

Art Database of the National Fund for Victims of National Socialism Available Online

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Today, 17 October 2006, the art database of the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism went online. The database takes the form of a digital gallery at the address www.kunstrestitution.at and provides information on art and cultural objects that were likely to have been seized during the Nazi era and have since come into public ownership. Its aim is to enable victims of Nazi art theft throughout the world to conduct a targeted search for seized art that meets the criteria for restitution that is held in the museums and collections of the Republic of Austria and the City of Vienna.

The Art Restitution Law of 1998 entrusted the National Fund with the task of selling art in the possession of the Republic of Austria or the City of Vienna that is eligible for restitution but for whom no entitled recipients can be found, and using the proceeds to benefit the victims of National Socialism. The aim of the art database is to make best possible use of the time before the official provenance research is completed to find heirs and to publicize worldwide items of questionable provenance.

The publication of objects in the art database occurs in cooperation with the museums concerned and Austrian provenance research bodies. It aims to help establish which objects may be liable for restitution. This enables entitled persons to identify art objects and lay claim to them before they are sold by the National Fund, with the proceeds going to help the victims as stipulated by law.

The art database contains a catalogue that is arranged according to category with several thousand art and cultural objects held by the museums or in the collections of the Republic of Austria or the City of Vienna. According to the provenance research, some of these objects were seized during the Nazi era. Other items are of questionable provenance that still needs to be determined, and their publication online aims to contribute towards achieving this.