

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**28 July, 2020**

*An Italian Renaissance painting looted by the Nazis finds peace in the Cerruti Collection at Castello di Rivoli*

*A seemingly lost painting by Jacopo del Sellaio, stolen from a family of Viennese Jews during World War II, and acquired in good faith in the 1980s, has been discovered by Castello di Rivoli Museum and is on display in its Cerruti Collection as part of an amicable agreement with the heirs*



**JACOPO DI ARCANGELO, known as DEL SELLAIO**  
*Madonna and Child with the Young St John and Two Angels, 1480-1485*  
tempera on panel, 89 x 59.8 cm  
Collection Fondazione Francesco Federico Cerruti per l'Arte  
Long-term loan  
Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Turin  
Photo © Alessandro Fiamingo  
Courtesy Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Turin

TURIN -- The Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea and the Fondazione Francesco Federico Cerruti per l'Arte, together with the Holocaust Claims Processing Office of the New York State Department of Financial Services, are pleased to announce the resolution of the Holocaust restitution case regarding the ownership of the *Madonna and Child with the Young St John and Two Angels*, 1480-1485 by Jacopo di Arcangelo, known as del Sellaio.

The painting, one of the most valuable pieces of devotional art created by Jacopo del Sellaio (Florence, 1443-1493), owes its fame not only to its art historical value as an important example of Italian High Renaissance painting, but also in memory of the dramatic events of the twentieth century that marked the fate of the family of the Jewish art collector Gustav Arens, his daughter Ann and her husband Friedrich Unger, after Nazi Germany annexed their native Austria in March 1938.

The work, installed in the tower room of Villa Cerruti, has a particularly troubled history. Purchased by the businessman and well-known Viennese art collector Gustav Arens (1867-1936) at the Galerie Sanct Lucas in Vienna in 1936, the painting was sent to the Akademie der bildenden Künste for restoration and the professor and art historian Emmerich Schaffran attributed the work to Jacopo del Sellaio rather than Raffaellino del Garbo, under whose name it was registered among the properties of Gustav Arens. After the death of Gustav Arens in March 1936, the painting was inherited by his eldest daughter Ann Arens Unger, who, after the annexation of Austria by Germany, suffered racial persecution by the Nazis. The Unger family fled Austria in June 1938 and first took refuge in France, before emigrating to the United States in May 1939. The Jewish family only retrieved their art from Vienna upon payment of a large ransom. Once in the United States, the family tried in vain to export their works of art from the Paris customs warehouse in which they were stored, and, in February 1942, the German authorities plundered the Ungers' property, including their art collection.

After the Second World War, the Unger family recovered many of their paintings, but the Jacopo del Sellaio seemed to have vanished. Ann and Friedrich Unger searched for it for the next two decades before giving up when the trail went cold, much to the regret of their youngest daughter Grete, born in Vienna in 1928, who had especially loved this painting as a child. Unbeknownst to the Unger family, the work reappeared on the market at the Galerie Fischer in Lucerne in 1974 and at a Christie's auction in London in 1985. Two years later, unaware of the dark history of the painting, the Turin collector Francesco Federico Cerruti (1922-2015) bought it from an Italian art dealer. After the death of Cerruti, who bequeathed his legendary collection to the Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, the museum conducted scholarly research on the painting and its provenance, and recognized the panel as the one lost by the Unger family.

In 2018 the Cerruti Foundation, also on behalf of the Castello di Rivoli, custodian of the Cerruti Collection, contacted the HCPO in New York and took the initiative to track down the heirs, now based in the US. They identified them as: Grete Unger Heinz, younger daughter of Ann and Friedrich, and the children of Ann's sister, Gitta Unger Meier: Karen Reeds, Andrea Meier and Alan Meier. In 2018 negotiations began, which ended in the early months of 2020, based on the mutual desire to establish an amicable agreement between the parties. The museum's objectives were to do justice, pay compensation, preserve the memory of the tragic events that occurred in Europe in the twentieth century, and offer the painting for public enjoyment in the newly launched Cerruti Collection, a house museum managed by Castello di Rivoli. The museum also sought to keep Francesco Federico Cerruti's collection together in its entirety for future generations. The painting is therefore now on display in the Cerruti Collection, in the villa built by the collector to house his art, a short walk from Castello di Rivoli. Cerruti so loved this painting that he installed it in the tower bedroom, one of the most intimate and important rooms in his house, in which he hung many devotional works and where he believed he would spend the last moments of his life.

**Grete Unger Heinz** states “At almost 93, I had lost hope that this beloved Italian Renaissance painting belonging to my parents would ever resurface. I am pleased not only that the Cerruti Foundation has reached an equitable agreement with the Unger family heirs, including a full account of the painting’s troubled history, but also that I might yet see the work itself in the Castello di Rivoli Museum in my lifetime.”

**Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev**, Director of Castello di Rivoli and of the Fondazione Francesco Federico Cerruti, says “I am extremely pleased that our Museum, together with the Cerruti Foundation and the heirs of Ann and Friedrich Unger, were able to successfully resolve a decades-long Holocaust restitution claim. Through scholarly provenance research on the Cerruti collection, and thanks to the HCPO, we were able to identify the heirs of this Renaissance painting lost during World War II, compensate them for their loss, and keep the painting in the Museum, for the public enjoyment. This artwork by Jacopo del Sellaio, so loved by its original owners, and also by Mr. Francesco Federico Cerruti, who acquired it in 1987 with no knowledge of its troubled past, has finally found peace.”



Jacopo del Sellaio's painting in the tower bedroom at Villa Cerruti  
Photo Francesco Federico Cerruti, late 1980s  
Courtesy Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Turin



Back row from the left: Frieda (Gustav Arens' wife),  
 Friedrich (Fritz) Unger, Gustav Arens, Grete Arens Glasner;  
 Front row, left to right: Lise Arens; Gitta Unger  
 (Ann and Friedrich Unger's daughter), Ernst Glasner, ca. 1923  
 © Grete Heinz, Courtesy Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte  
 Contemporanea, Rivoli-Turin



Ann A. Unger in the living room of her home in Berkeley, California, in 1950  
 The recovered paintings were brought there between 1946 and 1954.  
 © Grete Heinz, Courtesy Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea,  
 Rivoli-Turin

## Editors Notes

### The Cerruti Collection

Thanks to an important agreement with the Fondazione Francesco Federico Cerruti per l'Arte, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea is the first contemporary art museum in the world to incorporate an encyclopaedic historic art collection. Launched in May, 2019, the Cerruti Collection is installed in the villa built by the collector to house it, a short walk from Castello di Rivoli.

This private collection of immense quality was amassed from the 1950s by Francesco Federico Cerruti (1922-2015), a secretive and reserved entrepreneur and passionate collector who passed away in 2015 at the age of 93. It includes 300 works of sculpture and painting, ranging from the Middle Ages to today, plus approximately 200 rare and ancient books, and over 300 furnishings including carpets and desks by renowned cabinet makers. The collection features masterpieces from the Middle Ages through the 20<sup>th</sup> century by artists including Sassetta, Bernardo Daddi, Pontormo, Renoir, Modigliani, Kandinsky, Klee, Boccioni, Balla, Magritte, Bacon, Burri, de Chirico, Morandi, Warhol, Picasso, De Dominicis and Paolini, among others. Read more [here](#)



Francesco Federico Cerruti, October 4, 1957

© Fondazione Cerruti

Courtesy Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea

**Francesco Federico Cerruti** was born in Genoa on January 1, 1922 to Giuseppe (1890–1972) and Ines Castagneto (1892–1977). His father, of modest economic means and an employee of a bookbinder in Genoa, moved to Turin with his family the following year, when Francesco's sister Andreina was born (January 19, 1923). Giuseppe, who had been sent to Turin by his company in Genoa to open a branch office, soon opened his own binding business. Francesco Federico's childhood stands out for his strict and severe education. He and his siblings were involved in the family business at an early age; in fact, their father forced them to bind books in their kitchen when they came home from school. Such an austere and rigid upbringing greatly influenced the schooling and personality of Francesco Federico, who, for his entire life, always kept a simple and austere lifestyle.

After earning his diploma in accounting in the summer of 1940, Francesco immediately joined his father's business, followed by his sister one year later. The 1943 bombings destroyed the factory which at the time was located. After the war, the "accountant," as he was nicknamed, demonstrated such great organizational skills and immense spirit for innovation that he relaunched the family business, renaming it the Legatoria Industriale Torinese. After visiting the United States in October 1957, he introduced the American technique of "perfect binding," a procedure that did not require stitching. He made his own machines to industrialize binding—which up then was mainly artisanal—and patented specific

techniques. Thanks to his innovation, the LIT reached high levels of production, with numerous commissions for art books and, above all, Italian telephone books.

This spirit of entrepreneurship was joined with his love for beauty, based on his own taste and profound intuition, which led him to create one of the most important art collections in Europe. In addition to his passion for beauty and his business acumen, he also possessed a feeling of compassion and charity as a benefactor, but always in his rigorous and detached style, far from the spotlight. After a long illness, he died in Turin on July 15, 2015.

### **About Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea**

Inaugurated on December 18, 1984, the Castello di Rivoli Museum of Contemporary Art is housed in a royal castle of the House of Savoy designed by the baroque architect Filippo Juvarra, in the hills outside Turin. The inaugural Director was Rudi Fuchs, who was followed by Ida Gianelli. Since 1997 the Castello di Rivoli has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In 2000, the Manica Lunga [long sleeve or wing of the castle] was restored and opened to the public, and the entire residence came alive once again as a place to host major international contemporary art exhibitions. The Castello di Rivoli, one of the top modern art museums in Italy, boasts a prestigious collection of works from post-World War II to today, and has one of the most important collections of *Arte Povera* in the world. To read more, click [here](#)

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