
Thomas J. Watson Library

Research Guide

Methods in Provenance Research

A brief guide to books and online resources to assist with your provenance research.

Thomas J. Watson Library

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The following books describe methods of provenance research for objects of various kinds, especially fine art objects and books.

[International Provenance Research Colloquium. 2005. *Vitalizing memory: international perspectives on provenance research*. Washington, DC.: American Association of Museums.](#)

[Pearson, David. 1994. *Provenance research in book history: a handbook*. London: British Library, 1994.](#)

[Yeide, Nancy H., Amy Walsh, and Konstantin Akinsha. 2001. *The AAM guide to provenance research*. Washington, DC.: American Association of Museums.](#)

The following books can be used to find out about how works of art were looted, stolen, and dispersed during and after World War II.

General Information for WWII Provenance Research

[Akinsha, Konstantin, Grigorii Kozlov, and Sylvia Hochfield. 1995. *Beautiful loot: the Soviet plunder of Europe's art treasures*. New York: Random House.](#)

[Alford, Kenneth D. 2012. *Herman Göring and the Nazi art collection: the looting of Europe's art treasures and their dispersal after World War II*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers. <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=896968>.](#)

[Bruckler, Theodor, and Bernadette Reinhold. 1999. *Kunstraub. Kunstbergung und Restitution in Österreich, 1938 bis heute*. Wien: Böhlau.](#)

[Farmer, Walter I., and Klaus Goldmann. 2000. *The safekeepers: a memoir of the arts at the end of World War II*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.](#)

[Feliciano, Hector. 1997. *The lost museum: the Nazi conspiracy to steal the world's greatest works of art*. New York: Basic Books.](#)

[Müller, Melissa, and Monika Tatzkow. 2010. *Lost lives, lost art: Jewish collectors, Nazi art theft, and the quest for justice*. New York: Vendome Press.](#)

[Nicholas, Lynn H. 1994. *The rape of Europa: the fate of Europe's treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War*. New York: Knopf.](#)

[Petropoulos, Jonathan. 1996. *Art as politics in the Third Reich*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.](#)

[---. 2000. *The Faustian bargain: the art world in Nazi Germany*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford](#)

[University Press.](#)

[Ronald, Susan. 2015. *Hitler's art thief: Hildebrand Gurlitt, the Nazis, and the looting of Europe's treasures*. New York: St. Martin's Press.](#)

[Simpson, Elizabeth. 1997. *The spoils of war: World War II and its aftermath : the loss, reappearance, and recovery of cultural property*. New York: H.N. Abrams in association with the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts.](#)

The resources listed below provide photographs and other documentation on works of art reported missing or stolen from public and private collections during World War II.

Finding lost works from particular countries or collections

Austria

[Great Britain, and Hugh Pattison Macmillan Macmillan. 1946. *Works of art in Austria \(British zone of occupation\) Losses and survivals in the war*. London: H.M. Stationery Office.](#)

Belgium

[Office de récupération économique. 1948. *Répertoire d'oeuvres d'Art dont la Belgique a été spoliée durant la guerre 1939-1945*. Brussels: Royaume de Belgique.](#)

[Office belge de l'économie et de l'agriculture. 1994. *Missing art works of Belgium*. Bruxelles: Office belge de l'économie et de l'agriculture.](#)

France

[Germany \(Territory under Allied occupation, 1945-1955 : French Zone\). 1947. *Répertoire des biens spoliés en France durant la guerre, 1939-1945 = List of property removed from France during the war, 1939-1945*. \[Berlin\]: \[Impr. nationale\]. \[Click here for the online version.\]\(#\)](#)

[Schloss Collection, Non-Restituted Works Looted 1943-1998.](#) Published by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this website lists over one hundred works still missing from the collection of Adolphe Schloss as of July 1, 1997. Includes images, descriptive information, and cross-references to Répertoire de Biens Spoliés.

Germany

[Bernhard, Marianne, and Klaus P. Rogner. 1965. *Verlorene Werke der Malerei: in Deutschland in der Zeit von 1939 bis 1945 zerstörte und verschollene Gemälde aus Museen und Galerien*. München: F.A. Ackermann.](#)

Hungary

[Mravik, László, and Loránd Bereczky. 1998. *The "Sacco di Budapest" and depredation of Hungary, 1938-1949: works of art missing from Hungary as a result of the Second World War : looted, smuggled, captured, lost and destroyed art works, books and archival documents : preliminary and provisional catalogue*. Budapest: Published by the Hungarian National Gallery for the Joint Restitution Committee at the Hungarian Ministry of Culture and Education.](#)

Italy

[Great Britain. 1945. *Works of art in Italy; losses and survivals in the war*. London: H.M. Stationery Off.](#)

[Morozzi, Luisa, and Rita Paris. 1995. *Treasures untraced: an inventory of the Italian art treasures lost during the Second World War*. Rome: Istituto poligrafico e zecca dello stato.](#)

Netherlands

[Elen, Albert J. 1989. *Missing old master drawings from the Franz Koenigs Collection claimed by the State of The Netherlands: provisional handlist*. The Hague: SDU Publishers.](#)

[Venema, Adriaan. 1986. *Kunsthandel in Nederland, 1940-1945*. Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers.](#)

Collectors' marks, like stamps and inscriptions, can help determine ownership over time. The following resources may be helpful in identifying such marks.

Materials

[Fagan, Louis, Milton I. D. Einstein, Max A. Goldstein, and Howard Coppuck Levis. 1918. *Collectors' marks*. Saint Louis: The Laryngoscope Press.](#)

[Lugt, Frits. 1921. *Les marques de collections de dessins & d'estampes; marques estampillées et écrites de collections particulières et publiques. Marques de marchands, de monteurs et d'imprimeurs. Cachets de vente d'artistes décédés. Marques de graveurs apposées après le tirage des planches. Timbres d'édition. Etc. Avec des notices historiques sur les collectionneurs, les collections, les ventes, les marchands et éditeurs, etc.* Amsterdam: Vereenigde drukkerijen.](#)

[Ris-Paquot. 1893. *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des marques & monogrammes, chiffres, lettres initiales, signes figuratifs, etc., etc.: contenant 12.156 marques*. Paris: Henri Laurens.](#)

Domestic Databases

[The Getty Provenance Index](#)—This is comprised of several different databases. These art inventories include Archival Inventories, Sales Catalogs, Goupil & Cie Stock Books, Payments to Authors, and Public Collections. German Sales Catalogs 1930–1945 is a work-in-progress, focusing on the period of Nazi looting of art during WWII.

[Catalogues Raisonné](#)—Established by IFAR (International Foundation for Art Research) as two databases of catalogues raisonné—scholarly compilations of artists work—both published and in preparation, for research by artists name or to browse alphabetically.

[Frick Research Library Online](#)—During World War II, the Frick Art Reference Library assisted the armed forces in identifying and protecting cultural monuments and art works. Now, this searchable collection of photographs, catalogs, and monographs assist researchers in WWII provenance research.

[Nazi-Era Provenance Portal](#)—Searchable registry of objects in US museum collections that changed hands in Continental Europe during the Nazi Era (1933–1945)

International Databases

[Art Database of the National Fund](#) — Provides information on art and cultural objects located in the Republic of Austria or city of Vienne museums and collections that may have been seized under the National Socialist Regime.

[Database of Art Objects at The Jeu de Paume](#) — The Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR) was a Hitler-designed “Special Task Force” formed to appropriate cultural property during WWII. One operation was the plundering of art objects from French and Belgian collections that were brought to The Jeu de Paume building in the Tuileries Gardens in Paris for processing before shipment to Germany. This database is a searchable illustrated index of remaining registration cards and photographs of more than 20000 objects taken from French and Belgian households. One can search by object or name of owner from whom object was taken.

[LootedArt.com](#) — The central registry of information on cultural property looted 1933–45.

In addition to many useful links and breaking news of cases involving looted art, LootedArt contains two databases:

- The Information Database contains information and documentation from forty-nine countries, including laws and policies, reports and publications, archival records and resources, current cases and relevant websites.
- The Object Database contains details of over 25,000 objects of all kinds — paintings, drawings, antiquities, Judaica, etc— looted, missing and/or identified from over fifteen countries.

Internet Resources

[Art Loss Register](#)

[The Central Registry of Information on Looted Cultural Property, 1933–1945](#)

[Commission for Looted Art in Europe \(CLAE\)](#)

[The Lost Art Internet Database](#)

[Musées Nationaux Recupération](#)

[New York State Holocaust Claims Office](#)

[National Archives Holocaust Era Assets](#) — A finding aid to the records at the National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

[Researching Holocaust Era assets at the National Archives and Records Administration \(NARA\)](#)

[IFAR's Online Provenance Guide](#)

Search Tips

Locate other titles in the Met libraries by doing a KEYWORD search in the library catalog for any of the following terms.

Enclose phrases in quotation marks. (Example: "art thefts")

- Art thefts
- War and art
- Art treasures in war
- World War, 1939–1945— Art and the war

Have a question?

Reach a reference librarian at watson.library@metmuseum.org or use our virtual chat service, Ask a Librarian, Monday-Friday, 10am-5pm.

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