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Review of the Ph.D. Dissertation submitted by Michaela Watrelot:

Wilhelm von Bode and the International Art Market: the Unpublished Correspondence with Rudolphe Kann and Joseph Duveen

The main subject of the presented dissertation is the European and the American art market especially for Old Master paintings in the late 19th century and early 20th century, there tendencies, key aspects and mutual influences. The focus is on the probably most influential museum director of this period, Wilhelm von Bode, director general of the Royal Museums in Berlin (now Staatliche Museen zu Berlin) and director of the Picture Gallery and Sculpture Gallery in the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum for many years.

The basis of the dissertation is extensive and very meticulous research in different archives and the evaluation of original archival material, particularly in the Zentralarchiv of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, where the very voluminous Bode Papers are preserved. Mrs. Watrelot has studied various folders of the Bode Papers, such as letters from Rudolphe Kann and other private collectors, but also the correspondence between Bode and the art dealer company Duveen Brothers. This selection enables her to explore the art market from different point of views even Wilhelm von Bode is always the reference person and the connecting force in all chapters of the dissertation, which is of enormous value for structuring the complex study. It was also a wise decision to concentrate at first on the private collector Rudolphe Kann and his relationship to Bode and at second on the relationship between Bode and an important art dealer, Duveen, for examining and studying the behavior of Bode regarding the art market.

The structure of the dissertation follows this approach. Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 give a very convincing and helpful overview of the state of research and an introduction to the historical framework of the art market and the history of collecting. Chapter 3 introduces Rudolphe

Kann as a collector and connoisseur. Then the main chapters of the dissertation follow and all of them help to illuminate the main stakeholders and the mechanism on the European-American art market at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century.

Chapter 4 “Building the Kann Collection” uses the over 200 letters from Kann to Bode, preserved in the Zentralarchiv to analyze the interaction between the Banker and art collector and his adviser Bode, who represented above all the interests of a museum director. The result of this concentrated study is very important because the relationship between Bode and Kann is exemplary for many other collectors to whom Bode gave advice. This will be still more evident in the next chapter 5 “The International Art market”, where two other selected European collectors come in, Johann II. Prince of Liechtenstein and Adalbert von Lanna. The whole correspondence with Bode was evaluated and transcribed for the appendix of the dissertation as were the letters of the Kann family.

Although the Kann collection is often mentioned in the research literature, but so far no relevant academic research exists. The study of Michaela Watrelot is the first systematic review of the Kann collection and she analyze it in different ways using not only the published catalogues by Bode in 1900 and 1907 but above all the unknown letters from Kann to Bode. The study also shows what an important source the letters are for various topics: They can give a lot of valuable clues for provenance research of mentioned works of art. Also Bode’s influence on the international art market will be much more clearer, because the letters disclose his private opinions, which were often not the same as he wrote in published articles or even his memoirs.

The dramatic changes in Bode’s opinion and behavior from an opponent of the “American threat” to becoming an adviser of the new American collectors is content in the very strong chapter 7, starting already in Chapter 5 and 6. It shows again that the study of archival material brings new insights to light and can throw new perspectives on already known theses. The letters finally support these theses, some of them already expressed in the research literature about Bode and his various roles on the art market.

Another merit of the dissertation is the evaluation of the very voluminous correspondence of Bode and Duveen, which is preserved from both sides in the Getty Archive and the Zentralarchiv. Chapter 7 provides here for the first time ever insights into the relationship and collaboration between Bode and Duveen, one of the most influential museum director and one of the most influential art dealer of the period. Of course the material is so voluminous that this can be only the beginning of deeper research regarding this aspect of Bode’s life, but Watrelot has created a very good basis, for example, for further study of Bode's relations with American private collectors.

As mentioned before the most sustainable value of the dissertation is the transcription and translation of the extensive archival material in the appendix. However, the original letters should be checked by a (German) native speaker before publication, as some errors have been made during transcription, which also effect the translation (example: African vs. Asian art, p. 141, letter No. 63, 15.5.1909).

The submitted dissertation is in any case worthy of being awarded by an academic grade "Ph.D."

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