

Global Catalogue of Nazi looted art records published online in world first

“Use every means of transport to get all works of art out of Florence saving works of art from English and Americans. In fine get anything away that you can get hold of. Heil Hitler.”

Heinrich Himmler (HW1/3113)

The National Archives and the Commission for Looted Art in Europe today signed a global agreement in Washington DC with leading national archives and museums, to provide an international online catalogue of documentation on looted cultural artefacts to aid historians, researchers and families trace the history and provenance of objects taken by the Nazis between 1933 and 1945.

The project is designed to extend public access to all records related to looted cultural artefacts by cataloguing and digitising the archival materials and making them available through a single international research [web portal](#) hosted by the US National Archives and Records Administration.

Signing the global agreement on behalf of The National Archives, **Oliver Morley, Chief Executive and Keeper** said: *“It’s a privilege to be involved in this unique global collaboration - working together with leading archives throughout the world to make these records more accessible on an international scale. By digitising and linking archival records online, researchers will be able to piece together the stories of what became of cultural objects, be they books, paintings, sculpture, jewellery or any other stolen artefacts from evidence fragmented across borders and languages.”*

Signing the global agreement on behalf of the Commission for Looted Art in Europe, **Anne Webber, Co-Chair**, said: *“We are very pleased to be part of this extremely important project which will help researchers and families in identifying, documenting and recovering looted cultural property. For the first time in searching for the many*

thousands of still missing objects it will be possible to trace their fate online through these records which provide the names of victims, perpetrators, artists and works of art. The records and history they represent have never been made internationally available before and this project represents a major step forward in international cooperation to help resolve these long outstanding issues.”

The records encompass different aspects of the organisation of the Nazi plundering, the methods of disposal of the looted artworks and the efforts to identify, recover and retribute them made by governments and other agencies during and after the Second World War.

Created through collaboration between national archives and expert organisations in Belgium, France, Germany, Ukraine, the UK and USA, the project will enable families to research their losses, provenance researchers to locate important documentation, and historians to study newly accessible materials on the history of this period.

The official signing of the agreement comes ahead of a two day international conference on provenance research held at The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Washington DC.

Each member organisation has identified key groups of relevant records among its holdings. The National Archives has worked in partnership with the Commission for Looted Art in Europe to catalogue and digitise over 950 files from its collection. The Commission provided the expert knowledge and selected, described and provided the written introduction to the records. The National Archives has digitised the selected records and is hosting and delivering both the textual descriptions and new colour images of the records themselves through its [website](#).

The records, dating from 1939 to 1961, range from seizure orders, inventories and images of looted works of art, field reports and claim forms for seized property to interrogation reports of art dealers and reports of the transfer of looted artworks to

neutral countries. All the original British government files have been newly scanned in colour and will be searchable by name, place, subject and date thanks to detailed descriptions which will make searching these records more straightforward, user-friendly and productive.

The files document the systematic looting of Jewish households by Nazi agencies, Hitler's plans to establish a *Führermuseum* with the seized art in his hometown of Linz and the role played by art dealers in securing and trading looted artworks in Nazi-occupied Europe and beyond.

Highlights from the files identified by the Commission for Looted Art in Europe include:

- Hitler's plans to establish a *Führermuseum* with the seized art in his hometown of Linz (T209/29)
- A collection of photographs of artworks which were looted by the Nazis from Italian and French public and private collections and retrieved by the Allies in 1945 (T 209/31);
- The summer 1945 interrogation reports of prominent art dealers involved in the seizure and trading of looted artworks (T 209/29)
- Details of repositories of looted cultural property discovered as the Allies advanced into Europe over the spring and summer of 1945, including the Alt Aussee salt mines in Austria, containing over 6,000 paintings destined for the Linz museum, and the Alto Adige repositories in Italy, containing the works of art from the Florence public galleries removed in July 1944 (T 209/27);
- Records of the Macmillan Committee (1944-1946), a specialist advisory body to the British government established to support the post-war restitution process (T 209/1-39);
- Reports of the work of the Inter-Allied Vaucher Commission (1944-1945) which, acting on information supplied by different national commissions, operated as a central bureau in London for information on looted objects (T209/5)

- Looted works of art transferred to Switzerland and efforts to persuade the Swiss government to prevent the concealment of looted works of art found on Swiss territory (T 209/25)

Notes to Editors

For interviews with The National Archives or with the Commission for Looted Art in Europe or for images please contact either The National Archives press office on 0208 392 5277 or via email on press@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk, or Rosie Razzall for the Commission on 020 7487 3401 or via email on rosierazzall@lootedartcommission.com

About The National Archives

The National Archives, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk, is a government department and an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). As the official archives of the UK government, it cares for, makes available and 'brings alive' a vast collection of over 1000 years of historical records, including the treasured Domesday Book.

Not only safeguarding historical information, The National Archives also manages current digital information and devises new technological solutions for keeping government records readable now and in the future. It provides world class research facilities and expert advice, publishes all UK legislation and official publications, and is a leading advocate for the archive sector.

At the heart of information policy, The National Archives sets standards of best practice that actively promotes and encourages public access to, and the re-use of information, both online or onsite at Kew. This work helps inform today's decisions and ensures that they become tomorrow's permanent record.

About the Commission for Looted Art in Europe, www.lootedartcommission.com, is an international, expert and non-profit representative body based in London. It negotiates restitution policies and procedures, works to ensure the widest access to records and information of the period, and promotes the identification of looted cultural property and the tracing of its rightful owners. It researches, identifies and recovers cultural property looted during the Nazi era on behalf of families, institutions and governments worldwide, and has recovered over 3,500 items since it was founded in 1999.

The Central Registry of Information on Looted Cultural Property 1933-1945, www.lootedart.com, is the Commission's research arm. An international research centre and online repository of information on Nazi art looting and restitution, it was set up to fulfil Washington Principle V1 on the creation of a central registry of information in this subject. It provides detailed online research, up-to-date news and information from 48 countries and an online database of over 25,000 objects looted, missing and of uncertain provenance from 12 countries. The Registry is a charitable body, operating

under the auspices of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, an independent unit of Oxford University.

The Project

The Project was established to fulfill the 1998 Washington Conference Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art, the 2000 Vilnius Forum Declaration and the 2009 Terezin Declaration, in particular on the importance of making all such records publicly accessible.

The other organisations collaborating in this project are:

United States National Archives and Records Administration (NARA);

Bundesarchiv (The German National Archives)

France Diplomatie: Diplomatic Archive Center of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs

Central State Archive of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine (TsDAVO)

State Archives in Belgium

Claims Conference (Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany)

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Deutsches Historisches Museum (German Historical Museum)

Mémorial de la Shoah, Paris

National Gallery of Art, Washington (U.S.)

Rosie Razzall | Researcher | **Commission for Looted Art in Europe** | 76 Gloucester Place | London W1U 6HJ

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7487 3401 | www.lootedartcommission.com

To subscribe to our looted art newsletter, [click here](#)