

Inquiries to the Fischer Gallery Archive: An Overview

Galerie Fischer Auktionen AG in Lucerne manages an art library as well as a comprehensive art market, art trade and art auction archive (hereinafter referred to as the "Archive"). The Archive documents in particular the company's international art trading and art auction activities, founded by Theodor Fischer (1878-1957) in 1907 and later operated by Galerie Fischer Kollektivgesellschaft (collective partnership), and from 1993 by Galerie Fischer Auktionen AG (corporation).

Galerie Fischer Auktionen AG has been and continues to be frequently contacted by interested third parties (such as current and former owners or possessors of art objects or their heirs, museums and other institutions, art market players, scholars and the general public) with inquiries for information and/or research related to the business activities of Galerie Fischer and/or relating to objects once traded or offered by Galerie Fischer.

The following is a brief introduction to the Archive of the Fischer Gallery and information to help ensure that inquiries regarding the Archive are made and answered as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible for all parties.

What does the Archive of the Fischer Gallery consist of?

The Archive includes in particular auction catalogs, contracts, invoices and -statements, correspondence with consignors and bidders/buyers, inventories, descriptions of objects, appraisals, illustrations, commission and account books, etc.

Who is responsible for the Archives of the Fischer Gallery?

The Archive is operated, maintained and financed by Galerie Fischer Auktionen AG. The company and the Archive are exclusively privately owned and do not receive any government subsidies.

How is the Archive indexed? Do finding aids exist?

The Archive has grown "organically" through the more than 100 years of art trading and auction activities of the Fischer Gallery. It was and is designed exclusively to support and document the activities of this company. It is therefore not designed for research purposes and is not archivally indexed. At the same time, it has numerous gaps. In many cases, documents are not found in the expected context or turn up later in a different context. If information is provided, it can therefore only ever be a "snapshot" - which may be incomplete - at the time the corresponding information and/or research inquiry is fulfilled.

Are the documents digitized?

The Archive cannot be digitized due to its large volume. However, since spring 2022, all auction catalogs (with very few exceptions from the earliest history of the company, which unfortunately have not been preserved) up to and including the year 1945 can be accessed via the [Heidelberg catalogs](#).

Can I come to the archive and do research myself?

Due to the size and extremely complex structure of the archive, physical access for external researchers is not possible.

How likely is it that evidence relating to the object I am looking for will be found?

That depends on whether the object was traded at auction or in a "private deal," i.e., through the company's other art trading activities. While the more than 400 auctions of the company are comparatively well documented, even if not completely, documents on "private deals", especially in the first decades of the company, are only very incompletely preserved. The reasons for this are not known.

Since the archive has not been digitized due to its large volume, an "object database" does not exist. The desired information must therefore be taken from analog, often handwritten documents.

How do I submit an inquiry for information or research?

Most inquiries from interested third parties concern objects that were once (possibly) offered or sold by the Fischer Gallery.

- 1) Please provide us with all the information you know that is necessary to process your inquiry for information and/or research. For this purpose, please fill out our questionnaire, make the screenshots described there and tick the statement: "General Terms and Conditions read and accepted".
- 2) Send us the screenshots described in the questionnaire and the completed questionnaire by mail.

To whom should the inquiry be addressed?

This depends on the amount of information you need.

- 1) Would you like to know only the last name of the seller and buyer of an auction?

Please address such inquiries to the managing director of Galerie Fischer Auktionen AG, Lucerne, Dr. Kuno Fischer (kf@kunofischer.ch).

- 2) Do you need further information, such as addresses of sellers and buyers, circumstances of the sale, etc.?

Such research is carried out - depending on professional or personal availability - by either Dr. Kuno Fischer (kf@kunofischer.ch) or Dr. Sandra Sykora

(provenienzundrecht@bluewin.ch), with whom the Fischer Gallery has been collaborating since 2021. Sandra Sykora has full access to the Archive as an external provenance researcher, but is not an employee of Galerie Fischer and is not paid by Galerie Fischer.

How much does the information or research inquiry cost?

A remuneration is owed to process the information and/or research inquiry. The amount of the remuneration depends on whether the inquiry concerns

- ✓ the processing of simple information and/or research inquiries, e.g. looking up a consignor or buyer from the auction book; also typing work or the preparation of text excerpts; such work is charged at CHF 70 per hour; or
- ✓ more complex research assignments (e.g. locating objects or persons in handwritten commission or account books); such work will be charged at CHF 150 per hour.

Invoicing is done in 6min intervals (=1/10 h). In addition, telephone or copying costs may be invoiced.

A corresponding research contract is made directly between you or your institution and the researcher (i.e. Kuno Fischer or Sandra Sykora) and is also billed between you and the researcher. The researchers inform each other comprehensively about the respective clients, assignments and results.

The General Terms and Conditions apply to all research contracts.

Can I get copies of documents?

Reproductions of documents from the Archive of the Galerie Fischer are generally not made available. However, if desired, exact transcripts of documents or the like can be provided (for a fee).

Can the researchers refuse to answer inquiries for information and/or research?

The Fischer Gallery and the researchers reserves the right not to answer certain inquiries. This is particularly the case if the events to which the inquiries refer do not date back very far and it is to be expected that persons involved are still alive. In this case, providing information may violate data protection law and infringe the general personal rights of the persons concerned. Violations of copyright law are also possible in individual cases.

June 2023