

CONFERENCE ON JEWISH MATERIAL CLAIMS AGAINST GERMANY

The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) is pleased to participate in the International Research Portal for Records Related to Nazi-Era Cultural Property.

Founded in 1951 by 23 major international Jewish organizations, the Claims Conference is the principal negotiator for compensation and restitution for survivors of the Holocaust and heirs of victims. The partner of the State of Israel in founding Yad Vashem, the Claims Conference is the principal supporter of Holocaust-related archives and archival projects generally in the United States and many other countries, and it strives to encourage cooperation among archival institutions in the interests of providing both a measure of justice to victims and their heirs and of furthering Holocaust research, education and documentation.

The Claims Conference and the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO) conduct a comprehensive program toward the restitution of Jewish-owned art and cultural property lost and plundered during the Holocaust (see <http://www.claimscon.org/art>). Regarding archival provenance research, this program aims to reconstruct the historical-archival record so as to:

1. Develop listings of items plundered by the Nazis and their allies
2. Assemble listings of cultural property known to have been restituted; and thereby
3. Produce net listings of outstanding items of cultural property that have yet to be returned.

The projects under this initiative form a major part of the records and information being offered through the International Research Portal by a number of participating countries and institutions.

In particular, the Claims Conference has made available the following set of interlocking projects regarding the scattered records of the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR), the largest of the Nazi agencies engaged in the plunder of art, libraries, archives, and Judaica:

1. ***Reconstructing the Record of Nazi Cultural Plunder: A Survey of the Dispersed Archives of the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR)*** has been published online at www.iisg.nl/publications/errsurvey. The detail with which the ERR – the special operational task force headed by Adolf Hitler’s ideological henchman Alfred Rosenberg -- documented the art, archives, books, and Judaica it plundered has proved essential for recovery efforts. However, after WWII, original ERR documents were scattered and today are found in 29 repositories in 9 countries. This survey documents the current locations of all ERR records, details their contents, and provides links to online sources. Written by Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, the preeminent expert on WWII displaced archives, the Survey was funded and assisted by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) and published by the International Institute for Social History, whose own massive Amsterdam and Paris library and archival collections were plundered by the ERR, and whose building on the Keizersgracht in Amsterdam was used for the ERR headquarters in the Netherlands. The Survey also describes considerable documentation regarding the subsequent fate, postwar retrieval, and restitution of the ERR loot.

2. ***Cultural Plunder by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg: Database of Art Objects at the Jeu de Paume*** is at www.errproject.org/jeudepaume. This searchable database of the looting of more than 20,000 individual art objects from Jews in France and Belgium shows that at least half the objects were not restituted to their original owners. The Claims Conference, working with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, presents each of the original ERR registration cards for over 20,000 art objects in electronic form, listing Nazi ERR code numbers, artwork titles, artists, and detailed descriptions of each work. Many entries include photos of the artworks or objects as well as a scan of the original Nazi record. The database can be searched by owner, artist, or collection, or a combination of criteria.
3. The largest collection of ERR documents in the world – 140,000 pages - has been made available at <http://err.tsdavo.org.ua>. The Claims Conference arranged for the documents, held by state archives in Ukraine since 1945 (in secret before 1990), to be imaged and adapted for the Internet. Many documents describe individual items. Others list the number of crates from specific museums or libraries, detailing their origin, date of plunder, and where they were stored or relocated by the Nazis.
4. The second largest collection of ERR documents in the world – that held by the Federal Archives of Germany – has been made available at <http://startext.net-build.de:8080/barch/Midosasearch/NS30/> and http://startext.net-build.de:8080/barch/Midosasearch/B323-5209_Version_online/. The Claims Conference sponsored the digitization of the bulk of these records.
5. Additional collections of ERR documents held by archives and institutions in other countries – e.g., those held in France by the Mémorial de la Shoah - are expected to be made available online soon with the assistance of the Claims Conference to provide improved access to a major component of the record of wartime cultural plunder and retrieval.

Among other resources that the Claims Conference is making available through the International Research Portal are:

- ***Descriptive Catalogue of Looted Judaica***
(http://www.claimscon.org/index.asp?url=Judaica_catalogue)
The Descriptive Catalogue of Looted Judaica provides for the first time since the end of World War II a worldwide “snapshot” of what is known concerning the fate of Judaica that was spoliated by Nazi Germany and its allies. After a summary of the history of Nazi looting of Judaica and of restitution efforts after the war in regard to Judaica, information is presented for 47 separate countries. For each country, projects to identify looted Judaica are described, if they exist, followed by discussion of objects of Judaica in the country that are known to have been looted or to have gaps in their provenance that have been identified in databases, publications, or other sources. In some instances, information exists on the individual object level, while in other cases only more general descriptions of looted collections as a whole are available. The Descriptive Catalogue of Looted Judaica also contains a list of relevant archives; a bibliography; and a list of the leading experts in the field throughout the world. The compilation is based on information from existing

published and unpublished literature and archives, as well as information obtained from experts in various countries.

- ***Holocaust-Era Looted Art: A Worldwide Preliminary Overview***
(<http://www.claimscon.org/forms/prague/looted-art.pdf>)
- ***Holocaust-Era Judaica and Jewish Cultural Property: A Worldwide Overview***
(<http://www.claimscon.org/forms/prague/Judaica.pdf>)
- ***Nazi-Era Stolen Art and U.S. Museums: A Survey***
(<http://usmuseumsurvey.claimscon.org/survey.php5>)
A survey of U.S. Museums concerning adherence to the Washington Conference Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art and the procedures and guidelines recommended by the American Association of Museums regarding objects transferred in Europe during the Nazi era.
- ***Resources for Claimants and Researchers***
(<http://www.claimscon.org/art>)
Listings of international and national organizations involved in looted cultural property restitution, of relevant online databases, and of major conferences, declarations and resolutions.