

ForNet – Forgeries and Networks

Rebecca Welkens
Rebecca.Welkens@zegk.uni-heidelberg.de



About the Project

Duration: 2024-2027

From 1899 to 1939, the journal *Mitteilungen des Museen-Verbandes* published reports on confirmed and suspected art forgeries—but access was limited to members of the museum association. The DFG-funded research project ForNet, based at the Leibniz Institute of European History (Mainz) and the Institute of European Art History (Heidelberg), has been investigating this unique source since 2024. The project explores the networks connecting museums, experts, forgers, and the art market, as well as the association's structure, its effectiveness, and the later history of the forgeries it documented.

Research Approach and Methodology

- combining archival analysis and historical network analysis
- In-depth archival research, art historical analysis and contextualization
- Use of XML-based transcriptions derived from entries in the *Mitteilungen*
- Visualization of networks involving people, institutions, and objects
- Identification of patterns and connections within historical contexts

Team

Jaap Geraerts, Henry Keazor, Demival Vasques Filho, Rebecca Welkens, Thorsten Wübbena

A Chance for Provenance Research

Provenance Data and Archival Insights

- Internal circulation of the *Mitteilungen* enabled the open sharing of sensitive provenance data
- Included were names of buyers, collectors, and artworks with often complex histories
- Used to support authenticity claims—original vs. forgery
- Strong focus on decorative arts, including objects tied to colonial-era collecting practices

Institutional Networks and Political Contexts

- Annual conferences (*Verhandlungen*) facilitated international exchange, but also internal agreements
- Influential members like Max Sauerlandt, Otto Kümmel, Robert Schmidt, Richard Stettiner, and Konrad Hüseler et al. make the association highly relevant for studying political positions
- The *Verband* reveals institutional power dynamics and ideological ties
- Until 1945, the *Verband* served as a central hub for reporting unresolved art thefts, the so called *Diebstahlanzeigen* (fig. 1)

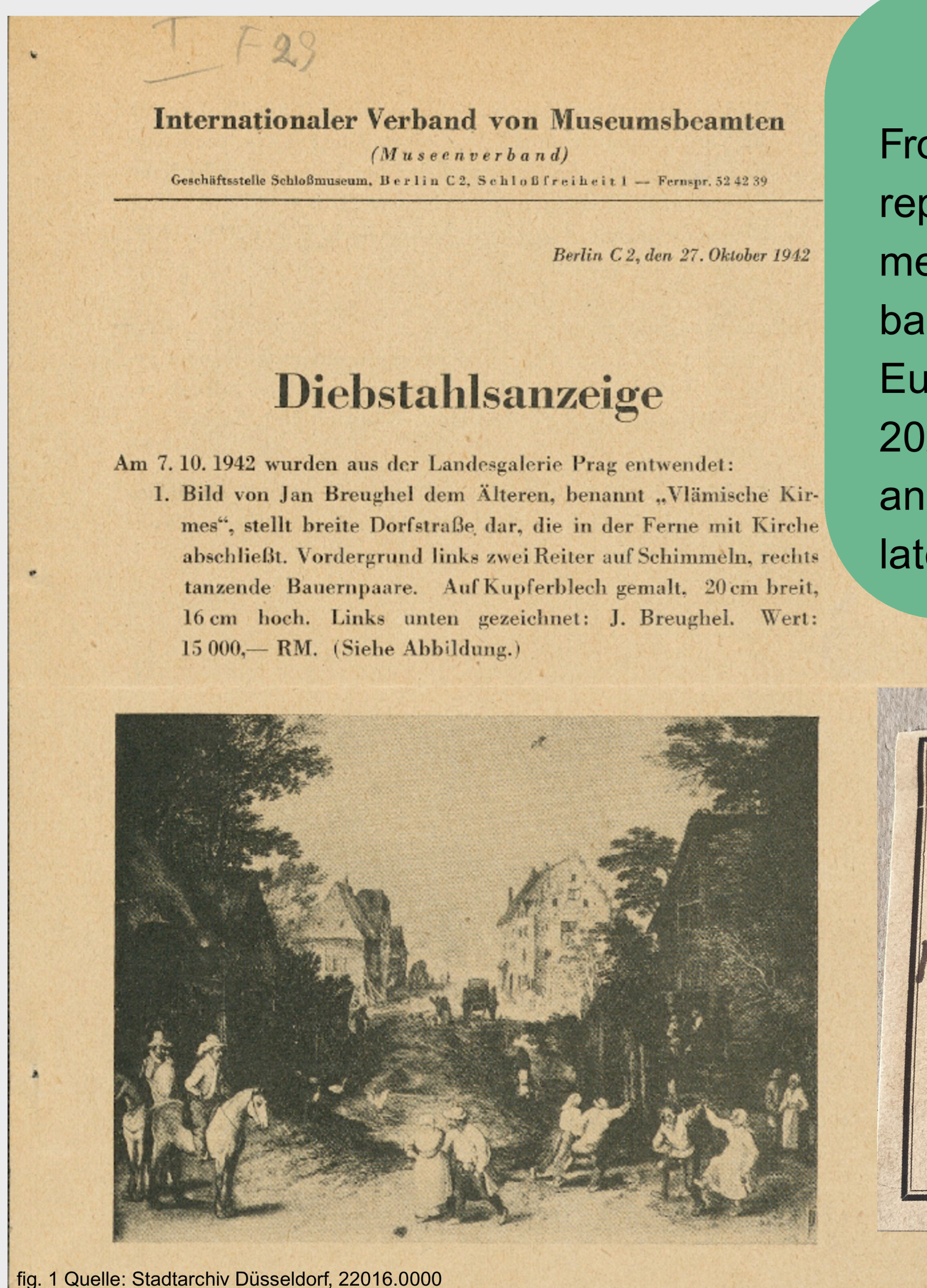


fig. 1 Quelle: Stadtarchiv Düsseldorf, 22016.0000

