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A Long-Lost Klimt Drawing Just Turned Up in a Former Museum Secretary's Cupboard

The ex-museum employee described the artwork's location in her will.

Henri Neuendorf, February 13, 2018



Visitors of the Belvedere Museum look at Gustav Klimt's painting "Der Kuss" (The Kiss). Photo: Dieter Nagl/AFP/Getty Images.

A Gustav Klimt drawing that disappeared from an Austrian museum has turned up in the cupboard of a recently deceased former secretary of the institution. The woman, who reportedly took and hid the work years ago, left a will describing the drawing's location and asking for it to be returned upon her death.

The drawing, *Zwei Liegende* (*Two Reclining Figures*), was taken from the Lentos Museum in the city of Linz. It was one of four works by Klimt and fellow Austrian artist Egon Schiele that were subject to a drawn-out lawsuit between the city and the heirs of the artist and collector Olga Jäger. Jäger had loaned the four works to the museum in 1951.

Following her death in 2006, Jäger's heirs asked for the works to be returned, but they could not be found. Last year, the Austrian Supreme Court ruled the museum must pay a total of €8.2 million (\$10.1 million) in compensation for the loss, including €100,000 (\$124,000) for the Klimt drawing.



The Lentos Kunstmuseum. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Three works by Egon Schiele—an oil painting, a watercolor, and a drawing—are still missing. According to a spokesperson for the city of Linz, there are “no serious indications” that the works were in the possession of the former Lentos Museum secretary.

The German press agency DPA reported that the rediscovered drawing will be included in one of several dozen exhibitions dedicated to the centenary of the deaths of Klimt and Schiele, Austria's most famous artists.

The artwork will then be returned to Jäger's descendants on the condition that they pay back the €100,000 compensation they were awarded for the lost work.

Meanwhile, Austrian police say they will resume the investigation into the three missing Schiele works. A police spokesperson told the Austrian press agency APA, “Whoever may be in possession of a lost artwork should ask themselves if they are handling stolen goods, and do the reasonable thing and come forward.”

