

## Looted Art & Restitution in 20th Century (Cambridge, 18–20 Sept 14)

Newnham College, Cambridge, Sep 18–20, 2014

Deadline: Apr 13, 2014

Bianca Gaudenzi

Looted Art and Restitution in the Twentieth Century: Europe in transnational and global perspective

Over the past decade the subject of looted art and the restitution of cultural property have captured the attention of the media and the public alike through a range of popular recollections that included novels, exhibitions, documentaries and more recently even a blockbuster movie, *Monuments Men*. In these narratives, the historical complexities that characterized wartime looting or under duress sales and the ensuing efforts to restore cultural artifacts to their pre-war conditions have often been put aside in favour of vivid literary accounts that occasionally present a tale of heroic sacrifice and the fulfillment of justice. Alongside, a diverse and wide-ranging academic literature has developed, providing insights from legal, historical and art historical perspectives. Based on a rich plurality of case studies, a substantial part of the existing literature focuses on the roles and actions of individual actors or groups - in particular the crimes of the Nazi elites - and the legal aspects of restitution. Other contributions approach the subject with an in-depth analysis of the fate of specific collections or art works, either belonging to individuals, families or museums.

The field remains, however, highly compartmentalized along institutional, disciplinary and national boundaries. The geographical and chronological spread of studies also still proves rather uneven. This conference aims to overcome these fragmentations by establishing connections between the public and private responses to art looting across institutional and national borders over the course of the twentieth century. We seek contributions investigating the nexus between private individuals, national governments and international organizations in order to question the impact on notions of national, international and regional identity in European nation-states and gain a deeper understanding of the processes of restitution of cultural property as a political and cultural practice in transnational and global perspective.

We welcome papers on the following themes:

- Changing definitions of looted and restituted art: criteria, motifs and limitations
- National policies, decision-making processes and the development of international cooperation - including the work of both private and public actors
- Identity and restitution: cultural property, international/national/local power structures and identi-

## ty politics

- Public debates and cultural representations of restitution claims: which claims capture the public imagination, which remain only a concern for experts and why?
- The (trans)national art world and restitution: the impact on museums, galleries, art dealing and collecting practices
- Restitution and decolonization: connections and contrasts between post-WWII and post-colonial claims and policies
- Continuities and ruptures: is restitution history structured by political history? Towards a periodization of restitution history
- Memories of restitution: the use and legacy of institutional and collective restitution debates, from the Napoleonic Wars to the present

The conference language is English. Papers will be pre-circulated in early September.

Please send a proposal of max 400 words, accompanied by a short CV, to Bianca Gaudenzi (bg265@cam.ac.uk) by 13 April 2014.

### Reference:

CFP: Looted Art & Restitution in 20th Century (Cambridge, 18-20 Sept 14). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 23, 2014 (accessed Jul 16, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/7065>>.