

Abstract

Wilhelm von Bode and the International Art Market: the Unpublished Correspondence with Rudolphe Kann and Joseph Duveen

This dissertation explores changing trends in the European and American art market in the late 19th and beginning of the 20th Centuries, in particular their influences, presented from the perspective of Wilhelm von Bode, renowned connoisseur and, at the time, director general of the Berlin Museums and explored predominantly through his relationship with the private collector Rudolphe Kann and art dealer Joseph Duveen. At the time, the collection of Rudolphe Kann was considered to be one of the most refined among the European private collections, yet it hasn't received much attention by contemporary scholars. This dissertation therefore offers the most systematic review of Kann's collection since 1907, the year when Bode compiled the revised catalogue. Wilhelm Bode was actively involved in building the Kann collection, as shown by the extensive numbers of private, previously unpublished, correspondence, which provided the foundation of this research.

After the dealer Joseph Duveen bought the entire art collection of this prominent Parisian collector in the summer 1907 and subsequently sold almost all of the artworks to American collectors, the competitiveness of European private collectors and the public institutions became questionable. By focusing on the circumstances of the sale and exploring the destiny of selected masterpieces, I was able to elucidate the process of negotiating the sale's conditions and further explore Bode's relationship with Duveen and the strategies he implemented in order to ensure Berlin's museums benefited from such relationship. In the context of Bode's published articles as well as his private correspondence with Duveen and selected American collectors, it was possible to further present Bode's changing views on the taste and knowledge of American collectors and, at the same time, outline some of the important issues of the more complex European-American art market dynamics in the early 20th century.