

DER STANDARD

Restitution case

**Chicago Art Institute must return Schiele painting – and plans to fight the decision
“Russian Prisoner of War” was confiscated in 2023 and, according to a New York court, must be returned to the heirs of Fritz Grünbaum.**

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According to the court, the drawing “Russian Prisoner of War” from 1916 must be returned to the heirs of collector Fritz Grünbaum.

Chicago/Vienna – Egon Schiele's Russian Prisoner had been in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago since 1966. The drawing, which dates from 1916, was originally owned by the Jewish-Austrian collector Fritz Grünbaum and must now be returned to his heirs, according to a ruling by a court in New York. The work, which was confiscated in 2023, was stolen during the Nazi era, according to the judges.

The Art Institute of Chicago has now taken a combative stance toward the magazine Artnews, which first reported on the case. “We are disappointed by the decision,” the museum said. It will attempt to appeal the ruling.

Auction of returned works

The collection of actor and art collector Fritz Grünbaum, who died in Dachau concentration camp in 1941, once comprised around 400 works, mainly Austrian modern art. Around 80 works by Schiele alone are said to have been among them. In the 1950s, works from Grünbaum's collection were sold to museums and private collectors, including the Art Institute of Chicago. Schiele's drawing Russian Prisoner of War was officially confiscated in 2023.

The Grünbaum heirs have been seeking recognition of the works as looted art for decades, with some success in US

courts in recent years. In December 2022, they filed lawsuits against several institutions and US private collections, which subsequently returned some of the works that had been auctioned off in the meantime.

The Albertina and the Leopold Museum in Vienna hold a total of twelve Schiele works from the Fritz Grünbaum collection. According to Austrian provenance research, this is not a case for restitution, as the collection remained within the family's sphere of control. (APA, red, April 28, 2025)