANCE RESEARCH AND THE ART TRADE

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