

City of Oslo – Munch Museum

*Provenance Research Report:
Edvard Munch, 'History', 1914,
Rolf E. Stenersen's Donation to
the City of Oslo (Stenersen
Collection) RES.A.315*

Oslo, 20 February 2026

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1 Edvard Munch, *History*, 1914 (Stenersen Collection RES.A.315)

1.1 Provenance timeline

The provenance of Edvard Munch's painting *History* (Munch Museum, Stenersen Collection RES.A.315), as published in Gerd Woll's catalogue raisonné of Munch's paintings, Woll M 1099, reads as follows:

Martin Flersheim, Frankfurt a. M. (– 1927 –); City Auksjon (1939); Blomqvist Kunsthandel (1939); Rolf E. Stenersen (1939–); Akersamlingen/Rolf E. Stenersens gave til Oslo by (–1994); Stenersenmuseet (1994–)

The painting was on long term loan to Sogn Student Village in Oslo between 1952-1973.¹

After more than one year of research, the Munch Museum has managed to unearth new knowledge regarding the provenance of *History*, and about the contexts and circumstances surrounding the transfer of ownership. Consequently, the report is laid out in an amended provenance timeline as follows:

1. Edvard Munch (1914—prior to May 1917)
2. Martin and Florence Flersheim, Frankfurt am Main (prior to May 1917—1935)
3. Florence Flersheim, acquired by inheritance (1935—1939)
4. City Auksjon (19 January 1939)
5. Blomqvist Kunsthandel (9 March 1939)
6. Rolf E. Stenersen (prior to 1946—most probably 1952)
7. City of Oslo, as a later addition to Rolf E. Stenersen's 1936 donation to Aker municipality² (most probably 1952—today)

For an extended timeline, which includes not only the provenance information but also the key movements of both the artwork and the members of the Flersheim family, see Summary Chapter 1.2.

¹ Gerd Woll, *Edvard Munch: Complete Paintings, Vols 1-4*, 2009, nr. 1099, in the following referred to as Woll M.

² Aker municipality was formally merged into the City of Oslo in 1948.

1.1.1 Edvard Munch (1914—prior to May 1917)

Edvard Munch's painting *History* is signed and dated 1914 by the artist.

In 1914, Munch was still busy with a large project for the decoration of the ceremonial hall (Aula) at the Royal Frederick University / University of Christiania (today Oslo). Munch's envisaged contribution was not a straightforward commission, but subject to a controversial competition which ended with a donation to the university, paid for by his supporters.³ The painting *History* from 1914 is a small-scale version of one of the final monumental works for the Aula decorations, which – like small-scale version of the other Aula paintings – was essentially employed by Munch to promote the main decorative scheme.

On Friday 2 January 1914, an exhibition dedicated to Munch's art opened at the Frankfurter Kunstverein, presenting amongst other works the Aula project.⁴ It is not certain whether the Flersheims' version of *History* was included in this exhibition. A German review from 5 January 1914 comments that the best work was the giant shore-landscape with two figures which, however, would probably benefit from a smaller format.⁵ This comment combined with a much later statement in the daily newspaper *Aftenposten* on 14 January 1939, claiming that *History* had been a commissioned work,⁶ opens for the theory that the Flersheims' version of *History* may indeed have been a commissioned work, prompted by the exhibition in Frankfurt, and possibly executed by Munch while he was in the city in January 1914.

In February 1914, an article in the daily newspaper *Dagbladet* reports on the popularity of the Aula project in Germany. This claim is supported by the fact that in Frankfurt, where the Munch exhibition with the Aula paintings had just been shown, a smaller version of *History* had been sold to 'a museum'.⁷ At the time, Martin Flersheim

³ Petra Pettersen, 'Munch's Aula Decoration', in Woll 2009, Vol. III, pp. 829-851.

⁴ *Frankfurter Nachrichten und Intelligenz-Blatt*, 1.1.1914, p. 2.

⁵ Referring to a large version of *History*, 230 x 605 cm, Munch Museum MM.M.966.

⁶ The newspaper article states that *History* had been commissioned by a great collector of Munch prints, whose collection had been sold at the Hotel Bristol in Oslo the previous year. This statement refers to the September 1938 auction held by City Auksjon (Eivind Rølles), where the collection of Martha and Paul Rauert (Hamburg) was sold, apparently with the involvement of a Norwegian bank. We do not know whether the Rauerts had also collected or commissioned Munch paintings. It seems that facts of different auctions have been confused here. *Aftenposten* 14.1.1939. This article will be discussed further in the context of the 1939 City Auksjon.

⁷ *Dagbladet* 23.2.1914.

was a (founding) member of the board of the Städel Museum's association and a member of the Frankfurter Kunstverein, and it is quite possible that the newspaper reporter mistook Flersheim's possible purchase as made on behalf of an institution.⁸ Alternatively, it is also possible that the reporter considered Flersheim's private art collection a (private) museum, which would correspond with Flersheim's own ambitions, see Chapter 1.1.2.2.

There is an early photograph of *History* in the Munch Museum archives, taken by P. Körbitz, Frankfurt am Main.⁹ The undated photograph carries two stamps; the relief stamp on the recto is executed in Art Nouveau style lettering, indicating early 20th century production. If the date can be confirmed as approx. 1914, the sheer existence of this photograph could support the theory that a) the painting had been in Frankfurt, and b) that Munch may have parted with it then and there, obtaining a locally taken photograph as a form of record.

Munch had undoubtedly parted with the work by May 1917, when Martin Flersheim's ownership can first be documented, see the following paragraph.

1.1.2 Martin and Florence Flersheim, Frankfurt am Main (prior to May 1917—1935)

1.1.2.1 Biographical information

Martin Louis Flersheim (18.4.1856—7.12.1935) was born in Frankfurt into a wealthy merchant family. Together with his brother Ernst, he ran the trading company Flersheim-Hess, founded by his father. Amongst other things, the company imported luxury raw materials to Germany, mainly ivory, mother-of-pearl and reed. The importation was mainly conducted via the Netherlands.¹⁰

Florence Mary Flersheim, née Livingston (24.12.1864—4.3.1950), was born in San Francisco (USA) as the daughter of Loeb Livingston. Only one generation earlier, her father had emigrated as a young man from the Taunus area near Frankfurt (Germany) to

⁸ The details of the early provenance are not relevant for the purpose of this report. Therefore, no further research has been undertaken into the Frankfurter Kunstverein and the Städel Museum's association.

⁹ Munch Museum MM.B.05000. P Körbitz may be identical to Paul Körbitz, owner of the Hansa Atelier, Hansa-Haus, Stiftstrasse 9, Frankfurt am Main.

¹⁰ Harald Jenner, *Die Familie Livingston und das Nellinistift*, Frankfurt am Main, 2015, p. 145.

the USA, where he and his siblings became exceedingly wealthy during the Gold Rush and afterwards. As a child, Florence Livingston repatriated with her family to Frankfurt am Main, where she married Martin Flersheim in 1887. Through dowry and later inheritance, she apparently contributed substantially to the wealth of the Flersheim family and to the family business.¹¹

Florence and Martin Flersheim had two sons, who also lived and worked in Frankfurt am Main: Herbert Ludwig Sidney (4.11.1887—3.10.1954) and Friedrich (Fritz) Georg (7.8.1892—1.4.1977).¹² The Flersheims' home was in the Westend district of Frankfurt am Main, at Mendelssohnstraße 78.¹³

The villa, originally built around 1888,¹⁴ was destroyed during WWII and since then replaced twice by modern buildings. Only one historical interior photograph has been identified, featuring the villa's art gallery in 1909.¹⁵

There seem to be hardly any photographs of the family in the archives or in the public domain. However, the family was portrayed by their artist friend Jakob Nussbaum in 1904.¹⁶ A farewell album for Nussbaum from 1933 includes two photographs of Fritz and Herbert respectively.¹⁷

The Flersheims seem to have been an integral part of the Frankfurt society, who – amongst other things – supported local art museums.¹⁸ For example, as mentioned above, Martin Flersheim was a (founding) board member of the Städel Museum association, and the couple seem to have donated repeatedly to the museum's collection.¹⁹ The Städel was appreciative, and when Martin Flersheim turned 70 in 1926,

¹¹ Jenner, pp. 145, 147.

¹² A family tree can be found in Walter Albert Eberstadt, *Whence We Came, Where We Went: From the Rhine to the Main to the Elbe, from the Thames to the Hudson*, New York, 2002, Introduction, unpag.

¹³ In the 1926 Frankfurt telephone directory, Martin Flersheim was registered as a merchant (Kaufmann), living at Mendelssohnstr. 78, phone no. Maingau 77918. Illustrated in Jenner, p. 152.

¹⁴ Plans of the building from 1888 describe the villa as newly built (Neubau), then owned by L. Steindecker. Institut für Stadtgeschichte Frankfurt am Main (in the following referred to as ISG FFM), A.63.04, 15809.

¹⁵ 'Aus Frankfurter Privatsammlungen' in *Die Woche*, 1909, p. 507, see

<https://archiv.staedelmuseum.de/archiv/julia-virginia-aus-frankfurter-privatkunstsammlungen-in-die-woche-20-maerz-1909> [accessed 21.11.2025].

¹⁶ Jakob Nussbaum, *The Family Flersheim*, 1904, Historisches Museum Frankfurt am Main, Inv.-No. B.1973.06 (acquired in 1973 from Bernhard Nussbaum, son of Jakob Nussbaum). The Flersheims owned several works by Nussbaum, also portraits, but apparently not this work.

¹⁷ Farewell Album for Jacob Nussbaum, 1933, Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt am Main.

¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Flersheim [accessed 14.11.2025].

¹⁹ The couple donated to the Städel *Der Einsiedler vor der Klause* by Spitzweg in 1900 and *Der Geiger am Fenster* by Scholderer in 1921. <https://frankfurter-personenlexikon.de/node/2189> [accessed 14.11.2025].

the museum initiated that he was officially honoured by the city of Frankfurt.²⁰ In addition, the local newspaper warmly congratulated him in a longer note.²¹

Martin and Florence Flersheim collected art, as did Martin's brother and sister-in-law Ernst and Gertrud Flersheim, who lived nearby.

1.1.2.2 Martin and Florence Flersheim's Art Collection

Martin and Florence Flersheim seem to have started collecting modern art in the 1890s. A magazine article from 1909 describes the collection as follows:

'Mr. Martin Flersheim pays homage solely to the most advanced, to the Secession itself, and this he has done these fifteen past years, when as yet the Secessionists found but few admirers. In his gallery of paintings (cf. Plate p. 507) the eye is at once arrested by three large figure-pieces by Zuloaga: a street-scene, two dancers, and that piquant canvas of three fair beauties. Uhde, too, is worthily represented with a considerable figure-piece entitled *Model's Repose*. Count Kalkreuth contributes his well-known *Costume Rehearsal*; Böcklin, with a boldly coloured *Battle of the Cimbri*; and Monet, with a distinguished work from his series of haystacks. Zügel's cattle, a radiant Engadine landscape by Segantini, a harmonious work by Dill from his Dachau period, an Exter Madonna, a Trübner, and a Thoma are not wanting in this gallery of the ultra-modern, nor are the Frankfurters Boehle and Nußbaum. By Stuck one beholds the celebrated *Swing of Love*, together with several of his bronzes and the two portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Martin Flersheim, the perceptive proprietors of this collection.'²²

²⁰ ISG FFM, A.02.01, S-2739-2.

²¹ *Frankfurter Nachrichten*, 17.4.1926 (morning issue), also as cut-out in ISG FFM, A.02.01, S-2739-2.

²² Translated by CoPilot AI. Original German text: 'Nur den Allermodernsten, der Sezession, huldigt Herr Martin Flersheim, und dies bereits seit 15 Jahren, als noch die Sezessionisten wenig Liebhaber fanden. In seinem Gemäldesaal (Abb. S. 507) fallen vor allem drei große Figurenbilder von Zuloaga ins Auge: eine Straßenszene, zwei Tänzerinnen und das prickelnde Bild dreier Schönen. Uhde ist ebenfalls mit einem großen Figurenbild *Modellpause* gut vertreten. Graf Kalkreuth mit seiner bekannten *Kostümprobe*, Böcklin durch eine farbenkühne *Zimbernschlacht* und Monet durch ein hervorragendes Bild aus der Serie seiner Heuschuber; Zügelsche Kühe, eine leuchtende Engadinlandschaft von Segantini, ein toniger Dill aus seiner Dachauer Zeit, eine Extersche Madonna, ein Trübner, ein Thoma fehlen nicht in dieser hochmodernen Galerie, ebensowenig die Frankfurter Boehle und Nußbaum. Von Stuck sieht man die bekannte *Liebesschaukel*, einige seiner Bronzen und die beiden Porträte von Herrn und Frau Martin Flersheim, den verständnisvollen Besitzern dieser Galerie.' Article 'Aus Frankfurter Privatsammlungen' in *Die Woche*, 1909, p. 510, see <https://archiv.staedelmuseum.de/archiv/julia-virginia-aus-frankfurter-privatkunstsammlungen-in-die-woche-20-maerz-1909> [accessed 21.11.2025].

The same article features the aforementioned interior photograph, showing the villa's art gallery.²³

Martin and Florence Flersheim had their collection registered in the form of a printed catalogue around 1910, too early for Munch's painting *History* to be included. Original copies of this private catalogue are extremely rare: only one copy could be located, at the Hessische Hauptstaatsarchiv in Wiesbaden. This copy was used to support a reparations case against the German state in 1954, submitted by attorney Georg Kappus in the name of Fritz Flersheim, son of Martin and Florence Flersheim.²⁴

Both Martin Flersheim and his brother Ernst Flersheim had their respective 'modern paintings collections' registered in an international directory of art dealers and art collectors in 1914.²⁵

We do not know how and where Martin and Florence Flersheim used to acquire art, but it seems that they bought repeatedly at the local Kunstverein.

We do not know when, where and at what price the couple acquired Edvard Munch's *History*. However, we can establish that the work must have been acquired before May 1917. At this point it was exhibited at the Kunstverein Frankfurt, listed as no. 71 in the exhibition catalogue under the title 'Landscape – design for a fresco in the University of Christiania', in the ownership of Martin Flersheim.²⁶

²³ 'Aus Frankfurter Privatsammlungen' in *Die Woche*, 1909, p. 507, see <https://archiv.staedelmuseum.de/archiv/julia-virginia-aus-frankfurter-privatkunstsammlungen-in-die-woche-20-maerz-1909> [accessed 21.11.2025].

²⁴ Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Wiesbaden (in the following referred to as HHStAW) Z 460 Nr Wik F 5910. The Kunstbibliothek Berlin holds a photocopy of the catalogue; it is unclear whether this was taken from the copy in Wiesbaden.

²⁵ Joseph Zenker, *Pantheon: Adressbuch der Kunst- und Antiquitäten-Sammler und -Händler, Bibliotheken, Archive, Museen, Kunst-, Altertums- und Geschichtsvereine, Bücherliebhaber, Numismatiker; ein Handbuch für das Sammelwesen der ganzen Welt*, Eblingen a. N., 1914. See <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/zenker1914/0156/image.info> [accessed 14.11.2025].

²⁶ Exhibition history: 1917, Frankfurt, Kunst-Verein, no. 71: 'Landschaft, Entwurf zum Fresko in der Universität Christiania'. The exhibition also included two prints by Munch, owned by Ernst Flersheim. *Die Neue Kunst ausgewählt vorwiegend aus Frankfurter Privatbesitz*, exhibition catalogue of Vereinigung für Neue Kunst im Frankfurter Kunst-Verein, Junghofstr. 8, 23.5.-15.6.1917. See digital copy at Getty Research Institute https://primo.getty.edu/permalink/f/19q6gmb/GETTY_ALMA21135644750001551 [accessed 22.11.2025].

In 1922, *History* was included in a travelling exhibition in Switzerland (Zurich, Bern, Basel).²⁷ However, since a confirmation of Flersheim's ownership in 1922 is not relevant for the purpose of this report, we have refrained from researching this aspect further.

In 1927, *History* was included in an exhibition at Berlin's Nationalgalerie.²⁸ Flersheim's ownership was published in the catalogue, and various documents in the Berlin archive show that the work was to be returned to Flersheim after the exhibition and not sent to the next venue at the National Gallery in Oslo.²⁹

The Munch Museum has found no evidence that Martin and Florence Flersheim tried to sell the Munch painting during this period. Generally, it appears that the Flersheims sold from their collection only sporadically prior to the Nazi period. The copy of the aforementioned catalogue of the collection includes handwritten notes next to some of the entries, revealing the sale of single works, for example a work by Tina Blau in 1926 (cat. no. 3), as well as single donations, for instance an Otto Scholderer painting to the Städel in 1912 (cat. no. 36) and a Vincent van Gogh drawing to the Nationalgalerie in Berlin in 1929 (cat. no.16).³⁰ However, according to the abovementioned article in the periodical *Die Woche* in 1909, Martin and Florence Flersheim seem to have owned a version of Monet's 'Haystack' motif in 1909. The Flersheim collection catalogue features no artworks by Monet, which may suggest that the author of the article was simply mistaken, or, if correct, that the work may have been sold in the period 1909-1915.³¹

²⁷ Exhibition history: 1922 Zürich, Kunsthaus Zürich, no. 49: draft for *History (Geschichte)*; 1922 Bern, Kunsthalle Bern, no. 44, draft for *History (Geschichte)*; 1922 Basel, Kunsthalle Basel, no. 42 draft for *History (Geschichte)*.

²⁸ Exhibition history: 1927, Berlin, Nationalgalerie, no. 143: *History (Geschichte)*.

²⁹ Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Zentralarchiv, Nationalgalerie, Band 59, *Munch Ausstellung 1927*, folios 83, 102 and 104.

³⁰ See https://recherche.smb.museum/detail/800368/stra%C3%9Fenarbeiter-bei-der-aushebung-eines-treppenschachtes?language=de&question=van+Gogh+Flersheim&limit=15&sort=relevance&controls=none&collectionKey=KK*&objIdx=1 [accessed 19.11.2025].

³¹ 'Aus Frankfurter Privatsammlungen' in *Die Woche*, 1909, p. 510, see <https://archiv.staedelmuseum.de/archiv/julia-virginia-aus-frankfurter-privatkunstsammlungen-in-die-woche-20-maerz-1909> [accessed 21.11.2025].

1.1.3 Florence Flersheim (1935–1939)

After Martin Flersheim's natural death on 7 December 1935, the core family consisted of his widow Florence Flersheim (sole primary heir) and the two sons Herbert and Friedrich (Fritz) Flersheim. According to the 1926 local telephone directory, Friedrich Flersheim was registered as a director and banker, living at Arndtstrasse 33 (Phone no. Maingau 77395) and Herbert Flersheim as a merchant (Kaufmann), living at Feuerbachstrasse 47 (Phone no. Maingau 71606).³²

1.1.3.1 The Flersheims' last years in Frankfurt

In the years between Hitler's empowerment in January 1933 and the outbreak of WWII in September 1939, more than 400 decrees and regulations directed against German Jews were issued.³³ In 1933-1934 the focus was on limiting Jewish participation in public life, and the first major law was issued on 7 April 1933, the 'Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service'. Without knowing any exact details, one can safely assume that the Flersheim family, like all Jews in Germany, must have been acutely aware of the changes.

For example, almost immediately after the introduction of the 'Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service', the Flersheim families' aforementioned artist friend Jakob Nussbaum, who had been a professor at the Städelschule art school and held a master's studio at the Liebieghaus, was dismissed from his posts on 15 April 1933. Nussbaum subsequently emigrated to the British Mandate of Palestine in October 1933.³⁴ Before departing, he received a farewell album with contributions by more than 60 of his friends in Frankfurt, amongst others Florence and Martin Flersheim, Fritz Flersheim (with photograph), Herbert Flersheim (with photograph) and Ernst and Gertrud Flersheim.³⁵

In the following years, the Flersheim families would have felt the increasing discrimination in Germany, prompted by the Nuremberg laws (September 1935) and the

³² Frankfurt telephone directory, illustrated in Jenner, p.152.

³³ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/anti-jewish-legislation-in-prewar-germany> [accessed 10.11.2025].

³⁴ For more information on Nussbaum, see <https://www.juedischesmuseum.de/en/collection/fine-arts/detail/jakob-nussbaum-impressionist0/> [accessed 27.11.2025].

³⁵ Farewell album to Jacob Nussbaum, 1933, Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt am Main.

harsh ‘voluntary’ Aryanisation efforts, all of which were directed at depriving the German Jews of their civilian, political and economic rights. All members of the Flersheim family had fled from Germany before the November pogroms (Kristallnacht 9.—10.11.1938), which mark the beginnings of forced Aryanisation and transfer of all Jewish-owned businesses to non-Jews.

We do not know exactly when the Flersheims decided to emigrate, but their plans seem to have been hastened when their well-established family business Flersheim-Hess was (falsely) denounced to the Gestapo by an employee in 1935.³⁶ At the time the business was run by Herbert Flersheim and his uncle Ernst Flersheim.³⁷ Herbert and Ernst Flersheim were also the first members of the family to flee to the Netherlands: Herbert in autumn 1935 and Ernst in 1936. Fritz Flersheim followed in March 1937 and Florence Flersheim in mid-1938.

We know very little about the circumstances under which the Flersheims spent their last years in Germany. According to a self-declaration by Fritz Flersheim dated 15 February 1954, he had become a partner of the Bank J Dreyfus & Co in 1919 (located in Frankfurt am Main, with a branch in Berlin). The business was closed in March 1937 due to the anti-Jewish laws, and Fritz Flersheim resigned from his post and emigrated from Germany. After having received the required permission (Unbedenklichkeitsbescheinigung), the contents of his seven-room apartment in Frankfurt were shipped to Amsterdam.³⁸ In an emotional letter to the City of Frankfurt, sent from Amsterdam in June 1937, Fritz Flersheim formally revoked his membership on the board of the foundation Königswarter’sche Stiftung, thus breaking his last formal tie with his hometown.³⁹

We do not know exactly when Florence Flersheim followed her sons to Amsterdam. Officially, her residency in Frankfurt ended on 29 June 1938. However, according to correspondence between German tax offices on 23 May 1938, Florence Flersheim, who had been outside Germany since March 1938, was already in

³⁶ Ernst Flersheim’s dictated memoirs in German, 1939, pp. 17-18, in Leon Baeck Institute Archive and ISG FFM, S2, 932 (in German). An English translation is included in Eberstadt.

³⁷ From 1892, the family business had been run by the brothers Martin and Ernst Flersheim. Before WWI, they were joined by their respective sons Herbert and Hans. Hans died in 1933 and Martin Flersheim in 1935. Eberstadt, p. 25.

³⁸ HHSTaW 518, 11268, folio 3.

³⁹ ISG FFM, S2, 4293.

Amsterdam.⁴⁰ According to Florence Flersheim's housekeeper and secretary Lona Maurer (later Diehl, employed in the period 1931-1939), Florence Flersheim went to Switzerland before she later moved to Amsterdam, see Chapter 5.10 (Appendix 2).⁴¹

In Florence Flersheim's absence, her affairs, which included arranging for her formal emigration, were taken care of by both Maurer and the family solicitor Dr Mertens. Maurer acted practically as an asset manager (Vermögensverwalterin) and, amongst other things, communicated with the bank and the foreign exchange office (Devisenstelle) regarding the payment of staff and other household costs.⁴²

Even though the dispersal of Florence Flersheim's possessions in Germany was not mapped systematically, one can safely assume that the last formal acts in Germany were prompted by the general political situation and official requirements, for example, payment of a 'flight tax' (Reichsfluchtsteuer) for being permitted official emigration. The surviving claims files contain numerous documents and detailed lists that help to illustrate the complexity and severity of the situation, for instance:

- In 1938, the family business Flersheim-Hess was 'Aryanised' and sold, and later confiscated.⁴³
- Florence Flersheim's bank account at B. Metzler Seel. Sohn & Co. had status as a blocked account for emigrants (Auswanderer Sperrkonto), at least from 27 May 1938.⁴⁴
- Large parts of Florence Flersheim's assets, household objects (including artworks) were sold or auctioned in Frankfurt. There are at least three lists of estimates which indicate auctions,⁴⁵ including one held at the Flersheim villa on 5 July 1938.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Letter from Zollfahndungsstelle to Devisenstelle, Frankfurt am Main, 23.5.1938. HHStAW 519/3 9225, folio 1.

⁴¹ Lona Diehl's self-declaration, dated 24.6.1953. HHStAW Z 460 Nr Wik F 5910, folio 70.

⁴² HHStAW 519/3, 9225, folios 19, 83.

⁴³ Eberstadt, p.25.

⁴⁴ HHStAW 519/3, 9225, folio 87.

⁴⁵ Lorna Maurer also organised an evaluation of both Florence Flersheim's silverware and jewellery items by the jewellers Otto Bräutigam, Goetheplatz 14, Frankfurt. The evaluations are dated 9.7. and 11.7.1938 respectively. There is also a list of items which were evaluated by the auction house Hahn, Kaiserstrasse 6, Frankfurt, dated 6.7.1938. The latter includes a few artworks. HHStAW 518 11267, folio 12-14, 15, 18-20, see also folio 39-41.

⁴⁶ HHStAW 518, 11267, folio 42-46.

- The Flersheim villa at Mendelssohnstrasse 78 was officially sold to the German Red Cross (DRK) on 1 December 1938 (for RM 32.000). By 15 March 1939, when the German Red Cross tried to further reduce the price, the amount had still not been paid.⁴⁷
- In 1938, there had been negotiations between the police department and representatives of the City art gallery (Städel), defining which artworks would not be permitted to leave the country due to their national importance.⁴⁸ The artworks were apparently sold and the money used to cover the flight tax.⁴⁹ As the post-war claims by the family illustrate, a total of 23 artworks from the Flersheim collection were deemed as nationally important and thus refused export. After the war, the selection was justified as an attempt to appease the local authorities, thus ensuring that the works of high international market value, such as the ‘Munch collection’, were permitted exportation. After the war, these artworks became subject to various restitution/indemnity claims. In 1948, the city of Frankfurt made a deal with Florence Flersheim regarding seven of these paintings, which included the return to her of one Böcklin painting.⁵⁰ Other cases were addressed and resolved more recently.⁵¹

Eventually, on 15 July 1938 the family’s solicitor Dr Fritz Mertens applied for permission to move Florence Flersheim’s household goods from Germany, stating that she had ended her residency in Frankfurt am Main on 29 June 1938 and that the flight tax (Reichsfluchtsteuer) of RM 164.000 had been paid. The application confirms that the art collection had been checked for artworks of national importance. Attached to the application by Dr Mertens is a detailed list of all household items, including Munch’s painting *History* (listed as ‘Historia’).⁵²

⁴⁷ ISG Frankfurt am Main, A.62.02, Nr 488 (Joseph Haydn Str 78).

⁴⁸ Letter from Dr Mertens to Devisenstelle Frankfurt/Main, 15.7.1938. HHStAW 519/3, 9225.

⁴⁹ Letter from Dr Mertens to Devisenstelle Frankfurt am Main, 21.6.1938. HHStAW 519/3, 9225, folio 13.

⁵⁰ ISG FFM A.20.04, 183.

⁵¹ For example, Fritz Uhde’s painting *Die Näherin*

https://www.kunstverwaltung.bund.de/SharedDocs/Provenienzen/DE/8000_8999/8938.html [accessed 14.11.2025] and Carl Spitzweg’s *Die Wäscherin*

https://www.kunstverwaltung.bund.de/SharedDocs/Provenienzen/DE/10000_10999/10517.html [accessed 14.11.2025].

⁵² HHStAW 519/3, 9225.)

The move of Florence Flersheim's household to the Netherlands was registered with the main customs office (Hauptzollamt) in Frankfurt am Main, Gutleutestrasse. The date was set for 10 December 1938.⁵³

On 1 August 1938, Maurer (with the address Wiesenhüttenstr. 14, Frankfurt am Main) informs the foreign exchange office (Devisenstelle) about some additions to the moving goods and asks for the presence of a customs officer so that the items can be packed under supervision.⁵⁴ In other files, there are further lists of additions, including prints.⁵⁵

The transcript of the invoice from the Frankfurt shipping company Fermont addressed to Florence Flersheim, Amsterdam, dated 13 February 1939, states that the actual packing took place on four subsequent days (5—8 December 1938) and that the transportation to Amsterdam started on 9 December 1938 ('Trsprt. Prs. 1 Gl-Waggon & 1 8m-Wagen nach Amsterdam, Lager').⁵⁶

Based on this invoice, it seems that the move took place as planned. At the same time, the invoice confirms the volume of the packed goods, and that at least an eight-meter-long van (most probably an eight-meter liftvan) was used for transporting the goods.⁵⁷ Whether the 'Gl-Waggon' was needed for transporting the liftvan, or whether this was a separate transport entity, is unclear. However, based on a later statement by the Dutch shipping company Veraart that arranged storage in the Netherlands, there was one unit (one liftvan) for Florence and Fritz Flersheim respectively.

1.1.3.2 The Flersheims in Amsterdam

Between Autumn 1935 and mid-1938, the members of the Flersheim families had managed to escape to the Netherlands. In Amsterdam, Herbert Flersheim continued to run the family business together with his uncle Ernst Flersheim, albeit in a reduced form. Ernst Flersheim describes the circumstances in his memoirs, which were published in

⁵³ HHStAW 519/3, 9225, folio 87.

⁵⁴ HHStAW 519/3, 9225, no folio number.

⁵⁵ HHStAW 518, 11267, folio 51 and 77.

⁵⁶ Fermont invoice HHStAW, 518, 112567, folio 168.

⁵⁷ According to a German handbook for Jewish emigration, *Handbuch für die jüdische Auswanderung*, 1938, a lift had the following measurements: 2,20 m width × 2,28 m height × 2 m length. Apparently also lengths of 3 or 4 meters were possible. This, however, does not correspond with the Flersheim's lift of 8 meters. See also <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liftvan>.

an English translation by his grandson Walter Eberstadt: ‘At the end of 1935 we applied for permission to take the entrepôt business with us, as my wife and I had also decided to leave the country. After prolonged negotiations we were granted permission in October 1936 to relocate the ivory business outside Germany on condition that the rest of the business was formed into a limited liability company headed by Rompel. As soon as this was completed, I terminated my 60-year association with the firm and left Germany for good.’⁵⁸ We do not know whether Florence Flersheim may have held shares in this company.

Eberstadt gives some more details regarding Herbert Flersheim, stating that ‘with the support of his old Amsterdam friend Hans Wetzlar, [Herbert Flersheim] carried on in the ivory trade.’⁵⁹

Herbert’s friend Hans Wetzlar may have been a central figure for the two branches of the Flersheim family in Amsterdam. Wetzlar seems to have kept in touch with Martin Flersheim’s brother and sister-in-law Ernst and Gertrud Flersheim after the other family members had left the Netherlands. For example, it was Wetzlar who on 10 November 1943 informed the Flersheims’ relative and business partner Willy Dreyfus⁶⁰ about the couple’s poor health.⁶¹ At the time, Wetzlar wrote from 205 Prinsengracht, Amsterdam, which was the address of the business Gebr. Wetzlar C.V. Apparently, the company was founded in 1923 by the father and uncle of Mr. Kurt Wetzlar and produced billiard items, for instance ivory billiard balls.⁶² In 1959, Hans Wetzlar, now writing from the address Roemer Visscherstraat 15, Amsterdam, testified in the claim case run by the heirs of Ernst Flersheim.⁶³ It should be mentioned that a Felix Wetzlar, Cologne, figures in one of the Flersheim files: In a letter from the foreign exchange office (Devisenstelle) in Frankfurt am Main of 25 November 1938, one can read that the sole owner of Felix Wetzlar & Co, GmbH in Cologne, Felix Wetzlar, had died on 28 July 1937. His death seemed to have prompted the liquidation process of the Tortosia AG, Zurich – which was

⁵⁸ Ernst Flersheim, quoted in Eberstadt, pp. 114ff.

⁵⁹ Eberstadt, p. 135.

⁶⁰ Fritz Flersheim had been a partner in the Dreyfus bank. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willy_Dreyfus [accessed 24.11.2025].

⁶¹ Eberstadt, p. 307.

⁶² <https://www.zoominfo.com/c/buffalonl-bv/348659837> [accessed 17.11.2025].

⁶³ Dr H Wetzlar, statement dated 5.4.1959. HHSTaW 518, 11266, folio 91.

linked to the company Flersheim-Hess Schildpatt-Import GmbH Frankfurt am Main. Tortosia AG had been owned by Felix Wetzlar, Ernst Flersheim and Ernest Friedlein.⁶⁴

In the Walter Eberstadt archive is at least one letter which mentions Hans Wetzlar. George Eberstadt, son-in-law of Ernst Flersheim, wrote on 1 December 1948 to Fritz and Herbert Flersheim regarding some sort of business rivalry between Hans Wetzlar and Friedlein. The letter bears a handwritten note: 'Wetzlar was my friend, thus animosity ...'.⁶⁵

Although Hans Wetzlar seems to have played an important role for the Flersheim family in Amsterdam, the Munch Museum could not establish any indication that he had been involved in any aspects related to the provenance of the painting *History*. Thus, no further research has been undertaken in this direction.

With regard to Herbert Flersheim's business in the ivory trade, mentioned by Eberstadt, the Munch Museum has managed to identify his company as Fleha NV.⁶⁶ The ivory trade company was registered on 29 January 1937, in the names of Herbert Flersheim (address Bentveldweg 10, Zandvoort, with offices in Prinsengracht 205, Amsterdam) and Louis Jean Joseph Verburg (Prinsengracht 201, Amsterdam, acting on behalf of Ernst Flersheim, Frankfurt am Main). The involved solicitor was Johannes Zwart, Leidschegracht 20, Amsterdam.⁶⁷ Apparently, the company was dissolved when Herbert Flersheim left the Netherlands in late 1939.⁶⁸

Herbert Flersheim stayed in the Netherlands approx. ten months longer than his mother, and it is possible that he may have looked after her affairs during this period (which also covers the period when *History* was finally sold in Oslo). There is little information on Herbert Flersheim to be gleaned from the consulted archives in Germany; he made no official claims after the war, although after his death his second wife did (together with Fritz Flersheim). However, Herbert Flersheim seems to have been

⁶⁴ HHStAW, 519/3, 34817, folio 80.

⁶⁵ Letter Georg Eberstadt to Fritz and Herbert Flersheim, 1.12.1947, see <https://archive.org/details/waltereberstadt03eber/page/n209/mode/1up> [accessed 14.11.2025].

⁶⁶ Herbert Flersheim's letter to Gerog Eberstadt, with business letterhead, dated 7.11.1939. See <https://archive.org/details/waltereberstadt03eber/page/n254/mode/1up> [accessed 18.11.2025].

⁶⁷ Dutch National Archive, Department van Justitie, Naamlooze Vennootschappen, Dossier 53893.

⁶⁸ Declaration by Juan M Semon 12.5.1955. HHStAW 518, 11269, p. 21.

in correspondence with other family members regarding ongoing restitution/indemnity cases.⁶⁹

Generally, we have little information about the life and network of the Flersheim family while they stayed in Amsterdam. Walter Eberstadt's family account *Whence we came, where we went. A family history* (2002), which also incorporates the memoirs of his grandfather Ernst Flersheim from 1939, includes some statements that may help to illustrate their situation:

- 'Many Jewish families with money had always had some assets outside Germany or started to make secret illegal transfers abroad.'⁷⁰ This can essentially be supported by Fritz Flersheim's statement in a self-declaration dated 5 April 1962, that he had acted as executor of the testament of his uncle Ernst Flersheim, who had died in Bergen-Belsen. The task had been laborious and time-consuming as the estate was spread over various countries.⁷¹ Fritz Flersheim also had to return from the US to the Netherlands in order to help his mother with her financial affairs prior to her departure for the US – this fact may also indicate a complex financial situation.⁷²
- 'Unlike most refugees, the Flersheims had no acute financial worries.'⁷³
- Herbert Flersheim had 'a pretty house in Sandvoort outside Amsterdam.'⁷⁴ The address has been confirmed as Bentveldweg 10, Zandvoort.⁷⁵
- Fritz and Florence stayed at the Hotel Doelen in Amsterdam, a hotel which Eberstadt describes as 'quite agreeable'.⁷⁶ A confirmation by the hotel from 14 December 1956, used in a compensation claims case by the heirs of Ernst Flersheim against the German state, notes that the room rate in 1937/1938 was six Dutch Guilders per person per night (in a double room with bath).⁷⁷

⁶⁹ For example, letter from Georg Eberstadt to Herbert Flersheim, 16.4.1946, see <https://archive.org/details/waltereberstadt03eber/page/n211/mode/1up> [accessed 18.11.2025].

⁷⁰ Eberstadt, pp. 112-113.

⁷¹ HHStAW 467, 4989, folio 175.

⁷² HHStAW 467, 4989, folio 171-2.

⁷³ Eberstadt, p. 135.

⁷⁴ Eberstadt, p. 135.

⁷⁵ Dutch National Archive, Department van Justitie, Naamlooze Vennootschappen, Dossier 53893.

⁷⁶ Eberstadt, pp. 134-135.

⁷⁷ HHStAW 518, 11266, folio 61.

1.1.3.3 Moving and storage of the household goods and art collection

A statement from the shipping company Chr. J. Veraart from 1958 testifies that they handled two batches of goods (Umzugsgüter) in 1937 and 1938 for Fritz Flersheim and his mother respectively. Veraart had taken over the goods from the German transport company Fermont (Frankfurt am Main) and subsequently stored them in the transshipment port 'Gemeentelijk Handels Entrepôt', Amsterdam.⁷⁸

According to letters from the Entrepôt to Veraart, sent in 1944 in the context of the confiscation of the goods (see later paragraph), the two sets of goods were stored in the units ZAT.I.2962, which measured 46 sq.m., and ZA.I 3592 which measured 24 sq.m.⁷⁹ It is unclear which unit belonged to Florence Flersheim and which to Fritz Flersheim. According to an interactive Amsterdam online map, the longest packhouse of the Entrepôt consisted of four units named according to four weekdays.⁸⁰ Most likely, the prefixes ZAT and ZA refer to the packhouse Zaterdag (Saturday).

Fritz Flersheim stated in 1962 that Dutch law prohibited the import of possessions if one could not prove disposal over a flat that was big enough to house all the items.⁸¹

According to the list of Florence Flersheim's household goods, submitted by Dr Fritz Mertens in 1938 and later used in postwar restitution/indemnity claims, the Entrepôt storage contained not only various artworks, but also furniture, china, silver, books and wine.⁸² This list includes Munch's painting *History*, as well as two prints by Munch: a woodcut, *Das Liebespaar*, and a lithograph, *Unterweisung*.

⁷⁸ Veraart, February 1958. Translated transcript attached to a later claim logged by the solicitor Kappus. HHStAW, 518, 11267, folio 165.

⁷⁹ Bundesarchiv Koblenz, B 323, 460, folio 334.

⁸⁰ <https://amsterdamopdekaart.nl/c/47/Handelsentrepot> [accessed 14.11.2025].

⁸¹ Frederick Flersheim's self-declaration (Eidesstattliche Erklarung), dated 18.4.1962: 'In diesem Jahr [1937] machten die Niederlaendischen Behoerden die zollfreie Einfuhr des Unzugsgutes eines neu Zugewanderten davon abhaengig, dass er einen Mietsvertrag ueber eine Wohnung, deren Groesse ungefaehr die Unterbringung des Unzugsgutes ermoeglichte, vorlegte. Die genannten Behoerden betrachteten es als einen Missbrauch, dass ein neu Zugewandeter sein zollfrei eingefuehrtes Umzugsgut in Holland verkaufte und dann mit dem Erloes in ein anderes Land weiter wanderte', probable location HHStAW Z 460 Nr Wik F 5910, folio 165.

⁸² HHStAW Z 460 Nr Wik F 5910 and HHStAW 518, 11267.

1.1.3.4 Removals from the Entrepôt storage

According to Fritz Flersheim's self-declaration from 1962, the Dutch authorities were generally lenient when it came to the retrieval of single items from the freeport storage, in particular works of art, which were exempt from import tax.⁸³

As stated in a self-declaration written by Fritz Flersheim on 28 June 1953, artworks by the following artists were removed from the freeport storage: 'Zuloaga, Hodler, Liebermann, Segantini and Munch, and with that is meant all artworks by these artists'.⁸⁴

1.1.3.5 Sale of artworks

Florence Flersheim placed eleven works by the abovementioned artists plus one additional work by Daumier into commission with the local art dealer Paul Cassirer & Co NV Amsterdam, run by Walter Feilchenfeldt and Helmut Lütjens.⁸⁵ An excerpt from Cassirer's commission book from 1939-41, shared with the Munch Museum by Von Trott zu Solz Lammek, also lists, in addition to Munch's *History* ('Historia', no. 111), five works by Hodler (nos. 101-105), four by Liebermann (nos. 106-109), one by Segantini (no. 110), and one by Daumier (no. 112). All entries date from 4 January 1939, and it is therefore likely that all these works were removed from the free port storage at the same time.⁸⁶ Two aspects with regard to the retrieval of artworks and Cassirer are interesting to note: a) Daumier does not appear on Fritz Flersheim's list as having been removed from storage, and b) the Zuloaga works that had been taken out of storage did not go to Cassirer Amsterdam at that time.

According to Cassirer's commission book, the Segantini and the Hodler works were transferred or possibly sold to Dr Nathan, St. Gallen, on 20 January 1939.⁸⁷ At least one of these paintings is still in Switzerland (Ferdinand Hodler, *The Woodcutter*, ca.

⁸³ Frederick Flersheim's self-declaration (Eidesstattliche Erklärung), dated 18.4.1962: '... Soweit es sich um die Freigabe einzelner Gegenstände handelte, insbesondere keiner zollunterliegender Kunstgegenstände, waren die genannten Behörden im Allgemeinen entgegenkommend', probable location HHStAW Z 460 Nr Wik F 5910, folio 165.

⁸⁴ Frederick Flersheim's self-declaration (Eidesstattliche Versicherung), dated 28.6.1953. HHStAW Z 460 Nr Wik F 5910, folio 69.

⁸⁵ For more information on Cassirer, see <https://upclose.christies.com/restitutions-amsterdam/n-v-amsterdamsche-kunsthandel-paul-cassirer-co#back-rest-about-amsterdam> [accessed 25.11.2025].

⁸⁶ Paul Cassirer Amsterdam, Commissionsbook 1938-1941, Paul Cassirer-Archiv Zürich.

⁸⁷ Almost certainly identical with the Swiss-German art dealer Fritz Nathan, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fritz_Nathan [accessed 13.11.2025].

1910, Kunstmuseum Luzern).⁸⁸ The Liebermann paintings, also listed in the commission book, were kept in Cassirer's storage and, according to documents in the Walter Feilchenfeldt archive, returned to Fritz Flersheim after WWII and subsequently auctioned in 1954.⁸⁹ We do not know what happened to the Daumier work, which according to Cassirer's commission ledger, was also transported by Veraart, on 23 March 1939. According to a comment in the ledger, it seems that it was shipped together with a drawing. The Zuloaga works, which had also been taken out of storage in Amsterdam, were not placed in commission with Cassirer Amsterdam. According to the annotated catalogue of the Flersheim collection, which was utilised in a post-war reparation case by the Flersheim family, four of these works were sold in Buenos Aires. It seems possible that they came to Argentina together with Herbert Flersheim, who – according to the annotations in the Flersheim collection catalogue – had owned six works by other artists from his parents' collection.⁹⁰

With regard to the general relationship between Cassirer Amsterdam and the Flersheims, no further documents seem to have survived in the Cassirer Archive Zurich. The keeper of the archive confirms that in most likelihood no written contract had been signed, and that the transactions had been based on trust.

1.1.3.5.1 Veraart: responsible for transport and storage

The company Chr. J. Veraart was central for the transport and storage of the art collection in Amsterdam. In addition to taking over Fritz and Florence Flersheim's goods from Fermont (Frankfurt am Main) in 1937 and 1938 respectively, it was under the name of Veraart that the Flersheims' property was stored at the Entrepôt. It was Veraart whom the Entrepôt informed about the Reichsleiter Rosenberg Taskforce (Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg or ERR) having confiscated the two storage units in June 1944, at the same time invoicing the company for the remaining storage fees for 1944.⁹¹

As described above, we do not know who may have acted on behalf of the family in the Netherlands after February 1939, when Fritz and Florence Flersheim had left the

⁸⁸ See <https://www.hodler2021.ch/en/hodlers-holzfaeller/provenance/> [accessed 13.11.2025].

⁸⁹ <https://kunst-raub-rueckgabe.de/en/biography/flersheim-family/> [accessed 16.9.2025].

⁹⁰ HHStaW Z 460 Nr Wik F 5910.

⁹¹ Entrepôt to Veraart, two letters dated 15. and 21.6.1944. Bundesarchiv Koblenz, B 323, 460, folio 334.

country. Thus, we do not know who, for instance, paid for the storage of their property in the years after their departure, either directly to the Entrepôt or indirectly via Veraart.

According to information in Dutch archives, the Veraart company was founded in 1937 and ceased to exist in 1969.⁹² We were unable to locate a company archive, either in the public archives or with the Veraart family descendants.

In most likelihood, *History* was shipped to Norway by boat. We do not know whether and how the transportation of the painting was recorded by the Dutch or Norwegian customs authorities. Usually, customs documents seem to have been kept for a ten-year period only, but freight lists etc. may have survived longer.

1.1.3.6 Emigration to North and South America

According to Fritz Flersheim's self-declaration of 14 December 1961, he emigrated to the USA in July 1938. He had to return to the Netherlands in October 1938 in order to solve the financial problems which arose in connection with the (re-)emigration of his elderly mother, who travelled back with him to the USA in February 1939.⁹³ According to the USA port authorities, they sailed from Le Havre on 16 February, arriving in New York City on 21 February 1939.⁹⁴ They travelled on the passenger liner SS *Île de France*,⁹⁵ which sailed for Compagnie Générale Transatlantique (or CGT, also known as the 'French Line').⁹⁶ As documented by the postwar indemnity claims file, Fritz and Florence Flersheim travelled first class.⁹⁷

Florence travelled on an American passport. We do not know whether her American citizenship may have had implications for her flight from Germany.

⁹² The international shipping company (Internationaal Expeditie) Chr. J. Veraart, with address at Singel 38, Amsterdam, was registered from 1.1.1937 to 1969. Its founder was Christianus Josephus Veraart. In 1943, the company was taken over by Alphonsus Maria Veraart. File at Chamber of Commerce (Handelsregister) in Amsterdam, Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

⁹³ HHStAW 467, 4989, folios 171-2.

⁹⁴ US Department of Labor, List or Manifest of Alien Passengers for the United States Immigrant Inspector at Port of Arrival, 21.2.1939, NARA microfilm publication T715, film number 6286, see <https://archive.org/details/passengercrewlis6286unit/page/n666/mode/2up> [accessed 13.11.2025]

⁹⁵ For more information on the passenger ship, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_%C3%8Ele_de_France [accessed 13.11.2025].

⁹⁶ For more information on the shipping company, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compagnie_G%C3%A9n%C3%A9rale_Transatlantique [accessed 13.11.2025]

⁹⁷ HHStAW 518, 11267, folios 160-161.

According to personal letters to the family friend Kasimir Edschmid, written directly after WWII, one can establish that both Florence and Fritz Flersheim lived at the Hotel Elysee in New York City, apparently since their arrival in 1939.⁹⁸ During the summer months, Florence Flersheim seems to have stayed outside the city, in a boarding house run by a Mrs Michel in Cryders Point, Beechhurst, Long Island.⁹⁹

The correspondence with Edschmid also reveals that Herbert Flersheim and his wife Marta moved to Madeira in December 1939, where Marta died of natural causes in 1940.¹⁰⁰ Herbert moved to Argentina in 1941, where he married Theresa Victoria (Vicky) Cattaneo in August 1942. He seems to have acquired parts of a ranch (from a Dr Ruhemann) in 1943, which he eventually took over completely.¹⁰¹ According to the reparation claim made by his widow (and Fritz Flersheim) against the German State in 1955, Herbert held Liechtensteinian citizenship at the time of his death.¹⁰²

1.1.3.7 Confiscation of the remaining possessions in Amsterdam

When Fritz and Florence Flersheim emigrated to the USA, their possessions remained in the Netherlands. We do not know why they were not shipped to the USA while it was still possible, i.e. before the war broke out on 1 September 1939.

As documented by the two letters from the Entrepôt, the storage units were confiscated by the ERR on 2 June and 5/15 June 1944 respectively.¹⁰³ It seems that all the contents were returned to Germany. These confiscated objects, including the art collection and library, have been the subject of restitution/indemnity claims by the family both directly after the war as well as in more recent times.

1.1.3.8 After WWII

Florence Flersheim died in 1950, while she was staying with her son Herbert Flersheim in Argentina. It is unclear whether she was there for a longer visit or whether she had officially moved to Argentina.

⁹⁸ Frederick Flersheim to Kasimir Edschmid, 4.9.1946. Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marburg, HS.1993.0005.

⁹⁹ Florence Flersheim to Kasimir Edschmid, 20.8.1946. Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marburg, HS.1993.0005.

¹⁰⁰ Herbert Flersheim to Kasimir Ebschmid, 28.8.1946. Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marburg, HS.1993.0005.

¹⁰¹ Declaration by Julius Strupp 12.5.1955, in HHStAW 518, 11269, folio19.

¹⁰² HHStAW 518, 11269.

¹⁰³ Bundesarchiv Koblenz B323, 460, folio 334. A translated transcript of the first letter (15.6.1944) was used in the postwar claim, see HHStAW 518, 11267, folio 167.

Fritz Flersheim logged various claims, initially also on behalf of his mother: restitution/indemnity/reparation claims for the possessions sold in Germany in 1937 and 1938 (including real estate), for the possessions confiscated by the ERR in 1944, for the emigration expenses and for a pension. The various original case files held in the German archives have been important sources of information for this report.

Georg Eberstadt, Ernst Flersheim's heir, was similarly engaged in making restitution/indemnity/reparation claims. Both branches of the Flersheim family seem to have coordinated their efforts, in particular with regard to the lost family business. For instance, they used the same solicitor (Dr Mertens) and updated each other by mail. The Walter Eberstadt Collection at the Leo Baeck Institute holds various letters by Georg Eberstadt, which not only provide a lot of details regarding the complicated structure of the family business, but also emotional accounts, for example of visiting Frankfurt am Main after the war.¹⁰⁴

However, within the thousands of document pages consulted by the Munch Museum in the course of its research, Edvard Munch's *History* and the other artworks that were removed from the Amsterdam storage in 1939 and subsequently sold, are mentioned only once – only to have been excluded from the list of items confiscated by the ERR in 1944.¹⁰⁵

1.1.4 City Auksjon, Oslo (19 January 1939)

As documented by the Cassirer Gallery's commission ledger, *History* was taken into commission by the gallery in Amsterdam on 4 January 1939. The painting was sent to Oslo on 12 January (or possibly 16 January; the date is difficult to decipher). Veraart were assigned with handling the shipment.

We do not know who decided that the painting was to be sent to Oslo, or who communicated with possible contacts in Norway (City Auksjon and Blomqvist Kunsthandel). In most likelihood it was Cassirer Gallery Amsterdam (i.e. Feilchenfeldt and Lütjens), who had been commissioned with the sale, but it is possible that a

¹⁰⁴ Georg Eberstadt, note titled 'General Observations', March 1946, see <https://archive.org/details/waltereberstadtc03eber/page/n212/mode/1up> [accessed 6.11.2025]

¹⁰⁵ Fritz Flersheim's statement 28.6.1953. This information was taken into consideration in the early indemnity cases, see annotation to letter to Kappus 19.11.1954, HHStAW, Z 460 Nr Wik F 5910, folio 19.

middleman was involved. We do not know how the Cassirer Gallery Amsterdam communicated with their client, Florence Flersheim, nor how and when the money for the sale was transferred to her.

We know, however, that the painting was offered for auction at City Auksjon in Oslo on 19 January 1939.¹⁰⁶ The auction house City Auksjon is known today as Christiania Auksjoner. The current auction house was approached, and they replied that they have no historic archival material. Furthermore, no relevant archival material could be located, either in the public archives in Norway, or with the descendants of the original proprietor Eivind Rølles.

1.1.4.1 Possible involvement of a Norwegian bank

On 14 January 1939, when the painting *History* was still in Amsterdam (or already on its way to Norway), its forthcoming sale at City Auksjon was advertised in the Norwegian press, albeit with the wrong date (December, instead of January).¹⁰⁷ The newspaper article also claims that the various Munch works, including *History*, had been acquired by a major Norwegian bank from a blocked-mark account (Sperrmark-konto).

In order to prevent capital flight from Germany, the German exchange office operated with a blocked-mark system, where funds were frozen in special accounts. Essentially, access was limited for use within Germany, which affected both foreign investors and emigrants, particularly Jews who were fleeing the country. Using the blocked funds to buy art from the German state was one legitimate way to make use of the otherwise frozen assets. Thus, it is quite possible that the Munch works that came directly from Germany were acquired with the help of a Norwegian bank. However, considering that *History* had been outside Germany and sold via the Netherlands, there seems to be no reason to believe that a Norwegian bank was involved in this case.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ City Auksjon, sales catalogue 19.1.1939.

¹⁰⁷ *Aftenposten*, 14.1.1939.

¹⁰⁸ It is also possible that the author of the *Aftenposten* article simply confused different auctions. In 1938 and 1939, several auctions featured Munch works from abroad, and for some the involvement of a bank is clearly documented, for example in the catalogue for a print auction in Oslo in 1938. The catalogue for City Auksjon 19.1.1939, however, makes no such claim.

1.1.4.2 The auction

On 19 January 1939, *History* is offered at auction at City Auksjon, Oslo, lot 10.¹⁰⁹ It is uncertain whether the painting was actually sold; the newspaper articles covering the auction contradict each other. The press clippings mention that the painting reached NOK 20.500, but that the offer was not accepted by the owner. However, an annual summary of the Norwegian Auction market 1938/1939, published in the periodical *Kunst og Kultur* vol. 25, claims that *History* was sold for NOK 20.500 kr.

1.1.5 Blomqvist Kunsthandel (9 March 1939)

On 27 January 1939, eight days after the auction at City Auksjon, the Oslo-based art dealership Blomqvist Kunsthandel offers *History* to the Tate Gallery in London for NOK 45.000. The original letter is in the Tate archive, albeit without the originally enclosed photograph of the work. Most probably, the photograph had been returned to Blomqvist together with the Tate's reply, declining the offer on 3 February 1939 due to lack of funds.¹¹⁰ The Munch Museum has found no indication that Blomqvist offered *History* to other institutions than the Tate Gallery.

As in the case with City Auksjon, the Munch Museum was not able to establish who communicated with and instructed Blomqvist, whether this happened through an unknown middleman or directly through Cassirer Gallery Amsterdam (i.e. Feilchenfeldt or Lütjens).

On 9 March 1939, *History* was put up for sale at Blomqvist's Spring Auction (Vårauksjon). According to an advertisement for the auction in *Aftenposten* on 6 March 1939, *History* had the catalogue no. 24,¹¹¹ which implies that a catalogue did exist, although none could be located.

Despite intensive advertising, the actual auction and its results were not well covered by the press: only one brief newspaper article could be identified. Interestingly, this does not mention the sale of *History*, only that of another Munch painting which is

¹⁰⁹ City Auksjon catalogue, 14.1.1939.

¹¹⁰ Blomqvist Kunsthandel to Tate Gallery, 27.1.1939 and Tate Gallery to Blomqvist Kunsthandel, 3.2. 1939, both Tate Library and Archive, London.

¹¹¹ *Aftenposten* 6.3.1939.

simply described as ‘a landscape’.¹¹² Curiously enough, *Kunst og Kultur* does not mention the Blomqvist auction (9 March 1939) in its yearly review, either in their 1938/1939¹¹³ or their 1939/1940 issue, see Chapter 5.¹¹⁴ The lack of mentioning *History* after the sale may suggest that the work was withdrawn from the auction at the last minute, and most likely sold directly.

The fact that *History* was first offered by City Auksjon, and soon afterwards by Blomqvist, cannot be fully explained. According to the current proprietor of Blomqvist, it is unlikely that the company would have bought the work and thus speculated in such a way.¹¹⁵ Instead, it seems plausible that the owner of the work/the responsible agent was not satisfied with the result achieved at City Auksjon (which can be confirmed by some, but not all newspaper articles) and therefore moved the commission to the somewhat more reputable auction house and art dealership Blomqvist. In theory, it is also possible that Blomqvist was the original and sole agent in Norway, aiming at an immediate sale and therefore employing City Auksjon as the first arising opportunity to do so.

Even though it could not be established for how much and when exactly the painting was sold in 1939, the reached amount of NOK 20.500 was rather high for a Munch work at the time. The achieved auction results for his works in the period 1930-1940 show that out of 39 identified transactions, only three works achieved higher prices: the early and central work *Moonlight* from 1893 (140 x 135 cm) was bought by the National Gallery in Oslo at the September 1938 auction of Harald Nørregaard’s estate for NOK 23.000. At Holst Halvorsen’s auction in Oslo in January 1939 a version of Munch’s famous motif *The Sick Child* from 1907 (188 x 121 cm) was sold for NOK 30.000 and at the same auction the monumental-sized *Life* from 1910 (194 x 369 cm) went for NOK 40.000. All other identified Munch works traded in the period 1930-40 achieved lower prices.

¹¹² *Morgenbladet* 10.3.1939.

¹¹³ ‘Munch-Auksjone og Utstillinger 1938-39’ in *Kunst og Kultur*, 1939, vol. 25, pp.121-123.

¹¹⁴ ‘Kunstauctions i 1939 og 40’ in *Kunst og Kultur*, 1940, vol. 26, pp.266-272.

¹¹⁵ Conversation between Elizabeth Vik Forsberg and senior curator Ute Falck, 31.3.2025.

1.1.6 Rolf E. Stenersen (prior to 1946 – most probably 1952)

Rolf E. Stenersen donated his first art collection, which contained works by Edvard Munch and younger Norwegian artists, to the Municipality of Aker (from 1948 merged into Oslo) in 1936. It took almost 60 years for the collection to get its first proper ‘home’ in the form of rented premises in the Oslo area of Vika in 1994, known as the Stenersen Museum, which a couple of decades later was merged into the Munch Museum. Before 1994, the collection was stored at various premises in Oslo, including Stenersen’s home. Stenersen continued to buy art, thus building up a new collection as well as adjusting the original donation. From 1952, Stenersen had parts of his collection placed at the newly built Sogn Student Village in Oslo. In 1971 Stenersen donated his second collection, which focuses on modern European art, to the Municipality of Bergen. The rather unclear boundaries between Stenersen’s original donation in 1936 and his later collection activities and adjustments to this gift, explain how the painting *History*, which Stenersen acquired in 1939 or later, in any case at least three years after his first donation, nevertheless became part of the first Stenersen collection, and thus part of his donation to the Municipality of Aker. Unfortunately, no documentation of Stenersen’s art transactions seems to have survived.

The Munch Museum has searched internal and external archives and been in dialogue with, among others, Stenersen’s biographer Espen Sørbye¹¹⁶ and Stenersen’s grandson Sten Stenersen jr.¹¹⁷ Despite all efforts, the museum has not been able to find any documentation with regard to Rolf E. Stenersen’s acquisition of *History*.

Norway was occupied by Nazi Germany on 9 April 1940. Rolf E. Stenersen fled from Norway to Sweden on 1 February 1942, according to his son Sten Stenersen sr. ‘due to his involvement in an organisation which worked against the German and Norwegian Nazi authorities.’¹¹⁸ While Stenersen was in exile, his home, Villa Stenersen, and its contents were confiscated in 1943 and his citizenship was revoked. The list of confiscated objects does not include *History*,¹¹⁹ and the Munch Museum has not been

¹¹⁶ Conversation between Espen Sørbye and senior curator Ute Falck, 26.5.2025.

¹¹⁷ Conversation between Sten Stenersen junior and senior curator Ute Falck, 2.9.2025.

¹¹⁸ Sten Stenersen senior, ‘Villa Stenersen under krigen’, as a reply to an article printed earlier in Vindern historical society’s publication no. 1/2013, *Vindern Historielags medlemsblad*, 2013, p. 18.

¹¹⁹ A list of the confiscated contents is preserved in the National Archives of Norway, Oslo, see ‘Rolf E. Stenersens Gave til Oslo By – Akersamlingen under Krigen 1940-1945’, internal report Munch Museum Archive, Stenersen P6.

able to establish where the work – if indeed already at the time owned by Rolf E. Stenersen – was kept during the war.

Rolf E. Stenersen's ownership of *History* can be documented for the first time in 1946, when the painting was recorded as part of a travelling exhibition of the Stenersen Collection, shown in Sweden and Denmark.¹²⁰ In 1952, *History* was in Villa Stenersen in Oslo, as documented in a press photograph.¹²¹

1.1.7 City of Oslo, later addition to Rolf E. Stenersen's 1936 donation to the Municipality of Aker (most probably 1952 – today)

Rolf E. Stenersen donated his collection to the Municipality of Aker in 1936, under the stipulation that the collection was to be housed in a designated museum. Until a Stenersen Museum was realised, Rolf E. Stenersen kept control of his donation, freely managing the collection according to his own wishes. The level of documentation is very low, and it is therefore almost impossible to reconstruct the exact evolution of the collection. With regard to *History*, which was acquired after the formal donation to Aker in 1936, it is not known when Stenersen decided that the work was to become part of the gift.

One generally chooses 1952 as the year the Stenersen Collection was formally transferred to the City of Oslo. This is the year when Sogn Student Village was inaugurated; from then onwards its various premises were used for displaying parts of the Stenersen Collection publicly (in lieu of a Stenersen Museum).

Until 1973, *History* was almost permanently displayed in the Student Village's restaurant, which opened 1954-55. During this period, the painting was lent to four exhibitions.¹²² On 31 October 1973, *History* was cut out of its stretcher and stolen from the restaurant. Due to the unsafe conditions at the student village, all the Munch works were moved to the Munch Museum (in Tøyen) almost instantly. Almost one year later, on

¹²⁰ Exhibition history: 1946 Stockholm, Riksförbundet för bildande konst (Modernt norsk måleri ur Rolf Stenersens samling, no. 40); 1946 Copenhagen, Kunstforeningen (Norsk kunst, no. 42); 1946 Copenhagen, Kunstforeningen (Norsk kunst. Et udvalg af Rolf Stenersens Samling, 2. Ophænging, no. 19).

¹²¹ *Studentbyen på Sogn, 1946-1966*, brochure of the student welfare organization Studentsamskipnanden, 1966, n.p.

¹²² Exhibition history: 1958 Bern Kunstmuseum (Edvard Munch, no. 66); 1962 Oslo, Nasjonalgalleriet (Rolf Stenersens Samling, no. 95); 1964 Humlebæk, Louisiana (Munch-Picasso-Klee fra Rolf Stenersens Samling, no. 11); 1970 Japan, no. 24.

13 September 1974, *History* was recovered, found rolled up in Frogner Park, Oslo. Ever since, it has been kept at the Munch Museum. In 1977, the work was restored and re-installed in its original stretcher.¹²³ Since then, it has been shown at 12 exhibitions.¹²⁴

After its return from the last exhibition in medio June 2025, the painting's verso, i.e. the stretcher and frame, has been photographed and closely inspected for further clues regarding the shift of ownership. None of the identifiable markings could be linked to the events in the period 1938-1939.

1.2 Summary and timeline

After more than one year of research, the Munch Museum has managed to shed more light on the provenance of Edvard Munch's painting *History* (RES.A.315). The herein presented facts allow for a better understanding of the circumstances relating to the transfer of ownership, although some questions remain unanswered. The following timeline summarises the key events mentioned in the report.

1. Edvard Munch (1914–prior to May 1917)

1914	Edvard Munch was the creator and therefore first owner of the painting <i>History</i> . The painting is signed and dated 1914, but may have been made earlier, if exhibited already in January 1914.
2 January 1914	The painting may have been exhibited in Frankfurt am Main.
23 February 1914	According to a Norwegian newspaper article, Munch sold a work in Frankfurt, which may have been <i>History</i> .

2. Martin and Florence Flersheim, Frankfurt am Main (prior to May 1917–1935)

Prior to 23 May 1917	The painting was exhibited at Frankfurter Kunstverein in the period 23 May-15 June 1917,
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¹²³ Conservation file Edvard Munch *History*, 1914 (RES. A.315), Munch Museum Conservation Archives.

¹²⁴ Exhibition history: 1974 Oslo, Munch-museet (Rolf E. Stenersens gave til Oslo by – Akersamlingen); 1993 Bergen, Bergen Billedgalleri, no. 48; 2003 Oslo, Stenersenmuseet, no. 19; 2007 Tokyo–Kobe, no. 79; 2011 Oslo, Munch-museet (Aula exhibition); 2012 Henie Onstad Kunstsenter (Lære for livet); 2014 Helsinki, Didrichsen Konstmuseum (Livets dans); 2016 Oslo, Munch-museet (Jorn + Munch); 2019 Bergen, Kode 2 (Edvard Munch. I oss er verdener); 2022 Paris, Musée d'Orsay (The Frieze of Life. A poem of life, love and death); 2024 Milan, Palazzo Reale Arthemisia; 2025 Rome, Palazzo Bonaparte Arthemisia.

	the catalogue stating its owner as Martin Flersheim. This means that the painting was acquired by Martin and Florence Flersheim prior to the exhibition opening.
1922	<i>History</i> shown in a travelling exhibition in Switzerland.
1927	<i>History</i> exhibited at the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, the catalogue stating Martin Flersheim as its owner.
Autumn 1935	Herbert Flersheim moves to Amsterdam.
7 December 1935	Martin Flersheim dies.

3. Florence Flersheim, acquired by inheritance (1935–1939)

1935	Florence Flersheim is Martin Flersheim's primary heir, herewith becoming the owner of the art collection, including <i>History</i> .
Late 1936	Ernst Flersheim moves to Amsterdam.
1936	Rolf E. Stenersen's donation to the Municipality of Aker (from 1948 City of Oslo).
March 1937	Fritz Flersheim moves to Amsterdam.
1937	Fritz Flersheim's possessions are transported from Frankfurt am Main to Amsterdam by the removal company Fermont, taken over in the Netherlands by Veraart, and subsequently stored at the Entrepôt Amsterdam.
Prior 29 June 1938	23 artworks from the Flersheim collection are deemed 'nationally important' and thus refused export from Germany.
29 June 1938	Florence Flersheim officially emigrates to Amsterdam, having left Germany earlier.
5 July 1938	Auction of remaining household goods at the Flersheim villa in Frankfurt am Main.
15 July 1938	Solicitor Dr Mertens applies for permission to move Florence Flersheim's possessions, including <i>History</i> , from Germany.
July 1938	Fritz Flersheim emigrates to the USA.
October 1938	Fritz Flersheim returns to Amsterdam to assist his mother.
10 December 1938	Florence Flersheim's possessions, including <i>History</i> , are shipped from Frankfurt am Main to Amsterdam by the moving company Fermont.
December 1938	Florence Flersheim's possessions, including <i>History</i> , are stored at the Entrepôt Amsterdam, handled by the Dutch removal company Veraart.

- 4 January 1939 *History* is given into commission at Cassirer Gallery Amsterdam, together with ten works by other artists.
- 12 (16?) January 1939 *History* is shipped to Oslo (handled by Veraart).
4. **19 January 1939** ***History* is offered at City Auksjon (Oslo), seemingly reaching NOK 20.500. The offer was apparently declined.**
- 27 January 1939 Blomqvist Kunsthandel offers *History* to the Tate Gallery, London, for NOK 45.000.
- 3 February 1939 The Tate Gallery rejects Blomqvist's offer.
- 16 February 1939 Florence Flersheim departs for the USA, accompanied by Fritz Flersheim.
- 21 February 1939 Florence Flersheim arrives in New York, accompanied by Fritz Flersheim.
5. **9 March 1939** ***History* is offered at Blomqvist Kunsthandel (Oslo). The work seems to have been sold prior to the auction.**
- December 1939 Herbert Flersheim moves to Madeira with his wife Marta Flersheim.
- 1940 Marta Flersheim dies in Madeira.
- 1941 Herbert Flersheim emigrates to Argentina.
- August 1942 Herbert Flersheim marries Theresa Victoria (Vicky) Cattaneo.
- 2 June 1944 Confiscation of the Flersheim possessions stored at the Entrepôt Amsterdam by the ERR.
- 5/15 June 1944 Confiscation of the Flersheim possessions stored at the Entrepôt Amsterdam by the ERR.
6. **Rolf E. Stenersen (prior to 1946 – most probably 1952)**
- 1946 Exhibition of *History*, with the catalogue stating its owner as Rolf E. Stenersen.
- 1950 Death of Florence Flersheim.
- 1952 Interior photograph of Villa Stenersen, showing *History* on the wall in the bar.
7. **City of Oslo, later addition to Rolf E. Stenersen's 1936 donation to the Municipality of Aker¹²⁵ (most probably 1952 – today)**
- 1952-55 Interior photograph of the Sogn Student Village's restaurant, showing *History* on the wall.
- 1958 *History* exhibited in Bern, Kunstmuseum, (Edvard Munch, no. 66).
- 1962 *History* exhibited in Oslo, Nasjonalgalleriet (Rolf Stenersens Samling, no. 95).

¹²⁵ The Municipality of Aker was formally merged into the City of Oslo municipality in 1948.

1964	<i>History</i> exhibited in Humlebæk, Louisiana (Munch-Picasso-Klee fra Rolf Stenersens Samling, no. 11).
1970	<i>History</i> exhibited in Japan (no. 24).
31 October 1973	<i>History</i> stolen from its location at Sogn Student Village's restaurant.
13 September 1974	Recovery of <i>History</i> in Frogner Park, Oslo.
1974	<i>History</i> exhibited in Oslo, Munch-museet (Rolf E. Stenersen's gave til Oslo by – Akersamlingen).
1977	Death of Fritz Flersheim.
1993	<i>History</i> exhibited in Bergen Billedgalleri (no. 48).
2003	<i>History</i> exhibited in Oslo, Stenersenmuseet, (no. 19).
2007	<i>History</i> exhibited in Tokyo–Kobe (no. 79.)
2011	<i>History</i> exhibited in Oslo, Munch-museet (Aula).
2012	<i>History</i> exhibited at Høvikodden, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter (Lære for livet).
2014	<i>History</i> exhibited in Helsinki, Didrichsen Konstmuseum (Livets dans).
2016	<i>History</i> exhibited in Oslo, Munch-museet (Jorn + Munch).
2019	<i>History</i> exhibited in Bergen, Kode 2 (Edvard Munch. I oss er verdener).
2022	<i>History</i> exhibited in Paris, Musée d'Orsay (The Frieze of Life. A Poem of Life, Love and Death).
2024	<i>History</i> exhibited in Milan, Palazzo Reale Arthemisia.
2025	<i>History</i> exhibited in Rome, Palazzo Bonaparte Arthemisia.