

Collection Mobility: The Berlin Gemäldegalerie

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Part of the Berlin State Museums and under the roof of the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, the Gemäldegalerie is the only systematic and encyclopedic collection in Germany. Therefore, the number of loan requests it receives is not surprising. Since the publication of the complete collection catalogue, we seem to operate more and more like a mail-order house.

Naturally, participation in important exhibitions is vital, and we usually extend loans to shows with convincing concepts. Monographic exhibitions are normally more welcome than thematic ones (e.g. a loan request for our *Cupid* by Caravaggio for an exhibition entitled *Music in the arts*).

When working jointly with other institutions, we obviously have to be more generous than in other instances. For example, in preparing the *Master of Flémalle and Rogier van der Weyden* exhibition together with the Städel Museum in Frankfurt, it was clear from the start that we would have to lend as many paintings from the Berlin collection as possible. On the other hand, restoration today is more scholarship than craft, and restorers are fully aware of the risks involved in shipping a painting. This is why requests for loans can only be granted following thorough discussions between the curator and the restorer.

An unusual instance is the lending out of entire parts of the collection. For example, this winter we sent some 50 Dutch and Flemish paintings to the Museo del Corso in Rome. The reason for choosing art of the Golden Age was fairly straightforward: this period is generally not well represented in Italian museums and for many of the Roman visitors to the exhibition this was the first opportunity to see an entire group of 17th-century Netherlandish art in their city. In some ways, the exhibition was a reward to UniCredit in reciprocation for the support they gave when we were preparing our *Sebastiano del Piombo* show. Similar activities are scheduled to take place with Japanese institutions in the coming years.