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Provenance research report for Lostart-ID 478415

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Ernest Durig (formerly attributed to Auguste Rodin)

*Danseuse Cambodgienne / Cambodian dancer, ca. 1906 (?)*¹

Watercolour, gouache and pencil on paper, mounted on cardboard backing, 323 x 237 mm
on recto signed in pencil at lower right: "Aug Rodin"; lower centre, inscribed on matting cardboard: "A. Rodin"

on verso, upper right, inscribed in pencil on white label: "Dr G"

Provenance:

(...)

¹ Dating may vary considering it is a fake by Ernest Durig.

Possible sale: Tableaux modernes, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 15 December 1943, lot 28²

André Schoeller, Paris, acquired at the above sale (per Archives de Paris)³

Probably thereafter acquired by Hildebrand Gurlitt through André Schoeller⁴

By descent to Cornelius Gurlitt, Munich/Salzburg

From 6 May 2014: Estate of Cornelius Gurlitt

General remarks:

On 10 July 1906, Rodin, aged 66, attended a performance given at the Pré Catalan open-air theater hidden in the Bois de Boulogne, by a troupe of Cambodian dancers, who had accompanied King Sisowath of Cambodia (1904 -1927) on his official visit to France. Enthralled by the beauty of these dancers and the novelty of their movements, Rodin followed them to Marseilles to be able to make as many drawings of them as possible before they left the country on 20 July. Enthusiastic about the purity of grace and expression, Rodin created some 150 drawings. Rodin fell in love with the Cambodian dance and followed the troupe to observe them closely. In these drawings, Rodin wished to depict the gestures of the arms, hands and legs, and the unique postures of the dancers.

Rodin's drawings were critically viewed as symptomatic of European engagement with foreign cultures at the turn of the century. Focusing on the study of form and motion denied giving voice to the significance of Khmer dance and stagecraft as an art form in itself. Giving voice to the sentiment that Cambodia was still perceived as a subordinate colony of France.⁵

The fact that a large number of drawings bear the title "Cambodian dancer" and that they are all created at the same time, with the same medium and on similar paper, needs to be taken into account in our attempt to identify the specific drawing found in the C. Gurlitt cache. The most decisive factor measurements poses similar difficulties, as most of the drawings' measurements are almost identical.

Forgeries of Rodin

According to the expert report submitted by Christina Buley-Uribe,⁶ fake Rodin drawings proliferated and were sold by the hundreds, explaining the presence of forgeries in collections in France and Germany. In her view, this explains the presence of two fake drawings she identified in the Gurlitt trove: LostArt 478415 and 478167.

Furthermore, during WWII the dealers Rudolf Melander Holzapfel and André Schoeller sold fake Rodin drawings to the Folkwang Museum in Essen. Schoeller's certificates, along with Jean Cailac's served as expert authentications of Rodin for auctions at the Hôtel Drouot in Paris between WWI and WWII and during the German occupation. Neither Schoeller nor Cailac were aware of the forgeries. She thus deduces that it is highly probable that H. Gurlitt bought most of the Rodin drawings through André Schoeller.

Buley-Uribe served as co-curator for the exhibition *Rodin et les danseuses cambodgiennes. Sa dernière passion*, Paris, musée Rodin, 2006, and believes that LostArt 478415 is characteristic of one of Rodin's

² Attachment 1. *Tableaux modernes, aquarelles, gouaches, pastels, dessins*. Auct. cat., Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 15 December 1943. [possibly lot 28, as *Danseuse indochinoise*]

³ Attachment 2. Archives de Paris: D149E3 17. Auctioneer Alphonse Bellier, Procès-verbal, 15 December 1943.

⁴ Attachment 3. BArch, N 1826 Bild-0012 [=2.2_F209], [12. November 1943].

⁵ <http://theappendix.net/issues/2014/10/cambodian-dancers-auguste-rodin-and-the-imperial-imagination>

⁶ Buley-Uribe, C., Provenance research report on works attributed to Auguste Rodin. Paris 2017

fakers - Ernest Durig (1894-1962).⁷ Durig was a sculptor who, after a brief vocation with the Vatican Swiss guard, claimed to be Rodin's last student.

It is most likely that he managed to steal original sheets, on which he drew and copied the master's style with outstanding capacity. Durig forgeries are believed to have been executed after his arrival in the USA in 1928; however, Buley-Urbe asserts that recent research reveals that his forgeries may have been executed during Rodin's lifetime in France.

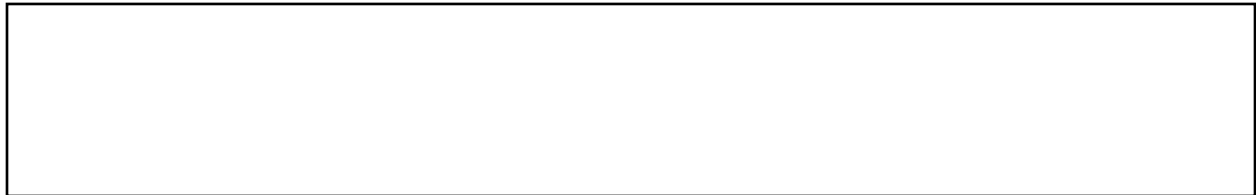
- **Primary sources:**

Business records Hildebrand Gurlitt

Book 1 acquisitions ledger 1937–41:⁸

4 April 1938 [line 180]

22 September 1941 [line 624]



As both entries identify the work on paper as “Drawing” and not as watercolour, our assumption is that These entries do not correspond to LostArt #478415, which H. Gurlitt may have identified at least with the title dancer.

Book 1 sales ledger 1937–41:

Sept 24 1939 (line 375)

Sept 12 1941 (line 611)



The ‘Akt’ sold to *Konsul* Wada clearly does not pertain to the ‘Dancer’. Only line 611 may correspond to LostArt 478415, an untitled watercolour sold to Hermann Reemtsma. However, a letter by Reemtsma to Gurlitt dated Nov 3 1947 negates this notion.⁹ Hermann Reemtsma refers to the work as an ink drawing, which does not correspond to LostArt 478415 by medium. It is to be noted that at several other instances in the ledger, the Gurlitt sales register was found to be problematic.

⁷ Ibid. – part 3

⁸ The sales ledger has proven to be problematic, inconsistent and inaccurate by provenance research conducted pertaining to the C. Gurlitt estate.

⁹ Letter Reemtsma to Gurlitt, Nov. 3, 1947, in: NL Cornelius Gurlitt Salzburg, K.1; Lfd_Nr 10, Bd 2, 316

All other entries in the ledger concerning the artist Auguste Rodin refer to drawings and watercolours with the title 'Akt'. The conclusion of the team is that this drawing was not recorded in the ledgers.

Photograph¹⁰

Certificate of authenticity issued by Andre Schoeller In November 1943, Paris. Photo and measurements correspond with LostArt 477910 (with a slight difference in measurements: 33 x 23 cm).

The date of the authenticity certificate, by Andre Schoeller of Nov. 1943 provides a further indication that the drawings sold in 1939 and 1941, as recorded in the ledger, do not correspond to LostArt 478415, assuming the certificate was not issued a year or two after acquisition.

It is likely that Schoeller issued the authenticity certificate on request of Hotel Drouot, prior to a sale of items to H. Gurlitt.

According to the American Art Looting Intelligence Unit:

Schoeller, Andre. Paris, 13 rue de Teheran. Well known expert in French 19th century painting. President of the Art Editors Syndicate and appraiser for the Hotel Drouot. Appraised paintings confiscated by the ERR. Sold extensively to Wüster, Brueschwiler and Lohse.¹¹ Expert in modern painting said to be collaborator. An opportunist and a gambler, probably rather unscrupulous.¹²

Dr. J Gramlich assesses that Adolf Wuester, Victor Mandl, Andre Schoeller were closely in contact pertaining to the art trade in occupied Paris.¹³ The Salzburg documents revealed more than 140 photographs of authenticity certificates Schoeller has provided for Gurlitt's private collection, most of them issued 1943 - 1944.¹⁴

Claims with reference to *Danseuse Cambodgienne* / Cambodian dancer, by Rodin:

Expert report by Christina Buley-Uribe¹⁵ addresses the issue of claimants:

Curt Glaser descendants' claim of the drawing *Tanzende Kambodjanerin* is negated.¹⁶ The expert believes to have located Glaser's Cambodian dancer in the Basel Öffentliche Kunstsammlung inventory no 1933.70, apparently bought by the Swiss museum at the Max Perl Auktion 180, Berlin in May 1933.¹⁷

The team supports this assumption as the Perl auction lot description does not match the artwork in question.

Regarding the David-Weill heirs' claim for a "*Danseuse cambodgienne*" stolen 11 April 1941, the expert Christina Buley-Uribe asserts the following:¹⁸ It is doubtful that Gurlitt's drawing originated with this collection. The David-Weill family is linked to the family of Lucien Raphaël whose wife, née Thérèse

¹⁰ Attachment 3.

¹¹ <http://lootedart.com/aliu-long> (October. 2017)

¹² <https://www.fold3.com/image/270228043> (October 2017)

¹³ Gramlich, J.: Paper I: Informationen aus dem Nachlass Cornelius Gurlitts zu Hildebrand Gurlitts Netzwerk in Frankreich, München 2015, p. 14

¹⁴ Gramlich, J., loc. cit., p. 15

¹⁵ Buley-Uribe, C., loc. cit. p. 18-20

¹⁶ www.lostart.de/EN/Verlust/398075

¹⁷ [Bücher, Handzeichnungen \[...\]](#); 18. [und] 19. Mai 1933 [...] Auct. cat. Max Perl, Berlin, 1933.

¹⁸ Buley-Uribe, C., loc. cit. p. 18

Leygues, was the daughter of Georges Leygues (1857-1933). Leygues was Minister of Colonies in 1906, when Rodin drew the Cambodian series. Four years later, in a letter addressed to Rodin dated 10 April 1910, Georges Leygues asks for permission to see drawings that had been exhibited at the Grand Palais and the ones he brought back from Marseilles: these are the 14 Cambodian dancer drawings. Leygues probably was given one or bought one of those. The expert asserts thus that it is doubtful that the David-Weill family owned a fake drawing of a Cambodian dancer, having had access to the originals.

- **Archival sources:**

ERR database of Art at the Jeu de Paume

Does not yield any results for Auguste Rodin "Cambodian dancer".

However, a search under Georges Mandel¹⁹ yields 44 items looted in December 1942, among them:

Rodin *Dessin*

No further details are provided, and thus the identification with LostArt 478415 cannot be fully proven. The expert report by Buley-Urbe also asserts that the Rodin drawing may have originated with the French politician Georges Mandel. Before being a close political collaborator to Georges Clemenceau (1841 - 1929), Mandel joined his daily newspaper *L'Aurore*. Art critic Gustave Geffroy (1855-1926), also a journalist at *L'Aurore*, and Clemenceau were friends, admirers and collectors of Rodin 18. It is possible that Mandel's taste for Rodin came from conversations with these two personalities. No trace of any correspondence with Mandel is kept at the *archives municipales* in Nancy (fonds Gustave Geffroy). Buley-Urbe quotes a letter dated 10 Feb. 1951 by the companion of Mandel, the actress Beatrice Bretty, addressed to the French officials.²⁰ No description or title of the Rodin drawing, however, verifies it was framed in a gold frame, measuring approximately a width of 25/30 cm x 35/40 cm height, with an inscription "MAN" for Mandel, which Bretty believes could well have been erased. The measurements provided do not match the golden frame of LostArt 478415 measuring 51.2x41.9, however, a recollection of size is not a precise measurement, and the golden frame thus may provide an important clue as to the possible provenance being Mandel. To be noted that the frame found in the Gurlitt cache with the Rodin drawing is only partially gilded.

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) / Fold3

The bill dated 20.11.1942 by Almas Dietrich records a sale of 2 Rodin watercolors with no further details²¹. Thus no clues for a match with LostArt 478415.

Auction Catalogues:

Max Perl, Berlin Auction 180, Sculpture, Japanese woodcuts, art works, May 18, 1933²²

¹⁹ http://www.errproject.org/jeudepaume/card_search.php?Query=georges+mandel (October 2017)

²⁰ Buley-Urbe, C., loc. cit. p. 20

²¹ <https://www.fold3.com/image/270039247> (October 2017)

²² http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/perl1933_05_18 (October 2017)

- Lot 1262 Rodin, Dancing Cambodian. Watercolour and pencil 31.5 x24.5 cm. Signature and date: Marseilles 1908 Aug. Rodin. Inscribed: Cambodgienne pour server de gloire.

Although subject and size bear similarities to LostArt 478415, the signature with date and place are missing. Furthermore, as the work was authenticated by Schoeller in Paris 1943, the Berlin origin and date are not concurrent with LostArt 478415.

Hotel Drouot, Paris, Ventes de Tableaux September 1941 - July 1942.²³

Rodin, Dancer, pencil and watercolour H. 32 width 22. Right bottom signature.

As the title does not refer to a Cambodian Dancer and the measurements slightly differ, the possibility of a match with LostArt 478415 is doubtful.

Tableaux modernes. Aquarelles, gouaches, pastels, dessins”, Hôtel Drouot, salle 7, 15 Dec. 1943, cat. N°28, p. 5. *Danseuse Indochinoise*. Aquarelle signée en bas à droite. H. 0,33 x 0.24.²⁴

This seems to be the closest match with LostArt 478415, and it is reaffirming the Schoeller expertise given in November 1943, in preparation for the sale.

Exhibitions:

Cambodian dancers by Rodin were put on display in several exhibitions, non-yielded a match with LostArt 478415 reaffirming the fact it was in the H. Gurlitt private collection, and not available public view.

Additional Rodin Literature reviewed

L. Bénédite: Rodin. New York 1927.

Catalogue des tableaux modernes. Collection Georges Bernheim. Auct. cat. Galerie Jean Charpentier, Paris 1935.

B. Champigneulle: Rodin. New York 1980.

J. Cladel: Rodin. New York 1937.

A. E. Elsen: The Drawings of Rodin. London 1972.

A. E. Elsen: Rodin. New York 1963.

A. E. Elsen (ed): Rodin Rediscovered. Washington 1981.

Exposición Rodin. Exh. cat., Museo nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires 1934.

W. H. Hale (ed): The World of Rodin. New York 1978.

D. Jarrassé: Rodin – A Passion For Movement. Paris 1995.

C. Lampert: Rodin. Sculpture & Drawings. London 1986.

A. le Normand-Romain: Auguste Rodin: dessins et aquarelles. Paris 2006.

S. Parmiggiani (ed): Auguste Rodin. Exh. cat. Palazzo Magnani, Milan, 14 June–31 August 2003.

P.-L. Renié (ed): Figures d' Ombres. Exh. cat. Musée Goupil, Bordeaux, 10 May–10 August 1996.

Rodin. Exh. cat. Museum Tel Aviv 1967.

²³ http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/drouot1941_1942 (Jan. 2017)

²⁴ Attachment 1.

Rodin. L'accident / l'aléatoire. Exh. cat. Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Genève 2014.

P. Sollers: Auguste Rodin. Munich 1987.

G. Talpir: Auguste Rodin. Tel Aviv <n.y.>.

V. Thorson: Rodin Graphics. San Francisco 1975.

The Berlin team has reviewed a great number of books focusing on Rodin's drawings and watercolours.²⁵ The particular work on paper LostArt 478415 was not illustrated in any of them. This fact may constitute a reaffirmation that the work had been since around 1943 in the private hands of H. Gurlitt.

Conclusions:

The expert report submitted by Buley- Uribe asserts a clear judgement regarding the authenticity of the watercolour, and believes it to be a fake by Ernest Durig.

Rodin's Cambodian Dancer provenance in Paris is established, and it was in all probability sold to H. Gurlitt through Parisian art dealer André Schoeller, who acquired the work at the 1943 December sale of Hotel Drouot.

The former provenance of the watercolour could not be established, as the auction protocol gives more than 25 names of sellers without an exact reference to lot 28.²⁶ Thus, it remains unclear who sold the work at the December 1943 auction.

Die Provenienz des Werkes konnte trotz intensiver Forschung nicht lückenlos aufgeklärt werden, d.h. das Kunstwerk ist weder erwiesenermaßen noch mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit NS-Raubkunst noch frei von NS-Raubkunstverdacht. Es wurde nach aktueller Einschätzung allen Rechercheansätzen nachgegangen. Das Werk muss demnach in die Kategorie „ungeklärt“ [=nach Ampelsystem: gelb] eingestuft werden.²⁷

Disclaimer

The research that goes into establishing the provenance of a work of art usually requires complex work that often lasts many years. Researchers have to reconstruct events that took place many decades ago. Often, the only sources of vital clues stem from third parties who do not always represent and assess the facts in a manner that is beyond all doubt. The above object record is just an interim report that was designed as a basis to facilitate possible further in-depth research. Despite the short period of time in which it was compiled, this interim report is nevertheless the result of utmost care in research, combined with great professional expertise. The following provisions therefore apply:

- a) The investigation revolved exclusively around the question of the origin and chronology of ownership of the artwork described in the report. No liability will be accepted for:

²⁵ See: ORE_Rodin 478415 attached.

²⁶ Attachment 2.

²⁷ Angleichung durch Projektleitung, 31.08.2018.

- the accuracy of the used sources' presentation of the facts and any analyses, conclusions, and assessments they may contain,
 - the exhaustiveness of our probing into and evaluation of the available source material,
 - the analysis and conclusions drawn from the sources in the course of our research,
 - the findings on the subject of the report and how they were derived,
 - the authenticity of the artwork, as well as the accuracy of its attribution to a particular artist.
- b) The report is based on the sources available at the time it was written. It is an interim report. Further research might be required. It is important to note the possibility that new source material may be found, which may lead to a re-evaluation of the interim findings presented here.
- c) The present report does not purport to make pronouncements on any legal claims and legal positions. No liability will be accepted for any conclusions drawn by the addressee(s) or by third parties based on this report.