

ART GALLERY OF HAMILTON RETURNS NAZI-LOOTED PAINTING

On display until April 26, 2015



Johannes Cornelisz Verspronck (Dutch 1597-1662), *Portrait of a Lady* 1652. oil on canvas. Gift of the Volunteer Committee, 1987

NOVEMBER 4, 2014 – The Art Gallery of Hamilton has agreed to restore a portrait in its permanent collection to the heirs of the original owners. The painting, *Portrait of a Lady*, by Dutch 17th-century artist Johannes Verspronck, is being returned to Sarah Solmssen, great granddaughter-in-law of Alma Bertha Salomonsohn, who represented Alma's heirs. Alma was the wife of Arthur Salomonsohn, Chairman of the Board of the Deutsche Bank, who assembled an important collection of art. The painting, donated to the AGH by the AGH Volunteer Committee, was purchased at the Sotheby's sale of Important Old Master Paintings in New York City in June 1987.

Portrait of a Lady, along with other possessions belonging to the Salomonsohns, was stolen by Nazi authorities in 1940. It was sold at auction there in 1941 and the proceeds sent to the tax office in Berlin-Brandenburg. Mrs. Salomonsohn, who changed her name to Solmssen after immigrating to the United States in the 1940s, began a search for her husband's paintings which had been stolen; a search which has been continued by her descendants.



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The AGH received detailed documentation to support the claim by the Solmssen family, including the circumstances surrounding the loss of the work. This is the only claim for restitution of an artwork that the AGH has received.

“The Art Gallery of Hamilton is the guardian of one of the finest permanent collections in Canada and *Portrait of a Lady* holds a very special place in it,” said Louise Dompierre, AGH President and CEO. “In making our decision to return *Portrait of a Lady* we have been guided by international law, the 1998 Washington Conference Principles on Nazi-confiscated Art, to which Canada is a signatory, and our own extensive research into the history of the painting’s ownership. It is a great pleasure to return the painting to those whom we believe, to the best of our knowledge, are its rightful owners.”

“We are grateful to the Art Gallery of Hamilton for its decision. *Portrait of a Lady* hung in Omi’s [Alma’s] bedroom in Berlin, and we are happy for its return. We are sad only that Omi [Alma] did not live to see her painting again,” said Sarah Solmssen, on behalf of Alma Solmssen’s great great grandchildren.

Art lovers have an opportunity to see *Portrait of a Lady* until April 26, 2015. The painting is on view in the *Art for a Century: 100 for the 100th* exhibition which closes on that date. The exhibition gathers 100 masterworks in the AGH permanent collection and is a focal point of the AGH centennial celebrations. Admission to *Art for a Century: 100 for the 100th* is free of charge.

TOURS

Docent guided tours of the exhibitions on view:

Every Saturday and Sunday at 12:30 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. Free with admission.

About the Art Gallery of Hamilton

The Art Gallery of Hamilton is celebrating its Centennial throughout 2014. Today the AGH is the largest independent public art gallery in Ontario. Its permanent collection, which is focused on historical Canadian, 19th-century European and Canadian Contemporary art, now numbers more than 10,000 works and is recognized as one of the finest in Canada. The AGH is regarded as a vital centre of creative development and artistic engagement that brings art and people of all ages together. It is also renowned as a North American centre for the study of 19th-century European art.

On view at the AGH are:

March 1 to February 22, 2015: *Art for a Century: 100 for the 100th* FREE ADMISSION

http://www.artgalleryofhamilton.com/ex_current.php#cent

June 28 to January 4, 2015: *Jenn E. Norton: Dredging a Wake*

http://www.artgalleryofhamilton.com/ex_current.php#4

November 1 to February 8, 2015: *The World is an Apple: The Still Lifes of Paul Cézanne*

http://www.artgalleryofhamilton.com/ex_upcoming.php#5

November 1 to February 8, 2015: *Painting Hamilton*

http://www.artgalleryofhamilton.com/ex_upcoming.php#5



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VISITOR INFORMATION

Admission:

AGH Members: Free; Adults, \$10; Students/Seniors, \$8; Children (6-17), \$4; under 5 years, Free.

Friday Free Night: Free admission on the first Friday of the month.

Museum Hours:

Tuesday & Wednesday, 11 a.m.–6 p.m.; Thursday, 11 a.m.–8 p.m.; Friday, 11 a.m.–6 p.m.;
Saturday–Sunday, 12 noon–5 p.m.

The Art Gallery of Hamilton is located at 123 King Street West, downtown Hamilton, Ontario,
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For publicity images go to: <http://www.artgalleryofhamilton/imagebank>

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