

COMMISSION FOR LOOTED ART IN EUROPE

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Press Release

CLAE and British Museum Joint Press Release: British Museum receives restitution claim

London 27 May 2002: Dr Robert Anderson, Director of the British Museum, and Anne Webber, Commission for Looted Art in Europe (ECLA), announced today details of a claim that was submitted to the British Museum by ECLA on 13 May seeking the return of four drawings in the museum's collection.

The claim was researched and presented to the museum on behalf of a family represented by ECLA. The claimants wish to remain anonymous.

The works are:

- The Holy Family by Niccolò dell'Abbate, Italian 16th Century
- St Dorothy with the Christ Child by a follower of Martin Schongauer, German 1508
- Virgin and Child adored by St Elizabeth and the infant St John by Martin Johann Schmidt, German 18th Century
- An Allegory on Poetic Inspiration with Mercury and Apollo by Nicholas Blakey, English 18th Century



The Holy Family by Niccolò dell'Abbate



St Dorothy with the Christ Child by a follower of Martin Schongauer

The claim states that the drawings were part of a renowned pre-war collection of Old Master drawings owned by Dr Arthur Feldmann. After the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1939, Dr Feldmann and his family were persecuted and the collection seized. Dr Feldmann and his wife subsequently perished. Since the war, the surviving family has spent many years searching for the collection, which numbered over 750 drawings.

Three of the drawings claimed were purchased on behalf of the British Museum at a sale at Sotheby's, London in October 1946. The fourth drawing was received by the Museum in 1948 as part of the Campbell Dodgson bequest. Campbell Dodgson was the Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum until his retirement in 1932. His personal collection of over 5,000 works of art was bequeathed to the Museum on his death in 1948.



An Allegory on Poetic Inspiration with Mercury and Apollo by Nicholas Blakey

As the result of earlier research by ECLA, all the drawings were added to the British Museum's list of works identified as having gaps in their provenance.

The list is published on the National Museums Directors' Conference website:
www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/spoliation

The British Museum regrets that incomplete and inaccurate details of the claim were published last week. The museum will be working with ECLA to review the claim and will respond as quickly as possible.

A decision has yet to be made as to whether the claim will be referred to the Government's Spoliation Advisory Panel.

Dr Anderson said: "We thank the Commission for Looted Art in Europe for the extensive documentation that they have provided. We have every sympathy for the family and we will be giving this matter our urgent attention. Our own research and enquiries will take some weeks, and we will make a further announcement in due course."

Anne Webber said: "The return of these four drawings would be of immense personal significance to the family whose lives were so tragically transformed by the Nazis. We look forward to working closely with the British Museum in bringing this case to a satisfactory resolution."



Virgin and Child adored by St Elizabeth and the infant St John by Martin Johann Schmidt

Notes to Editors:

In June 1998 the National Museum Directors' Conference established a working group to examine the issues surrounding the spoliation of art during the Holocaust and World War II period. The working group is chaired by Tate's Director, Sir Nicholas Serota.

Discussions by the working group resulted in a Statement of Principles and Proposed Actions for member institutions. The statement was finalised and adopted by the NMDC in November 1998 and presented to the Washington Conference on Holocaust Assets in December 1998.

In 1999 the UK's National Museums, Galleries and Libraries including the British Museum, National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, National Galleries of Scotland, Imperial War Museum, Tate Gallery and Victoria and Albert Museum, began a painstaking process of research to identify any suspect works in their collections. Details of the works which have been identified as having gaps or question marks in their provenance during the period 1933-45 are regularly updated and published on the internet on www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/spoliation.

An external advisory committee is reviewing progress and providing advice on the actions necessary to fulfil the statement of principles. The committee is chaired by the High Court Judge, Sir David Neuberger and includes the following members: Sir Jack Baer, Lord Brooke, Professor David Cesarani, Mark Fisher MP, Lady Vaizey and Ms Anne Webber.

To date the national museums and galleries have only received one claim from a member of the public in connection with works in their collections. This was received by the Tate in July 1999, in relation to the painting, *View of Hampton Court Palace* by Jan Griffier, in the gallery's collection. The work was the first claim to be considered by the Advisory Panel - under the Chairmanship of retired Lord Justice of Appeal the Rt Hon Sir David

Hirst - set up by the Government to help resolve claims of this kind. In January 2001 the Government announced that it had agreed to make an ex-gratia payment of £125,000 to the claimants in compensation for the painting on the advice of the Advisory Panel. Any other claims will be referred to the Panel if appropriate.

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Issue date: 27th May 2002

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CLAE is mandated to represent the European Council of Jewish Communities (ECJC) and the Conference of European Rabbis (CER)

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Press Release

British Museum Press Release: Restitution claim considered by the E Museum

London 1 October 2002: The British Museum has considered the claim made to the Trustees by the Commission for Looted Art in Europe in respect of four Old Master drawings wrongfully seized by the Gestapo collection on 15 March 1939. The drawings are:

- (a) **Niccolò dell'Abbate**; *The Holy Family*; BM reg. no: 1946-11-16-1
- (b) **Nicholas Blakey**; *An Allegory on Poetic Inspiration with Mercury and Apollo*; BM reg. no: 1946-11-16-3
- (c) **Martin Johann Schmidt**; *Virgin and infant Christ, adored by St Elizabeth and the infant St John the Baptist*; BM reg. no: 1946-11-16-3
- (d) **Follower of Martin Schongauer**; *St Dorothy with the Christ Child*; BM reg. no: 1949-4-11-98

The Trustees recognize the merits of the detailed and compelling claim and have therefore authorized the Commission to work jointly with the Commission to find the speediest possible resolution, including the possibility of referring the matter to the Spoliation Advisory Panel established by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

In acknowledging the claim, the Trustees note that the atrocities committed during the era 1933-45 were a distinct and especially brutal period of modern history, and express their sympathy with the claims of the victims of the Nazi regime.

In evidence to the Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport on 8 June 2000, the Museum proposed its agreement with the Chairman of the Committee that, if it were established that the Museum was wrongfully deprived of objects looted by the Nazis during the Holocaust, the Museum would wish to find a way to achieve a return of the objects to the victim's family.

For further information contact

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2. Anne Webber, Commission for Looted Art in Europe, 020 7487 3401



The Holy Family by Niccolò dell'Abbate



St Dorothy with the Christ Child by a follower of Martin Schongauer



An Allegory on Poetic Inspiration with Mercury and Apollo by Nicholas Blakey



Virgin and Child adored by St Elizabeth and the infant St John by Martin Johann Schmidt

Issue date: 1st October 2002

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News: UK museums can return looted art

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BBC News 13 November 2009

Artefacts in national museums found to have been looted by the Nazis can now be returned to their rightful owners, thanks to newly-passed legislation.



The act allows institutions like the National Gallery to return looted art

The Holocaust (Stolen Art) Restitution Act gives national institutions in England and Scotland the power to return art stolen during the Nazi era.

The bill was introduced earlier this year by Labour MP Andrew Dismore.

The act, he said, would "right a long-standing injustice" and marked "an important moral step".

The MP for Hendon said it was "an important moral step" that had been supported by all political parties.

Forbidden

The law, which has been supported by all political parties, enables national museums and galleries in England and Scotland to act on the recommendations of the Spoliation Advisory Panel.

Formed in 2000, the panel resolves claims from people, or their heirs, who lost property during the Nazi era which is now held in UK national collections.

Since then there have been nine cases of artefacts held by British museums adjudged to have been stolen from their rightful owners.

However national institutions, like the British Museum or the Tate, had been forbidden from returning items by legislation preventing them from disposing of artwork in their collections.

Instead the institutions in question would make an ex-gratia payment based on a valuation of the item, in lieu of returning the item itself.

Examples of this include a £125,000 payment made by the Tate in 2001 to the former owners of a painting by Dutch artist Jan Griffier.



Andrew Dismore's bill was given Royal Assent on 12 November

In 2006, the British Museum paid £175,000 to the heirs of an art collector whose Old Master drawings were stolen by the Nazis.

'Wonderful'

The new legislation allows institutions to return those disputed works of art judged to have been looted between 1933 and 1945.

In Wales and Northern Ireland, museums already have the power to return disputed items.

Culture minister Margaret Hodge said it was "a wonderful day" for families who "suffered so terribly during the Nazi era".

"For too long families who had heirlooms stolen from them by the Nazis were unable to reclaim them, although they were the rightful owners."

Anne Webber, co-chair of the Commission for Looted Art in Europe, said this was "a great step forward" that confirmed Britain's "commitment to providing justice".

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/arts_and_culture/8358902.stm

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