

LP² STUDY GROUP PROPOSAL FOR FALL 2022

THE PERSISTENT CRIME OF NAZI-LOOTED ART

Coordinators: Gerald Gline, Deborah Markow and Mark Rattner

"To the victors belong the spoils." From time immemorial, the conquerors have pillaged, looted and destroyed the art, artifact and monuments of the vanquished. The looting of German museums began in 1933 with Hitler's rise to power. It was soon followed by the systematic and unprecedented appropriation of Jewish collections. This study group discusses the role Jews played before the war as art collectors and dealers in Germany, Austria and France; the purposes behind the Nazi confiscation and theft of art; and the attempts to find, catalogue, preserve and return the looted art after the war. We trace the efforts to establish international protocols addressing the return of stolen art, looking at legal battles between Holocaust survivors and their heirs and the museums and individuals who had acquired their possessions. We will take a multidisciplinary approach to this topic, examining the historical, political, cultural, legal and artistic issues involved.

Jerry Gline is a retired bankruptcy lawyer. He has long been interested in World War II and Nazi obsession with and systematic looting of art. He looks forward to exploring this fascinating topic with his capable co-coordinators and LP2 colleagues. **Deb Markow** is an art historian with an abiding interest in the intersection of the two disciplines. In response to requests, she has repeated her study group on 17th century Dutch Art four times. In this study group, she focuses on early 19th century European art. **Mark Rattner** is a recently retired corporate lawyer, inspired to take the coordinator "plunge" by the excellent coordinators of the study groups he has taken and the knowledge that he has two highly capable co-coordinators.

Type of Study Group: Presentation and discussion

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:

Coordinator-provided excerpts from books:

Art and the Nazis, 1933-1945: Looting, Propaganda and Seizure by Arthur J. Mclaughlin (2021);

The Rape of Europa by Lynn H. Nicolas (1994);

and others.

Three assigned films available on streaming services:

The Rape of Europa;

LP² STUDY GROUP PROPOSAL FOR FALL 2022

The Monuments Men;

The Woman in Gold.

Coordinator provides links to a variety of YouTube videos and optional films and recorded lectures.

***** SYLLABUS - A WORK IN PROGRESS *****

WEEK 1

TOPIC: An introduction to a persistent crime

VIEWING:

The Rape of Europa

QUESTIONS:

How would you define or distinguish the Nazi persistent crime? Does the restitution of an Egon Schiele painting absolve the crime? Do you agree with even asking “Why bother?” when confronting a criminal act?

WEEK 2

TOPIC: Looting as an historical event

READING:

Excerpt from *Art and the Nazis, 1933-1945: Looting, Propaganda and Seizure* by Arthur J. Mclaughlin (2021).

QUESTIONS:

Considering Roman, Medieval and Napoleonic examples, is there more than one kind of pillage or are they all the same? Do they differ in intensity and meaning?

WEEK 3

TOPIC: The Weimar Republic and Hitler's rise to power; Berlin, Vienna, Paris and Amsterdam in the 1930s

READING:

Downloaded excerpts from:

Lost Lives, Lost Art by Melissa Muller and Monika Tatzkow (2010);

Hitler's Last Hostages: Looted Art and the Soul of the Third Reich by Mary M. Lane (2019).

QUESTIONS:

LP² STUDY GROUP PROPOSAL FOR FALL 2022

Do the lives of these wealthy Jews tell us anything about the “huddled masses yearning to be free”? Do these lives fit into your image of European Jews caught in the Shoah? Does the historical background of Germany matter?

WEEK 4: Degenerate Art

WEEK 5: 1933-1939—new rules and regulations

WEEK 6: Preparation for war

WEEK 7: War begins—the treasure trove

WEEK 8: The Monuments Men

WEEK 9: War ends—recovery and restitution

WEEK 10: Legal framework

WEEK 11: Particular claims for restitution

WEEK 12: Closing thoughts—Why did we “bother”?

LP² STUDY GROUP PROPOSAL FOR FALL 2022