



International Center for the Study of European Jewish Art and Art of the Holocaust

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Research Reveals That Nazi-Looted Works of Art Recovered by the Monuments Men and Transferred to the Bavarian Government After World War II Were “Returned” or Sold to Nazis

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Shock waves rippled through the art world this week with the stunning revelation in the Munich-based newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* that Nazi-looted works of art recovered by the Monuments Men and transferred to the Bavarian Government after World War II for the purpose of being returned to their rightful owners were in fact “returned” or sold to Nazis by the Bavarian Government. The June 25, 2016 newspaper article reported that while researching the whereabouts of a work of art looted from a Jewish family during the Holocaust, the London-based Commission for Looted Art in Europe (CLAE) “uncovered a scandal.” It discovered that works of art that were transferred to the German post-war authorities for the purpose of being returned to their rightful owners were later “returned” or sold by the Bavarian Government to high-ranking Nazis.

During World War II, the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives section of the Allies (commonly referred to as the “Monuments Men”) was established for the purpose of salvaging monuments and other cultural treasures, including works of art, from the destruction of war. The Monuments Men were comprised of approximately 345 men and women, many of whom were historians, architects, museum curators, and professors who interrupted their professional careers to help prevent cultural treasures from being destroyed during the war. The Monuments Men rescued and recovered countless pieces of art stolen by the Nazis. After the war, approximately 10,600 works of art recovered by the Monuments Men were transferred to the Bavarian Government with the explicit instruction that the investigation into the ownership of the works of art should continue. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* June 25, 2016 newspaper article reported that rather than investigate the provenance of the works of art and return them to their rightful owners, the Bavarian Government allowed Nazis who claimed that they were the rightful owners of some of the works of art to take possession of those works of art and at times allowed Nazis to purchase some of the artwork.

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