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HEIR TO VAST ART COLLECTION RECOVERS OLD WORLD PAINTING LOOTED BY NAZIS

First Painting From Famed Goudstikker Collection Returned to Family

New York (May 24, 2001) -- Marei von Saher, the sole living heir of Jacques Goudstikker, the foremost collector and dealer of Old Masters in pre-World War II Holland, announced today that the Estate of Hertha Katz has returned to her a painting entitled "The Temptation of St. Anthony" by the Dutch pre-Renaissance painter J.W. de Cock.

The painting is part of an extensive collection of Old Master art that was owned by Goudstikker but looted by officers of Nazi Germany during its occupation of Holland in the early 1940s. In recent years there has been growing international interest in the misappropriation of art and other assets perpetrated by Germany during World War II. Jacques Goudstikker, his wife and his only son fled Holland in May 1940, when Nazi troops invaded Holland. Goudstikker was forced to leave behind his business and 1,400 art works, escaping only with his personal effects. Field Marshall Hermann Goering subsequently took the best of the collection back to Germany with him, leaving the remainder to one of his agents who managed his own "art dealership" through the war years. After the war, about 250 paintings from the Goudstikker collection were returned by the Allies to the Dutch authorities; but rather than returning the collection to the family, as the Allies had anticipated, the Dutch authorities retained the collection, over the protests of the family, and it became the cornerstone of the Dutch National Collection.

Marei von Saher is presently seeking to recover those paintings from the Dutch government. At the same time, she has been pursuing the other paintings that disappeared from the Goudstikker collection during the war. She is confident that her claim against the Dutch government will ultimately be resolved favorably to the family and she is also optimistic that other paintings from the collection will be found and recovered.

The de Cock painting is the first from the massive and historic Goudstikker collection to be returned to the family. The painting was to be auctioned by Christie's this past January for the benefit of the Katz Estate. Prior to the auction, it was identified as a lost Goudstikker painting and removed from the auction by Christie's. Discussions between the Goudstikker family's U.S. attorney, Lawrence M. Kaye of Herrick, Feinstein LLP, and the attorneys for the Katz Estate resulted in the return of the painting to the family. Mrs. von Saher said: "The family is gratified by the actions of Christie's and the Katz Estate and believes that this is an important and historic step in the family's efforts to recover the legacy of Jacques Goudstikker. I am heartened by the fact that museums and collectors throughout the world have become more sensitive to Holocaust claims in recent years and have begun to do "the right thing."

Paul Marchese, of the law firm of Brancato & Marchese, P.C., representing the fiduciary for the Estate of Hertha Katz, stated: "We are honored that we could take part in the return of this work to the owner's family and wish to acknowledge the diligence of Christie's in helping to identify the work as a stolen piece."

Stephen S. Lash, Chairman of Christie's Americas said: "The restitution of this painting to the sole living heir of the original owner is a tribute to the work that has been accomplished since the issue of Nazi Looted Art came to the forefront of the art world in the mid 1990s. Christie's has established and supports a system whereby, in addition to our own research, we work with secondary sources, in this case the Art Loss Register, to help identify lost works of art. This happy reunion is proof that the system works. It is Christie's hope that other paintings will be restituted in a similar fashion." Mrs. von Saher added: "It is my hope that this first return of art from the Goudstikker Collection will increase international awareness of the family's plight and lead to additional returns by people of goodwill who find themselves in possession of other works from the collection. I am also hopeful that this event will serve to encourage the many other families who were victims of war-time thefts to continue their pursuit of family treasures, wherever they might be held."

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Editor's Note: A digital image of the painting, courtesy of Marei von Saher, can be requested by e-mail to mfowl@herrick.com or dpell@herrick.com.

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