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It's Time to Give Us Back Our Nazi-Looted Paintings

The Norton Simon should stop wasting its charitable resources trying to cling to Nazi loot.

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July 25, 2014 4:24 p.m. ET

My father-in-law, the renowned Jewish art dealer Jacques Goudstikker, lost his property and his life following the Nazi invasion of the Netherlands in 1940. Imagine my shock at seeing Jacques and me criticized by Walter W. Timoshuk of the Norton Simon Art Foundation ([Letters, July 10](#)).

The Norton Simon is in possession of two paintings, "Adam" and "Eve" by Lucas Cranach the Elder, which indisputably were looted from Jacques by Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring. The Norton Simon refuses to restitute them and instead has waged a seven-year battle filled with technical and legal roadblocks.

The Allies recovered the Cranachs and other artworks stolen from Jacques and returned them to the Netherlands so that they could be restituted to their rightful owners—my family—but they were not. Instead, the Dutch government called the looting "voluntary" and kept Jacques's paintings. It was not until 2006 that it acknowledged the unfairness of its postwar restitution process and restituted 200 artworks in its custody to me. If "Adam" and "Eve" had not been sold improperly to George Stroganoff in 1966, they would have been restituted as well.

Although Mr. Timoshuk insinuates that "Adam" and "Eve" were looted from the Stroganoffs, that is untrue. The Norton Simon is fully aware that "Adam" and "Eve" were never part of the Stroganoff Collection and that an essay that accompanied the catalogue for the 1931 auction, where Jacques purchased them, specifically stated that.

Mr. Timoshuk's letter conveniently ignores a recent federal court decision that characterized Stroganoff's "restitution" claim as "dubious at best" and me as "just the sort of heir that the Washington Principles . . . encouraged to come forward to make claims," emphasizing that "allowing . . . [my] lawsuit to proceed would encourage the Museum . . . to follow the Washington Principles[.]"

Contrary to Mr. Timoshuk, my case is not unique and my claim is well founded. The Norton Simon should stop wasting its charitable resources trying to cling to Nazi loot. As Ronald S. Lauder said (op-ed, June 30), that is immoral.

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