

Egon Schiele  
**HOUSES BY THE SEA**

Press conference, 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2012



EGON SCHIELE  
Houses by the Sea (Row of Houses), 1914  
Oil on canvas  
99,5 x 119,7 cm  
Leopold Museum Inv. 452

## Favorable conclusion of settlement negotiations in the case Jenny Steiner



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Houses by the Sea (Row of Houses), 1914  
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### Settlement concerning the Schiele painting “Houses by the Sea” with the heirs of Hellmann/Mertens

#### Favorable conclusion of settlement negotiations in the case Jenny Steiner

The Leopold Museum Private Foundation is able to announce that negotiations in the case Jenny Steiner / “Houses by the Sea” have reached a favorable conclusion: Following the settlement with the only living granddaughter of Jenny Steiner in May 2011, strenuous efforts have now led to another settlement with the heirs of Daisy Hellmann and Klara Mertens.

#### Milestone in the search for solutions

The Leopold Museum Private Foundation regards the settlement with the heirs of Hellmann/Mertens in the case »Houses by the Sea« as another important milestone in the search for solutions based on the findings of the joint provenance research of the Federal Government and the foundation. The Board of Directors of the foundation calls this settlement a “long and hard-fought solution”. In the end, an important agreement could be reached with this settlement.

#### Thanks to the heirs

The Leopold Museum Private Foundation would like to take this opportunity to once again thank the granddaughter of Jenny Steiner. The settlement with her and her willingness to arrive at a solution has paved the way for this final settlement. The heirs of Hellmann/Mertens are to be thanked for their willingness to contribute to this mutually satisfying solution.

#### Fulfillment of Rudolf Leopold’s wish

Elisabeth Leopold has described the present settlement as the fulfillment of a long-standing wish of her husband, the founder of the Leopold Museum Prof. Rudolf Leopold.

#### Painting with explanatory text publicly accessible

Presented along with an explanatory text, the painting “Houses by the Sea” will as of now be accessible to the public as an integral part of the largest and most important Schiele collection in the world, the Leopold Museum’s permanent collection, serving as a reminder of the work’s stirring history and as a memorial to Jenny Steiner.

<http://www.leopoldmuseum.org/de/presse/meldungen>

The following explanatory text has been put up next to the painting:

Eugenie “Jenny” Steiner, née Pulitzer (1863 Budapest – 1958 New York), was the owner of a silk factory and an avid art collector. In 1938, immediately after the annexation of Austria, she fled from the National Socialists to Paris and later emigrated to the US. Egon Schiele’s urban landscape “Houses by the Sea” (1914), a painting from Jenny Steiner’s collection, was seized and sold by the National Socialists in 1938. It was put up for auction at the Dorotheum in 1940, but initially attracted no buyers. It was again put up for auction at the Dorotheum in 1941 and was acquired by Josefine Ernst. Her son, Johann Ernst, then sold the painting in 1955 to Rudolf Leopold. For Rudolf Leopold, who successfully promoted Egon Schiele’s oeuvre throughout his life, the painting “Houses by the Sea” formed an integral part of the Leopold Collection.

Since the painting is doubtlessly the property of the Leopold Museum Private Foundation, but since it was also clearly confiscated from Jenny Steiner in 1938, it was of vital importance to the Leopold Museum to come to a mutual agreement with the heirs of Jenny Steiner.

Following lengthy negotiations, it was possible in 2011 to arrive at a fair and just solution with the only granddaughter of Jenny Steiner.

In 2012 a mutually satisfying solution could also be reached with the remaining heirs.

The following explanatory text has been put up next to the painting:

***Rudolf Leopold, Houses by the Sea***

*Shortened version from: Rudolf Leopold: Egon Schiele. Gemälde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen, Salzburg 1972.*

*Schiele gave this painting three different titles: Houses by the Sea, Houses and Sea and Row of Houses. Only at first glance does the rendering appear to be composed of several simple horizontal zones. The most important zone, formally and in terms of content, is the one featuring the row of five houses situated in the center of the painting. Despite the two-dimensional composition of the painting, the illusion of distance and closeness is created without the aid of foreshortening, through the density of the stripes of terrain in front of and behind the houses. A sense of remoteness is suggested by the shadowed line depicting the horizon and by the darker sky above it. This leads to a sense of fearful uncertainty. The sea and islands have become a wall, the line has become a border. Behind it seems to be the end of the world, or worse still – nothingness.*

*This idea of a border also applies to the row of houses, which is separated and stands out from its very different surroundings. It represents the last bastion of human population within this bleak terrain. Only the foreground is interrupted by little poles in muted red and by patches in a stronger crimson shade. The depiction of these five houses vividly illustrates the exposedness of human existence. In order to express a sense of fateful menace, Schiele humanized the appearance of the facades facing the beholder, with each of the houses bearing physiognomic traits: hatches become eyes, rows of windows appear like mouths. The sense of tranquility created by the painting's division into horizontal lines is disrupted by five threatening and at the same time threatened »faces«.*