

27 April 2006

# Feldmann Drawings Decision

The Trustees of the British Museum welcome the decision of the Spoliation Advisory Panel on the case of the four drawings in the British Museum from the collection of Dr Arthur Feldmann. Mr Peled, Dr Feldmann's heir, and the British Museum had jointly proposed to the Panel that Mr Peled should receive compensation for the loss of the drawings, and that the drawings should remain in the British Museum collection. The Panel has recommended that Mr Peled should receive an *ex gratia* payment from the government.

Mr Peled said "On behalf of Dr Feldmann's heirs, I would like to express our delight that these drawings are remaining in the British Museum. We are sure that this is what our grandfather would have wanted, for them to be available to the public and for future research. We also want to express our thanks to the British people for offering shelter to those fleeing from the Nazis. We owe our lives to them. I want to make it clear, since the summary of events in paragraphs 5 and 6 of the report does not, that we, the claimants, decided to pursue this claim on our own account because we felt strongly that the drawings ought to remain in the British Museum, whatever the British Courts or Parliament may decide about the powers of UK museums and galleries to return art looted by the Nazis."

The Old Master drawings were wrongfully seized by the Gestapo from the late Dr Feldmann on 15 March 1939. Three of the drawings entered the Museum's collection through a sale at Sotheby's in 1946, the St Dorothy was part of a substantial bequest to the Museum in 1949. The drawings are:

- (a) **Niccolò dell'Abbate**; *The Holy Family*; BM reg. no: 1946-11-16-1
- (b) **Nicholas Blakey**; *An Allegory on Poetic Inspiration with Mercury and Apollo*; BM reg. no: 1946-11-16-2
- (c) **Martin Johann Schmidt**; *Virgin and infant Christ, adored by St Elizabeth and the infant St John*; BM reg. no: 1946-11-16-3
- (d) **Follower of Martin Schongauer**; *St Dorothy with the Christ Child*; BM reg. no: 1949-4-11-98

## Notes to Editors:

- The Trustees of the British Museum recognised the moral claim of Dr Feldmann's heirs to the drawings, shortly after the first claim was made in 2002. They recognised the exceptional circumstances of the Holocaust in Europe between 1933 and 1945, and that objects stolen from their owners in this period have a unique status. Since 2002 the Trustees have sought to find ways of meeting the claim, through the High Court and the Spoliation Advisory Panel
- The *ex gratia* payment figure has been set by the Spoliation Advisory Panel as a result of independent advice commissioned by them. The panel's recommendation is that the Government should cover this cost as no legal liability or moral blame rests with the British Museum.

- The drawings are part of the British Museum's Prints and Drawings department. They are always available to view via the student's room. A display on the drawings is planned for later this year.
- For further information about the drawings, please see the British Museum website at <http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/pd/pdreww2.html>  
On the issue of WWII Provenance and spoliation research, see <http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/spoliation.html>