

# Unabhängige Kommission SKKG

Independent Commission of the Stiftung für Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte  
for Clarifying Claims Resulting from Nazi Persecution

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Just and fair solution for “Thunersee mit Blüemlisalp und Niesen”: The SKKG and heirs of the previous owner come to an agreement on the restitution of the painting by Ferdinand Hodler**

*The Stiftung für Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte (SKKG) and the heirs of the previous owner, Martha Adrianna Nathan, born Dreyfus (1874-1958) have come to an agreement through proceedings led by the Unabhängige Kommission SKKG (hereafter: the Commission). The painting “Thunersee mit Blüemlisalp und Niesen” (1876/1882) by Ferdinand Hodler will be returned to the heirs. The agreement also stipulates that the history of the former owner be made available to the public.*

The focus of the proceedings was the painting “Thunersee mit Blüemlisalp und Niesen” by Ferdinand Hodler, which has been in the SKKG collection since 1998. In its report, the Commission acknowledged the results of SKKG Provenance Research and conducted its own investigations. In doing so, it came to the conclusion that, at the end of 1922, the artwork belonged to Martha Nathan, who was persecuted as a Jew by the Nazi regime. She fled Germany for France in 1937 and on to Geneva in August 1939. Martha Nathan was born a French citizen. She became Swiss in 1875, along with her parents and siblings. When she married Hugo Nathan, she lost her Swiss citizenship and became a German citizen. In 1933, she applied for and was granted French citizenship again. At the time of her escape, she was a French citizen and as such was able to reside in Geneva. After the fall of France, Switzerland changed this policy. French Jews could only obtain a residence permit if they provided guarantees or paid a deposit. Martha Nathan’s application to be recognized as an “emigrant” in Switzerland, and thereby have a degree of legal security, was rejected by the Federal Aliens Police [*Fremdenpolizei*]. However, she was granted a residence permit, for which she had to submit a new application every six months, including a statement of her financial situation.

In 1941, the painting “Thunersee mit Blüemlisalp und Niesen”, which she owned, was sold in Switzerland, because she found herself forced to dispose of works from her art collection since 1938, to cover her living expenses and generate financial resources. The UK-SKKG came to the conclusion that the sale of Ferdinand Hodler’s painting was directly related to the former owner’s predicament. Without the sale of the painting, she would not have been able to prove that she had the necessary funds to extend her residence permit. As a French Jew, the loss of her residence permit would very likely have had life-threatening consequences for her. The Commission therefore considers this to be a case of loss due to Nazi persecution. In its report, the Commission emphasizes that this applies despite the fact that the sale took place in a third country such as Switzerland. The persecuted person was also in a state of distress in this case. The sale directly protected the former owner from Nazi persecution, as without sufficient

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zur Klärung NS-verfolgungsbedingter Ansprüche

financial resources she would have faced the refusal of a residence permit and deportation to occupied France. The parties to the proceedings have unreservedly acknowledged this fact and its assessment.

A central component of the agreement is the desire of all parties involved in the proceedings to keep the memory alive. To this end, the painting will be on display at the exhibition “Jewish Collectors in Germany” at the Bucerius Kunst Forum in Hamburg (September 11, 2026 through March 28, 2027). In addition, the SKKG plans to honor the history of the artwork and the Martha Nathan family in a publication.

During the settlement negotiations in Zurich on March 10, 2026, the SKKG and the heirs, supported by the Commission, agreed on a just and fair solution in accordance with the Washington Principles. The Commission report formed the basis for the solution that has now been reached.

The Unabhängige Kommission SKKG structured and led the process of clarifying the claims. It is committed to the guidelines of the Washington Conference (1998), the Terezín Declaration (2009), and the ICOM Code of Ethics (2004). In its function, the Commission has evaluated the results of provenance research, conducted the process independently, and drafted an agreement for the settlement that has now been reached. The SKKG committed itself in advance to recognizing the decisions made by the Unabhängige Kommission SKKG and the just and fair solutions reached by agreement as binding.

## Enclosures:

- Report of the Unabhängige Kommission SKKG (October 28, 2025),
- Research Report by SKKG Provenance Research (February 23 and September 17, 2024)
- Image of “Thunersee mit Blüemlisalp und Niesen” by Ferdinand Hodler (1876/1882)

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