

# **Art Restitution in Austria**

## **(Restitutions from the Federal Collections)**

### **Conference**

**(March 4-5, 2010, Austrian Cultural Forum, New York)**

**DAY 1, THURSDAY, MARCH 4: 10.00 A.M. – 5.00 P.M. – SPECIAL EVENT FOR EXPERTS IN THE FIELD OF ART RESTITUTION**

**9.30 a.m.**

**Welcome Table**

**9.45 a.m.**

**Introduction by Andreas Stadler, Director of the Austrian Cultural Forum, New York**

**10.00 a.m. – 10.45 a.m.**

Looting of art during the Nazi era in Austria (1938-1945) - Historical and political outline  
Presentation by Michael John, Historian and Political Scientist, University of Linz

***Followed by Discussion and Q&A (Moderator: Marc Masurovsky, Historian)***

**11.15 a.m. – 12.00 a.m.**

The Austrian Art Restitution Law ("Kunstrückgabegesetz 1998") as the legal basis of art restitution from the Federal Collections against the background of private and international law. The origins of this bill as well as its amendment in 2009  
Presentation by Georg Graf, Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies

***Followed by a Discussion and Q&A (Moderator: Marc Masurovsky, Historian)***

***Lunchbreak***

**2.00 p.m. – 2.45 p.m.**

The Commission for Provenance Research – its activities since 1998: from its origin to an established research facility  
Presentation by Leonhard Weidinger, Historian, Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna (MAK)

**2.45 p.m. – 3.30 p.m.**

The Art Restitution Advisory Board – outline of its functions and decisions  
Presentation by Christoph Bazil, Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK)

***Coffee Break***

**4.00 p.m.**

**Panel Discussion**

"Austrian Art Restitution"; Marc Masurovsky in conversation with Michael John, Georg Graf, Leonhard Weidinger, Christoph Bazil, Steven Beller.

**Christoph Bazil** studied law in Vienna and has worked for the Austrian Federal Ministry for Culture since 1994. He was Deputy Head of the Department for Cultural Heritage, before becoming Head of the Department of Restitution in 2008. He is also administrative Co-Chair of the Commission for Provenance Research.

**Steven Beller** was born in London and educated in Cambridge, England. He currently works in Washington DC as an independent scholar. He has written on various topics of modern Central European and modern Jewish history, including books on "Vienna and the Jews, 1867-1938: A Cultural History" (1989); "Herzl" (1991); and "Francis Joseph" (1996). He also edited and introduced "Rethinking Vienna 1900" (2001). His book "A Concise History of Austria" was published by Cambridge University Press, followed by his book "Antisemitism" in 2007.

**Georg Graf** has been Professor for Private Law at the University of Salzburg since 2001; he is Head of the Department for Private Law. From 1999 to 2003, he was a member of the Austrian Historical Commission with the mandate to investigate and report on the whole complex of expropriations in Austria during the Nazi era and on restitution and/or compensation (including other financial or social benefits) after 1945 by the Republic of Austria. Since 2009, he has been the chairman of the board of directors of the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies.

**Michael John** studied History and Political Science at the University of Vienna. He worked as a historian in Vienna, and is since 2001 Professor of Social and Economic History at the Johannes Kepler University in Linz, Austria. His research interests include: migration and ethnicity in Austria, biographical research, oral/video history, history of minorities, and Jewish history. He has served as director of the projects "Jews in Upper Austria" and „Aryanization and Restitution in Upper Austria, Salzburg and Burgenland" as part of the Historical Commission of the Republic of Austria (2000-2004) and was the head of the Commission for Provenance Research of Art Objects of the Regional Government of Upper Austria (2000 – 2007). He is the author of six books, five editions, and numerous contributions to scientific journals, anthologies, books, including several articles on "looted art". He was guest professor at the University of Salzburg, and lecturer at the Central European University, Budapest, the University of Nova Gorica and the Academy of Sciences, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

**Marc Masurovsky** has investigated and studied since 1980 the thefts and outflows of assets looted during the Holocaust and World War II. In September 1997, he co-founded the Holocaust Art Restitution Project (HARP) and served as its Director of Research. In 1999 and 2000, he spent 15 months as Director of Research for Monetary Gold at the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States. Masurovsky produced an unpublished final report on the wartime and post-war fate of gold bars and coins looted by the Nazis. From 2001 to 2004, he worked on a pilot project to create a database focused on the spoliated Jewish community of Vienna, Austria, based in part on the records of the Bundesdenkmalamt in Vienna. From 2004 to 2006, he oversaw the design, construction, and execution of a looted art database for the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference). Its exclusive focus centered on the estimated 20,000 highly-prized works and objets d'art removed by the Nazis from leading Jewish and non-Jewish families and businesses in France and Belgium. In the fall of 2006, he co-authored in French a book on the economic plunder of France during the Vichy years. Masurovsky is currently finishing a book in French with Fabrizio Calvi on the Holocaust, the mechanics of the art market, and the destruction of Europe's Jewish artists, scheduled for publication in 2011.

**Leonhard Weidinger** is a historian and multimedia producer. Since 2005 he has been a member of the Austrian Commission for Provenance Research and oversees the collection of the Austrian Museum for Applied Arts in Vienna (MAK). He was Co-Producer of a video documentary about the concentration camp Steyr-Muenichholz, Co-Editor of the volume "... wesentlich mehr Faelle als angenommen", which presents the first ten years of the work of the Austrian Commission for Provenance Research, and author of the upcoming book "Schneidern und Sammeln", a study of the Viennese Rothberger family.

**DAY 2, FRIDAY, MARCH 5: 10.00 A.M. – 1.00 P.M. – PUBLIC EVENT “AUSTRIAN ART RESTITUTION”**

Presenters: Christoph Bazil, Leonhard Weidinger

The meeting aims to inform about the Republic of Austria’s actions and measures. After an overview about looting of art during the Nazi era in Austria (1938-1945) and the art restitution since 1945 there will be a focus on the art restitution law of 1998, on its origins as well as on its amendment in 2009. The experts will inform about the work of the Commission for Provenance Research whose members inspect systematically and consistently the Austrian federal museums and collections and about the Art Restitution Advisory Board and its functions and decisions. The practice of art restitution in Austria will be shown with recent examples.

**Christoph Bazil** studied law in Vienna and has worked for the Austrian Federal Ministry for Culture since 1994. He was Deputy Head of the Department for Cultural Heritage, before becoming Head of the Department of Restitution in 2008. He is also administrative Co-Chair of the Commission for Provenance Research.

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***Coffeebreak***

***Followed by a Discussion and Q&A***

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**RSVP please to Alexander Bogner for reservations:  
[alexander.bogner@bmeia.gv.at](mailto:alexander.bogner@bmeia.gv.at) – limited seats available!**