

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2nd Session of the 54th Legislature (2014)

HOUSE
RESOLUTION 1042

By: Reynolds, Ritze, Wesselhoft
and Bennett

AS INTRODUCED

A Resolution directing the University of Oklahoma to return a painting that was stolen by the Nazis during World War II to the family of Raoul Meyer; and directing distribution.

WHEREAS, in 1940, after Paris, France, fell under Nazi control, German troops began looting thousands of artworks from museums, galleries and personal collections across France; and

WHEREAS, before the invasion, Raoul Meyer, a Jewish businessman living in Paris, amassed a large collection of French impressionist paintings that were seized during the Nazi occupation; and

WHEREAS, one of the paintings which was stolen is the 1886 work by French impressionist artist Camille Pissarro called "Shepherdess Bringing in Sheep"; and

WHEREAS, after the war, Raoul Meyer, who survived the occupation, spent years trying to track down the artwork that had been stolen; and

1 WHEREAS, in 1953, Raoul Meyer sued a Swiss art dealer who had
2 bought the painting, but a Swiss judge dismissed the suit saying the
3 Meyer complaint was not timely filed; and

4 WHEREAS, the painting then made its way to an art gallery in New
5 York and was purchased in 1956 by Aaron Weitzenhoffer, an oilman who
6 lived in Norman, Oklahoma, and his wife Clara Weitzenhoffer; and

7 WHEREAS, when Clara Weitzenhoffer died in 2000, the painting was
8 among 33 pieces of art left to the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art,
9 which is located on the campus of the University of Oklahoma; and

10 WHEREAS, according to Max Weitzenhoffer, the son of Aaron and
11 Clara Weitzenhoffer, his parents never knew about the connection the
12 painting has to Nazi art thefts which occurred during World War II;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, Leone Meyer, the daughter of Raoul Meyer, has filed a
15 lawsuit against the University of Oklahoma and the Fred Jones Jr.
16 Museum of Art demanding that the painting be returned to the family;
17 and

18 WHEREAS, there is no dispute that the painting was stolen by the
19 Nazis and there is nothing in Clara Weitzenhoffer's will, according
20 to Max Weitzenhoffer, which would prevent the University of Oklahoma
21 from returning the painting to the Meyer family; and

22 WHEREAS, the facts are clear that the Weitzenhoffers bought the
23 painting in good faith and are not to blame; and
24

1 WHEREAS, even if the University of Oklahoma is not legally
2 required to return the painting to the Meyer family, the University
3 is under an ethical obligation to return the painting and any other
4 stolen artwork in its possession.

5 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
6 OF THE 2ND SESSION OF THE 54TH OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE:

7 THAT the Oklahoma House of Representatives hereby directs the
8 University of Oklahoma to immediately return the painting called
9 "Shepherdess Bringing in Sheep" which was stolen by the Nazis from
10 Raoul Meyer during the Nazi occupation of Paris, France, to Leone
11 Meyer, the daughter of Raoul Meyer and to return the painting
12 without any cost to Ms. Meyer.

13 THAT a copy of this resolution be distributed to David Boren,
14 the President of the University of Oklahoma and to each member of
15 the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma.

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