

Objects Confiscated During the Nazi Era in Exhibitions of Austrian Federal Museums

Abstract: Even though the restitution of Nazi-looted property from Austrian federal museums is clearly regulated by law, dealing with objects that are still or have been returned to the collections, or with gaps in exhibitions that have resulted from restitutions, poses challenges for museum work. Through a semiotic analysis of museum media (exhibitions, audio guides, information boards as well as museum shops) in Austrian federal museums in 2020 and 2021, this article investigates whether and how the topics of Nazi-looted property, provenance research, and restitution are represented. The research revealed that these topics, which are inevitably linked to violence, are often completely ignored or only presented in exhibition sections on the histories of the museums, as if the problem belonged to the past.

Keywords: museology, nazi persecution, provenance research, restitution

In 1998, after decades of delay, the Austrian parliament passed the Federal Law on the Restitution of Works of Art and Other Movable Cultural Assets from Austrian Federal Museums and Collections and Other Federal Property (Art Restitution Law), which can be described as exemplary by international standards and which, since its amendment in 2009, has been extremely comprehensive. Nevertheless, there are still thousands of cultural assets¹ knowingly confiscated during the Nazi period and affected by this law in the Austrian federal museums, the Albertina, the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien (KHM), the Belvedere, the Museum of Applied Arts (MAK), the Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien (mumok), the Natural History Museum Vienna (NHM), the Vienna Museum of Science and Tech-

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25365/oezg-2023-34-1-8>



Accepted for publication after external peer review (double blind)

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1 See <https://www.kunstdatenbank.at/> (20 January 2022).

nology (TMW) and the Austrian National Library. Apart from cases still open or under investigation, this is due to the fact that the objects concerned cannot be identified, their provenances cannot be clarified, the original owners or their successors are unknown, or they do not have the necessary resources to take over the cultural objects from the museums.

In addition to the Nazi-looted cultural assets that are still in the federal museums for the reasons mentioned above, it is also important to mention those objects that have been (re-)acquired, donated, or loaned to the museums after successful restitutions. Although these objects can be classified as unobjectionable from a purely legal point of view, ethical questions arise about the presentation and utilization of these objects by museums. What message is conveyed when state museums show objects that (despite restitution) are inevitably linked to Nazi violence? How do museums contextualize these objects and to what extent does this change the message conveyed to national and international visitors? These and other questions gain further importance when considering the involvement of federal museums in Nazi persecution and their position of power in relation to the creation and consolidation of national narratives.

Dealing with restitution-related gaps in exhibitions is also a challenge for museums, whereby similar fundamental decisions regarding transparency must be made concerning all three categories of objects: persecuted cultural property that is still in museums, objects that are (again) in museums after restitution, and gaps that have arisen as a result of restitution.

The federal museums and their historical (co-)perpetration

Just as diverse as the circumstances briefly described above, due to which countless Nazi-looted objects can still be found in Austrian exhibitions today, are the ways in which these objects found their way into museums during or after the Nazi era. What these trajectories have in common is that they were based on the systematic violence, suppression, and persecution of people by the National Socialists, regardless of whether the objects came into the museums' collections as a result of forced property transfers (sale, donation, inheritance), acts of the state (confiscation of property), or criminal acts (embezzlement, theft, robbery). The involvement of the museums or their staff in this violence ranged from active collaboration in Nazi art theft to self-serving efforts to acquire objects whose problematic origins were well known to those in charge, to the unintentional acquisition of objects (long) after the end of the Second World War.

The staff of today's Albertina, for example, which goes back to the graphics collection founded by Duke Albert von Sachsen-Teschen in 1776 and was nationalized as a museum in 1919, were heavily involved in the violent dispossession of Jews. During the Nazi era, the Albertina deliberately filled gaps of the collection – often with works seized from Jewish collectors. Anton Reichel, the director of the Albertina during the National Socialist era, was anxious to obtain valuable objects from property seizures and personally approached the Vermögensverkehrsstelle (Property Transaction Office) to gain an advantage over his competitors. When Reichel died in February 1945, his deputy Heinrich Leporini took his place. Leporini was able to “exonerate” himself thanks to his professional network, although he had bragged in 1938 that Reichel and he were the only National Socialists at the Albertina. After several changes at the top of the Albertina, Otto Benesch was appointed director after his return from exile in the USA at the end of 1947. However, Benesch – an art historian who had worked at the Albertina from 1934, enjoyed an excellent reputation, and was married to a Jewish woman – had himself been involved in the appraising of Jewish-owned artworks before his flight, and was extremely critical of the issue of restitution. He advocated an export ban, lamenting the loss of important works to the Albertina as a result of many objects being extorted by refugees.²

The Belvedere, which dates back to the Moderne Galerie opened in 1903, was also one of the beneficiaries of the Nazi confiscation of assets. Between 1938 and 1945, the gallery was able to acquire more than 600 objects, largely due to its then director, Bruno Grimschitz, who also worked as an appraiser for the Vermögensverkehrsstelle and as an expert on the realization of Jewish art possessions for the Reichskammer der bildenden Künste (Reich Chamber of Fine Art), unscrupulously exploiting his positions.³

The Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien (KHM), which opened in 1891, was also significantly involved in the expropriation of persecuted persons and the distribution of looted objects. The museum director at the time, Fritz Dworschak, is not only considered the initiator but also acted as the administrator of the Central Depot for Seized Collections established in 1938. The Depot kept confiscated collections, which were reviewed by the special commissioner for the construction of the “Führer Museum”, Hans Posse, and subsequently distributed to the museums.⁴

The Austrian Museum of Applied Art (MAK), which goes back to the k. k. Öster-

2 Pia Schölnberger, Ein 'deutsches Kunstinstitut'. Die Albertina in der NS-Zeit, in: Neues Museum 3/4 (2013), 10–17.

3 <https://www.lexikon-provenienzforschung.org/grimschitz-bruno> (4 April 2022).

4 <https://www.lexikon-provenienzforschung.org/zentraldepot-fuer-beschlagnahmte-sammlungen> (4 April 2022).

reichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie (Imperial and Royal Austrian Museum of Art and Industry) founded in 1864, also benefited greatly from expropriation measures during the National Socialist era: around 1,000 objects from seized collections were taken over.⁵ Particularly noteworthy are those objects that were seized as part of the forced surrender of precious metals, pearls, and gemstones.⁶

The Natural History Museum Vienna (NHM), which opened in 1889, is a special case, because it benefited comparatively little from the central distribution of expropriated objects by the National Socialists. More generally, however, the Natural History Museum was a player not to be underestimated during the Nazi era: the then head of the Anthropological Department, Josef Wastl, for example, conducted research on imprisoned Polish Jews with a commission of eight,⁷ and human remains from the Währing Jewish Cemetery, which had been destroyed in 1942, were a welcome addition to the collection.⁸ The German Hans Kummerlöwe, who headed the Science Museums – the NHM, the Museum für Völkerkunde (ethnological museum), the Volkskundemuseum (ethnographic museum), and the Vienna Museum of Science and Technology (TMW) – from 1939 and who had joined the NSDAP as early as 1925, supported the ideological research and exhibition policy of the Nazis. For example, the museum actively contributed to the propaganda of the Third Reich through the exhibition *Das körperliche und seelische Erscheinungsbild der Juden* (The Physical and Mental Appearance of the Jews).⁹

Although donations of Jewish-owned objects to the Vienna TMW increased after 1938, there is no evidence that the museum or its staff played an active role in acquiring them. However, this seems to be entirely due to the focus of the museum's collection, as the TMW, opened in 1918, was also firmly in the hands of the Nazi state museum administration: two civil servants were dismissed, the number of patrons fell due to the resignation of Jews, and there were plans to merge the museum with the Haus der Deutschen Technik (House of German Technology), planned by the Nationalsozialistischer Bund Deutscher Technik (National Socialist Association of German Technology), and the Deutsches Museum in Munich.

5 <https://www.lexikon-provenienzforschung.org/oesterreichisches-museum-fuer-angewandte-kunst> (4 April 2022).

6 <https://blog.mak.at/provenienzforschung-restitution-silberobjekte-mak-zwangsablieferungen-ins-zeit/> (4 April 2022).

7 Claudia Spring, Vermessen, deklassiert und deportiert. Dokumentation zur anthropologischen Untersuchung an 440 Juden im Wiener Stadion im September 1939 unter der Leitung von Josef Wastl vom Naturhistorischen Museum Wien, in: *Zeitgeschichte* 32/2 (2005), 91–110.

8 Maria Teschler-Nicola/Margit Berner, Die anthropologische Abteilung des Naturhistorischen Museums in der NS-Zeit. Reports and documentation of research and collection activities 1938–1945, in: *Akademischer Senat der Universität Wien* (ed.), *Untersuchungen zur Anatomischen Wissenschaft in Wien 1938–1945*, Vienna 1998, 333–358.

9 <https://www.lexikon-provenienzforschung.org/naturhistorisches-museum-wien> (4 April 2022).

This would have given the NSDAP central control over the TMW's presentation of technology.¹⁰

In addition to the roles of museums during the Nazi era as described above, it is also important to consider events after the end of the Second World War that continue to complicate provenance research to this day. For example, when the Vermögensziehungsanmeldeverordnung (Ordinance on the Notification of Seized Assets) was issued in September 1946, requiring owners of seized assets to report them, many public museums and collections refused to comply, despite the threat of sanctions.¹¹ In the same vein, the willingness of museums to cooperate was limited when, as a result of the signing of the Austrian State Treaty, so-called "Sammelstellen" (collection points) were set up for the realization of unclaimed assets.¹² The auction of the so-called "Mauerbach Treasure" caused a particular stir in the late 1990s: in a former Carthusian monastery in Mauerbach near Vienna, almost 1,000 "ownerless" works of art were stored from 1966 onwards by the Federal Office for the Protection of Monuments, which did not pay sufficient attention of the legally required adjustment of ownership. In 1969, following numerous complaints, a list of the works was published in a newspaper, but only about 300 objects were restituted. In the mid-1980s, an article in an American art journal¹³ led to a public debate about the "Mauerbach Treasure", a change in the law, and the renewed publication of the list. Finally, in 1996, the still large remaining stock was auctioned off at the MAK for the benefit of victims of National Socialism.¹⁴

So while the legal situation allowed for restitution, many federal museums and Austrian authorities used loopholes or their institutional power to avoid returning objects to their rightful owners or their heirs – a situation that only changed in 1998 with the passing of the Art Restitution Law and the institutionalization of provenance research.

10 Christian Klösch, *Inventarnummer 1938. Provenienzforschung am Technischen Museum Wien*, Vienna 2015.

11 Ingo Zechner, *Zweifelhaftes Eigentum. Fußnoten zur Kunstrestitution in Österreich*, in: Gabriele Anderl/Alexandra Caruso (eds.), *NS-Kunstraub in Österreich und die Folgen*, Innsbruck 2005, 235–246.

12 Michael Wladika, *Die Beanspruchung von Kunst- und Kulturgegenständen durch die Sammelstellen 1959–1972*, in: Olivia Kaiser/Markus Stumpf/Christina Köstner-Pemsel (eds.), *Treuhänderische Übernahme und Verwahrung. International und interdisziplinär betrachtet*, Göttingen 2018, 85–98.

13 Andrew Decker, *A legacy of shame*, in: *ARTnews* 83 (1984), 55–76.

14 Sabine Loitfellner, *NS-Kunstraub und Restitution in Österreich. Institutionen – Akteure – Nutznießer*, in: Verena Pawlowsky/Harald Wendelin (ed.), *Enteignete Kunst. Raub und Rückgabe. Österreich von 1938 bis heute*, Vienna 2006, 23; Kurt Haslinger, *Mauerbach und der lange Weg bis zur Auktion: 1969–1996*, in: Theodor Brückler (ed.), *Kunstraub, Kunstbergung und Restitution in Österreich – 1938 bis heute*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 1999, 45f.

Current framework conditions for provenance research and restitution

But even today objects that were confiscated in the course of Nazi persecutions pose challenges for all museums concerned. These challenges take on additional significance in view of the special legal and institutional framework conditions of federal museums. This is because Austrian federal museums are subject to the Federal Museums Act and subsequently to the Art Restitution Act. This means museums cannot freely dispose of the objects and archival materials in their care, as these are the property of the federal government.¹⁵ So if museums want to return confiscated cultural assets to their rightful owners, they have to involve the Commission for Provenance Research, the Art Restitution Advisory Board, and relevant ministers.

The Commission for Provenance Research, which is anchored in the Art Restitution Act and was already established in February 1998, is composed of staff from the Commission's Office as well as the members who conduct provenance research in the federal museums and collections on behalf of the Commission. It should be mentioned that since the establishment of the Commission in 1998 the restitution of Nazi-looted objects in Austria does not require an application by the owners but is carried out based on proactive provenance research headed by the Commission. The research results of the Commission for Provenance Research are recorded in dossiers and submitted to the Art Restitution Advisory Board, which is also anchored in the Art Restitution Act. The Advisory Board meets on a regular basis to review the dossiers and make recommendations to the relevant federal ministers.¹⁶ The ministers are then authorized to transfer movable cultural property from direct federal ownership to the rightful owners or their legal successors. So far, every minister has followed every single recommendation of the Advisory Council.¹⁷

If the rightful owners or their successors cannot be determined, the objects will be handed over to the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism to be sold. It is also important to note that any fees paid by the state for the transfer of ownership must be reimbursed before restitution.¹⁸ As a result – as already mentioned – the objects to be restituted may remain in the museums, especially if they are less valuable and/or difficult to transport.

However, neither the laws nor the expert groups working in the field of provenance research provide any information on how to deal with Nazi-looted cultural property in exhibitions or with the gaps resulting from restitution therein. It is

15 § 2 par. 1 and § 4 par. 1 Bundesmuseen-Gesetz 2002.

16 Pia Schölnberger, Provenienzforschung in Österreich, unpublished lecture, Sigmund Freud University Vienna 19 January 2020.

17 Pia Schölnberger, personal communication, 29 January 2022.

18 § 1 par. 1 and 2 Kunstrückgabegesetz.

therefore up to the respective federal museums whether or how they (re-)present the topics of Nazi-confiscated cultural property, provenance research, and restitution to their visitors. For this reason, the aim of this paper is to find out how federal museums deal with cultural property seized as a result of persecution and with the gaps created by restitution, in order to identify commonalities from which conclusions can be drawn about the role of museums in the construction and consolidation of narratives concerning the Nazi period.

Semiotic analysis for museum representation

The multifaceted set of factors – controversial ownership relationships, contexts of violence, and complex framework conditions – gives rise to questions about how museums deal with Nazi-looted objects on several levels. To what extent can federal museums be understood as institutions of structural or direct violence – directly in the form of expropriation and indirectly in the form of self-serving support for disenfranchisement? How are power structures, violence, and persecution, in the context of which the cultural assets were taken over by the federal museums, presented? Is reference made to the historical and current ownership and ownership relationships, the legal framework, and the issues and results of provenance research? Are gaps left by restitution used within exhibitions as a space for (self-)reflection and information for visitors, or are these gaps filled with comparable objects and the restitutions kept quiet? What conclusions can be drawn from the current presentation of Nazi confiscations, provenance research, and restitution about the self-image of Austrian federal museums as institutions, which, within the framework of a permanent social discourse, are required to scientifically process, document, and make accessible to a broad public the testimonies of the past and present entrusted to them?¹⁹

A semiotic analysis²⁰ of the exhibitions and other visitor spaces in the main buildings of the federal museums can shed light on the current practice of dealing with cultural objects whose biographies are inextricably linked to violence and persecution. In this way, different strategies of display are explored in order to discuss the role of federal museums in the (re)production of hegemonic narratives of Nazi violence. The semiotic method of analysis makes it possible to ask about discourses of

19 § 2 para. 1 Bundesmuseen-Gesetz 2002.

20 Jana Scholze, *Medium Ausstellung. Lektüren musealer Gestaltung* in Oxford, Leipzig, Amsterdam und Berlin, Bielefeld 2017; Mieke Bal, *Double exposures. The subject of cultural analysis*, New York 1996; Roswitha Muttenthaler/Regina Wonisch, *Gesten des Zeigens. Zur Repräsentation von Gender und Race in Ausstellungen*, Bielefeld 2006.

exclusion, especially in large and national institutions that often cloak their presentations in the garb of objective truth.²¹ In this sense, the contribution not only includes information that museums provide to visitors but also gaps and omissions. This refers both to gaps in representation, for example when an object whose rightful owners have not yet been found is not appropriately marked or contextualized, and to gaps created by restitution.

When considering the results, the following limitations must also always be borne in mind. First, we look at what the museums display. This means that only publicly accessible representations of the museums themselves are included in the analysis. Second, missing representations are also regarded important indications for answering the guiding research questions, and thus non-existing indications are also included in the study. Third, only the main buildings of the federal museums are included in the study, as a consideration of the branches and incorporated museums, for example the Weltmuseum Wien, which is incorporated in the KHM association, would inevitably have led to an arbitrary selection. Although the National Library is also an institution under the Federal Museums Act and its institutional structure also includes museums, such as the House of Austrian History or the Literature Museum, it is not included in the study because it is mainly a library. The Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien (mumok), which only opened in 1962, does not have a permanent exhibition. It only had to deal with one restitution case and is thus not taken into account. It should also be noted that the permanent loans of the Ludwig Foundation, which give the museum its name, are not federal property and are therefore not affected by the Art Restitution Law. In this sense, museums owned by the federal government or with federal participation that are also not subject to the Federal Museums Act, such as the Museum of Military History, are not included in the study. This selection ensures that the museums are comparable in terms of their legal framework, despite their different collection focuses. Fourth, due to its limited scope, this article focuses on the museum buildings with permanent exhibitions, museum shops, and other acoustic, visual, or audio-visual media.²²

21 Mario Schulze, *Wie die Dinge sprechen lernten. Eine Geschichte des Museumsobjektes 1968–2000*, Bielefeld 2017, 190.

22 These are not the only forms of representation of the museums: guided tours, websites, online catalogues, events, as well as publications of all kinds are also important indicators of how the institutions deal with these sensitive holdings, even if they are not physically located in the buildings. However, they cannot be considered within this limited framework. A comprehensive analysis of further forms of representation can be found in Andrea Berger, *Die Repräsentation von NS-verfolgungsbedingt entzogenem Kulturgut, Provenienzforschung und Restitution durch die österreichischen Bundesmuseen*, unpublished master's thesis, University of Vienna 2020.

How (not) to display Nazi-looted objects

Of the six federal museums examined, only the TMW dedicates a separate – albeit small – permanent exhibition to the topics of Nazi-confiscated cultural assets, provenance research, and restitution. In the exhibition *Inventory No. 1938*, which opened in 2015, empty boxes are presented referring to objects that are no longer in the museum, in addition to restituted objects that have been returned or are still in the museum, and objects whose provenance is still unclear. The design of the exhibition is reminiscent of a walk-in, oversized wooden transport box. The confinement creates an oppressive feeling that supports the curatorial approach. The exhibition is located in the middle of the large exhibition *Everyday life - Directions for Use*, which seems fitting not only with regard to the everyday objects confiscated during Nazi persecution on display. Placing these objects in close vicinity to the *Everyday life - Directions for Use* exhibition reduces the distance for visitors to the topics dealt with in the exhibition and emphasizes the everydayness of these topics – both concerning everyday violence against persecuted persons during the Nazi era and the everyday encounter with movable assets and real estate seized during Nazi persecution in Austria. There are two text panels for each object or group of objects in the exhibition: the first panel contains brief information about the direct previous owner, the date of acquisition, the type of dedication (donation, loan, or purchase) as well as a short description of the object. The second panel is devoted to the provenance of the objects, the biographies of the rightful owners, and the – unfortunately outdated – state of the art of provenance research. In addition to the objects, the exhibition also shows reproductions of photos and documents related to the object biographies. Also worth mentioning is a screen that shows almost all Nazi-confiscated objects located in other areas of the exhibition collection.

In addition to the *Inventory No. 1938* exhibition, a small area in the staircase at the side of the banquet hall, designed for the museum's centenary in 2009, is dedicated to the history of the museum during the Nazi era, provenance research, and restitution. The aims and successes of provenance research are demonstrated by objects from the estate of the technology historian Hugo Theodor Horwitz, who was murdered by the Nazis in 1942. In 2006, the estate was restituted to his son, who lives in Canada, but who donated his father's manuscripts and letters to the TMW. The remaining part of the estate (97 books) was purchased by the museum. Furthermore, large text panels explain individual steps and the (outdated) state of the art of provenance research. In addition to the scholarly examination of the topics, Miriam Bajala's work [*Nameless*] also intervenes artistically: a mirrored glass wall and sound installation around the honour plaque in the banquet hall draws attention to the fact that the originally affixed honour plaque named the Jewish industrialist Bern-

hard Wetzler and the Jewish banking house Rothschild, which is why the plaque was removed and replaced during the Nazi era.

At the NHM, the exhibition *The History of the Natural History Museum Vienna – From 1750 to Today* deals with Nazi confiscation, provenance research, and restitution. It is located in the area of the staircase between the first floor and the mezzanine above, where there is only one more room accessible to visitors. One showcase of the exhibition covers the period from 1918 till today, with half of the showcase dedicated to the Nazi period and its consequences. A text panel addresses the topic of restitution: “Since the Law on Restitution of Artworks came into force in 1998, the Museum of Natural History has been examining its collections for items that are now owned by the state after being purchased or seized by the Nazis. These objects are returned to the original owners or their legal successors.” The same plaque explains that the copy of a Bronze Age antenna sword on display refers to an original that was restituted in 2009. Another clue about restitution is found in a text about the period from the 1920s onwards: here, Nazi racism and its impact on NHM research and collection projects are discussed. It also refers to the participation of the German Wehrmacht and the SS in expeditions, which brought numerous objects from Poland, Greece, and the Soviet Union into the collection, and explains that a staff member volunteered as a supervisor at the Auschwitz concentration camp to have prisoners prepare animals there. At the end of the text it says: “In the course of ‘denazification’ after 1946, 40 of the museum’s employees were fired. In 1947, the skeletons taken from the Währing Jewish Cemetery were returned to their graves, and in 1990 the skulls and death masks [of Jewish and Polish concentration camp prisoners, note A.B.] purchased by the NHM were handed over to the Jewish religious community of Vienna.” The large showcase also contains anthropological measuring instruments, a shell splinter, and a film of a person being measured, although it remains unclear how the footage is connected to the NHM.²³

Similar to the situation at the NHM, the Belvedere also deals with Nazi confiscation, provenance research, and restitution in the exhibition *History of the Belvedere*. The two rooms, which opened in 2018, are located in the direct vicinity of the entrance – that is in a prominent position – but visitors have to pass through the museum shop to get there. A huge text panel explains the timeline that runs through both rooms and the history of the museum, which can be traced chronologically from its beginnings to the present day. The rear of the two rooms is of particular importance here: it presents the history of the building and the museum from 1903

23 Since August 2021, the exhibition has been redesigned and the portraits of the former directors are no longer shown. This is presumably due to the reopening of the interactive area *Deck 50* on the mezzanine above. The area in the stairwell was upgraded with a modern guidance system in the course of the opening in autumn 2021 and will certainly be frequented more often than before.

to the present day. The text panel with the timeline mentions the enactment of the Art Restitution Law and the beginning of provenance research in 1998 as well as the restitution of five Klimt paintings to the successors of Adele and Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer in 2006. Even though 59 works of art have already been restituted by the Belvedere, many references only refer to these five famous paintings (*Adele Bloch-Bauer I and II*, *Apple Tree I*, *Birch Forest* and *Houses at Unterach on the Attersee*). Their restitution was not recommended by the Art Restitution Advisory Board in 1999, whereupon the heirs filed a lawsuit against the Republic of Austria – first in Austria, then in the US – which the Republic appealed against. Although the US Supreme Court accepted the jurisdiction of US courts over the proceedings in 2004, the parties agreed in 2005 to terminate the proceedings in the US and submit to binding arbitration in Austria instead. In 2006, it was decided that the requirements for restitution to the successors had been met and that the Republic would refrain from purchasing the paintings. *Adele Bloch-Bauer I* was sold to Ronald Lauder for the then record price of 135 million dollars, the remaining works were auctioned at Christie's.²⁴ The sale of the paintings was both criticized and mourned in Austria. Numerous visitors came to the Belvedere to say goodbye to the paintings, and an advertising company in which the City of Vienna holds a stake put up posters reading “Ciao Adele” in the year of the restitution.²⁵ While it is of course a pity that the artworks are no longer on public display, there is no doubt that the restitution has clarified unlawful ownership and restored justice.

One of the six console showcases in the exhibition *History of the Belvedere* bears the title “Art Restitution since 1999 / The Case Bloch-Bauer”. The introductory text mentions 54 works of art that have been restituted since the Art Restitution Law was enacted.²⁶ It then refers in just one sentence to the fact that the five Klimt paintings were restituted based on an arbitration court decision in 2006. For visitors who are not familiar with the multi-layered case, the objects displayed in the showcase are unlikely to be particularly informative: a copy of Adele Bloch-Bauer's testament, a confirmation of receipt for six Klimt works, a thank-you letter from the Belvedere to Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer, and some objects relating to the legal dispute, for example a DVD of the film *Woman in Gold* or a photograph of the poster “Ciao Adele”. Neither the objects nor the brief descriptions of the objects make it clear to visitors how exactly the works came to the museum, why the successors or the Belvedere claimed ownership in each case, or the circumstances under which the works were finally restituted.

24 <https://orf.at/v2/stories/2041044/2041067/> (4 April 2022).

25 <https://transliconog.hypotheses.org/kommentierte-bilder-2/2006-klimts-adele-als-wiener-botschafterin> (22 June 2022).

26 In the meantime, the number of restituted objects has increased to 59, according to information on the Belvedere website.

Another example in this exhibition is the restituted Munch painting *Summer Night on the Beach*, whose biography is also not discussed, although a photograph of its ceremonial handover in 2007 is displayed in the showcase. The work was lent to the Belvedere for two years in 1937 by its then owner, Alma Mahler, and the museum attempted to obtain a purchase through her National Socialist-minded stepfather. Mahler, who had fled Austria, refused, but her stepfather – allegedly in Mahler’s name – collected the work of art while it was still on loan and finally sold it to the Belvedere in 1940 in the name of Mahler’s half-sister. Mahler unsuccessfully tried to recover the painting after the war. After an equally unsuccessful attempt by Mahler’s granddaughter in 1999, the legal situation was reviewed, which led to the restitution in 2006.²⁷

In contrast to the works by Klimt and Munch, the Belvedere contextualizes the printed book from Erich Bien’s estate displayed in the showcase, referring both the biography of the object and the museum’s provenance research. The text points out that it is one of four books acquired in bookshops between 1939 and 1945 that have not yet been restituted because the heirs of Bien, who died in exile in Wales in 1940, have not yet been found.

Another showcase dedicated to the museum’s reconstruction and reopening after the Second World War contains the copy of a letter written by the Belvedere’s interim director in 1946, which, in accordance with the “Vermögensentziehungsanmeldeverordnung”, lists the works of art belonging to Jews and records the circumstances of their acquisition by the museum. In this way, visitors can see not only the many different routes of confiscated objects but also the role of the Belvedere as a profiteer of Nazi property confiscation.

The *History of the Belvedere* exhibition also features the painting *The Entry of Charles V into Antwerp* by Hans Makart, which was seized in 1938, restituted, and repurchased in 2013, with an additional panel tracing the object’s biography in detail from 1885 onwards.

In summary, the Belvedere and the NHM have a number of things in common with regard to their engagement with provenance research and restitution: both museums – with a single exception – are devoted exclusively to the topics of the exhibitions that deal with the history of the museums. This leads to an artificial historicization, which will be discussed in more detail below. This, and the fact that both exhibitions are located away from the rest of the exhibition space – in the stairwell and behind the museum shop – gives the impression that visitors are not supposed to be confronted with provenance research and restitution. The biggest diffe-

²⁷ <https://wiev1.orf.at/stories/191623>; https://www.provenienzforschung.gv.at/beiratsbeschluesse/Mahler-Werfel_Alma_2006-11-08.pdf (all 4 April 2022).

rence between the two exhibitions is clearly the way in which their own (co-)perpetration is presented. Whereas the NHM chose (self-)critical words comprehensible to all visitors, the Belvedere rather gives the impression that the exact circumstances are to remain unclear due to a lack of contextualization.

In contrast to the numerous – albeit sometimes difficult for most visitors to interpret – references in the exhibitions dedicated to the history of the museums, there are hardly any references to Nazi-confiscated objects, provenance research, and restitution in other permanent exhibitions. Even if the museums deal with Nazi-confiscated cultural property, provenance research, and/or restitution in some areas, this does not mean that (all) affected objects are clearly marked or contextualized.

In the TMW, outside the *Inventory No. 1938* exhibition and the described area near the banquet hall dedicated to the technical historian Horwitz, only four affected objects are marked. The biography of the instantaneous water heater, for example, which came to the museum on loan in 1938, was donated in 2007, restituted in 2011, and later reacquired by the museum, is made transparent by a text panel next to the object. The exhibition area *Energy* shows Leopold Singer's library, which was confiscated by the Gestapo in 1939, subsequently acquired by the University of World Trade (now the Vienna University of Economics and Business), and finally restituted by the latter to its legal successors in 2015. In 2016, the successors transferred the library to the TMW, where the books are marked with an additional text panel. The Willibald Duschnitz organ was restituted in 1950, before it was taken over by the TMW in 1994. It had previously been housed in the villa of the industrialist Willibald Duschnitz, who was forced to flee in 1938. His villa was confiscated by the Gestapo and subsequently used by the German Wehrmacht, the Austrian government, and the Americans. After restitution, Duschnitz sold the organ in 1955 to the parish church of Leopoldsdorf, where it was eventually purchased by the TMW. Today, the organ is housed in the TMW's banquet hall and is complemented by a large display tracing the history of the object.

However, no objects are marked in the permanent exhibition *Monet to Picasso. The Batliner Collection* at the Albertina, although a wall text briefly introducing the Othmar Huber Collection addresses the exploitation of works of art by the National Socialists. Central works of the collection which have been on loan at the Albertina since the beginning of 2020 came into Huber's possession via the National Socialist Verwertungsstelle (Office for the Disposal of the Property of Jewish Emigrants). The exhibition text reads:

“And he knew how to seize special opportunities, on the other hand. This was the case when the National Socialist ‘Verwertungsstelle’ (Office for the Dis-

posals of the Property of Jewish Emigrants) sold examples of ‘degenerate art’ at the auction ‘Modern Masters from German Museums’ at the Fischer Gallery in Lucerne in 1939. Huber feared that the Nazis would destroy the works that could not find a buyer, which later actually happened.”

To portray Huber merely as a skilful opportunist who wanted to save “degenerate art” from the Nazis, rather than (also) as a profiteer of Nazi rule, seems extremely questionable. Even after the auction mentioned in the exhibition text, Huber still acquired confiscated works from German museums, for example, the paintings *Blue Horse II* by Franz Marc and *Buveuse assoupie (Sleeping Drinker)* by Picasso, which was bequeathed to the Hamburger Kunsthalle by Gertrud Troplowitz, the widow of Nivea inventor Oscar Troplowitz. The heiress’s claims that the work had been explicitly donated to the Hamburg Kunsthalle and that the Nazis had no right to dispose of it were rejected by the district court in Lucerne.²⁸

At the Belvedere, only one work of art outside the *History of the Belvedere* exhibition is contextualized in terms of its object biography. The provenance of the Gothic panel painting *Martyrdom of St Vitus (front side); Christ before Caiaphas (back side)*, is presented in a transparent way. An additional text panel explains that the work came from the collection of the Jew Friedrich Spiegler, who was expelled in 1938. The painting was confiscated by the Gestapo and transferred to the KHM. In 1953 it was handed over to the Belvedere. The difference between the German and English text is confusing: “Following its restitution in 2013, it was purchased for the museum from the successors of Friedrich Spiegler”, reads the neutral English version, whereas the German version suggests a success: “Nach der Restitution 2013 gelang der Rückkauf von den Erben von Friedrich Spiegler” (After the restitution in 2013, the repurchase from the heirs of Friedrich Spiegler was successful). In addition to the panel painting described above, five other objects are currently on display that (re) entered the Belvedere after restitution, although they are not contextualized. For example, information on the provenance of the Klimt painting *Forester’s House in Weissenbach on the Attersee I*, which was restituted in 2001, auctioned in 2003, and returned to the Belvedere in 2018, is not disclosed to visitors. Reference is made exclusively to the permanent loan from a private collector in 2018.

Examples such as the one from the Belvedere can be found in all federal museums studied. Even if the exhibitions of the Albertina, the Belvedere, the NHM, and the TMW deal with Nazi-confiscated cultural property, provenance research, and/or restitution, this does not mean that they mark every object affected. For example,

28 Thomas Boumberger, *Raubkunst – Kunstraub. Die Schweiz und der Handel mit gestohlenen Kulturgütern zur Zeit des Zweiten Weltkriegs*, Zurich 1998, 60–62.

in the TMW, the object biography of the Marcus car, one of the central objects in the collection, is not made transparent to visitors. The car – one of the first in the world – had been on display as a loan from the Austrian Automobile Club (ÖAC) since the museum opened in 1918. After the National Socialists came to power, the ÖAC's assets were taken over by the Nationalsozialistischer Kraftfahrerkorps (National Socialist Motorist Corps), and the Marcus car was donated to the TMW. The four-year legal dispute between the Austrian Automobile, Motorcycle and Touring Club (ÖAMTC), the legal successor to the ÖAC, and the Republic of Austria ended in 1962 with a settlement: the transfer of assets was reversed, but the car remained on permanent loan at the museum²⁹ and is still on display today.

Other unmarked objects include a typewriter donated to the TMW by the Nazi party branch of Hollabrunn and a bust donated to the museum by the Nationalsozialistischer Bund Deutscher Technik (National Socialist Association of German Technology) in 1943. The biographies of these objects are not directly discussed, but the aforementioned screen in the *Inventory No. 1938* exhibition refers to the objects, their location, and the respective status of the provenance research.

Likewise, there is no contextualization of the work on display in the KHM Picture Gallery showing Count Sinzendorf. The painting was in the Rothschild Palace, which had already been sealed on 14 March 1938 – two days after the “Anschluss” of Austria to the German Reich, and was brought to the Central Depot for Seized Collections by KHM staff in October. With the start of the war, the artwork was moved to a secret salvage location – a hunting lodge also seized from Louis Rothschild. After 1945, the Rothschild collections were restituted, but in return for the export permit, donations to various museums – including the KHM, Albertina, Belvedere, and MAK – were forced. Thus, the painting remained in the KHM in 1948 and was later restituted according to the provisions of the 1999 Art Restitution Law, as the donation from 1948 was considered involuntary. After the restitution in spring 1999, Louis Rothschild's niece donated the painting to the KHM in the summer of the same year.³⁰

The MAK's permanent exhibition *Renaissance Baroque Rococo* features a goblet which, according to the object's inscription, was donated to the collection by David Goldmann in 1948. The home furnishings of Goldmann, who had already fled Austria on 11 March 1938, were seized by the Nazis and auctioned off by the Dorotheum. 109 particularly valuable objects had previously been handed over to the Central Depot for Seized Collections – including the goblet held by the MAK. In 1942, 17 of the objects from the Central Depot were assigned to the MAK, but the objects

29 Klösch, Inventarnummer, 2015, 54.

30 <https://retour.hypotheses.org/1330> (4 April 2022).

remained in the depot due to the war. The objects were restituted to Goldmann at the end of the war, but the MAK recommended that the Federal Monuments Authority prevent four objects from being exported from Austria in order to secure them for its collection. After written negotiations with the director of the MAK, Goldmann received a Chinese porcelain bowl and four plates from the Vienna Porcelain Manufactory in exchange for the goblet and three other pieces. The respective arrangement in a so-called *Rückstellungsvergleich* (restitution settlement) was concluded in July 1948.³¹ In 2012, the Art Restitution Advisory Board advocated the restitution of the four objects from the MAK, which has not yet taken place because the legal successors have so far not reimbursed the consideration received in the exchange deal.³² The MAK website presents the object biography of the goblet in a transparent manner, which is why it seems inconsistent that it is not mentioned in the museums' brochure from 2016 that contains texts of the *Renaissance Baroque Rococo* exhibition.

Moreover, the gaps created by restitution are hardly ever addressed by the federal museums. Only the TMW's *Inventory No. 1938* exhibition deliberately preserved these gaps in a metaphorical manner. It is designed as a process, as the TMW is to be gradually emptied by restitutions, thus transforming itself from a presentation of objects to a documentation of restitution.³³ In this sense, gaps are contextualized, as are the objects still in the exhibition, and negative moulds made of foam in the otherwise empty boxes allow visitors to imagine what the restituted objects looked like. For example, 18 musical instruments that came to the museum in 1936 on loan from the Jewish merchant Theodor Sternberg are discussed. Sternberg fled Austria while the provisional manager of his shop sold the loans to the TMW. After the end of the war, Sternberg got his music shop back, but not the musical instruments in the TMW, which were only returned to its legal successor in 2018.

In the exhibition *History of the Natural History Museum*, the gap left by an antenna sword from the Bronze Age that was restituted in 2009 is filled with a copy, clearly marking and contextualizing this procedure. Even though the gap was not preserved in this case, it is indicated by the display of a copy which is clearly marked as such.

No gaps can be found in the other museums examined. Even if it is today difficult to trace where in permanent exhibitions objects that had long since been restituted were shown, it can be said with certainty that, at least in some cases, gaps

31 https://provenienzforschung.gv.at/beiratsbeschluesse/Goldmann_David_2012-11-30.pdf (3 April 2022).

32 https://mak.at/sammlung/sammlung_artikel?article_id=1615905294874 (3 April 2022).

33 Christian Klösch, Von 'Russenbriefen' und 'Durchlauferhitzer'. Provenienzforschung im Technischen Museum Wien mit Österreichischer Mediathek, in: *Neues Museum* 3/4 (2013), 26–32.

were filled without any reference to the restitutions that had taken place. This is the case, for instance, with extremely prominent works such as *Adele Bloch-Bauer I* at the Belvedere. In view of the numerous restitutions from other federal museums, it is fair to assume that objects previously on display in permanent exhibitions have also been restituted from there and that the resulting gaps have been closed without informing visitors. Instead of using the resulting gaps for a critical debate within the exhibitions and informing visitors about this part of the institution's history, gaps are being filled. We can only speculate about the reasons for this. Presumably, the museums want to present themselves as positively as possible to the visitors, or they do not want to confront visitors with such supposedly outdated and depressing topics. And yet, for the sake of their own credibility, they should rather deal with their own history in a critical and transparent way. While in other areas it is quite common to make one's own Nazi past visible through commemorative plaques, monuments, or other forms of representation, museums still seem to pursue the strategy, common until the Waldheim affair, of remaining silent about this phase in their exhibitions. This is deplorable for several reasons: first, it conceals the confiscation of property and thus an essential part of Nazi violence. Second, the work of provenance researchers is not shown to the visitors. Third, many visitors are known to be interested in provenance research, and exhibitions in this field are very well received.³⁴ Fourth, as already mentioned, museums risk their own credibility.

Museum shops

One of the six federal museums studied – the KHM – represents Nazi confiscation, provenance research, and restitution exclusively outside its exhibition, namely in the museum shop. There, in addition to three volumes of the publication series of the Commission for Provenance Research – which cannot be found in any other federal museum – numerous souvenirs with the motif of Klimt's *Lady in Gold* are on offer, including a colouring book for children and a spectacle case. The KHM is thus profiting from a painting looted by the Nazis that was never part of the museum's collection, but was restituted by the Belvedere in 2006 and has since been in the US.

One of the books from the series of publications of the Commission for Provenance Research is devoted to Vermeer's *The Art of Painting*. The painting is one of the best-known works in the KHM's collection and has been the subject of several restitution applications, all of which were rejected. In addition to the direct reference to the painting, the sale of the book in the museum shop is probably due to the

34 Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste, Provenienz&Forschung 1 (2018).

fact that the volume was edited by Susanne Hehenberger and Monika Löscher, who work at the KHM. The other two volumes on sale also contain contributions about the KHM by Hehenberger and Löscher.

The TMW also offers an academic publication on the subject areas studied, namely the catalogue of the same name on the *Inventory No. 1938* exhibition. Souvenirs with motifs of Nazi-looted objects are not found here, which is presumably due to the museum's collection focus.

In the museum shop of the Albertina, on the other hand, numerous souvenirs with the motif *Lady in Gold* are sold, for example, a pack of cards, a small tin of sugar-free peppermint pastilles, and a small barrel organ playing the melody of *Free as the Wind*. Also for sale is a postcard with the motif of Munch's painting *Summer Night on the Beach*, whose restitution from the Belvedere was discussed above.

In the book accompanying the permanent exhibition of the same name *Monet to Picasso. Masterworks from the Albertina. The Batliner Collection*, the Nazi period is mentioned in a single sentence, and the only reference is to the fact that the collection was not damaged in the air raids of the Second World War.³⁵ In contrast to the exhibition, the catalogue of the Othmar Huber Collection, already discussed above, at least mentions that other collectors took a controversial view of the purchase of confiscated "degenerate art" and that the collector Oskar Reinhart ignored the auction of these works of art because he assumed that the proceeds would serve the Nazis to raise foreign currency. However, this is put into perspective immediately afterwards by listing various museums and collectors who, like Huber, took part in the auction.³⁶

At first glance it may seem odd to look at products in museum shops in order to learn something about the handling of Nazi violence. But the analysis of countless kitsch souvenirs and the scarce academic literature allows for some interesting conclusions. The motifs of the artworks, which have long since been restituted, are presented by the museums as symbols of Austrian culture and subsequently perceived as such by visitors to the museum shops. While the originals are no longer in the museums – in most cases not even in Austria – profits are being made from the sale of postcards and card games that ostensibly show typical Austrian images. Thus, the sale of souvenirs (in French *se souvenir*, "to remember") commemorates a state of affairs that must be described as illegitimate – at least since the Nazi confiscation of the respective art objects – while the remembrance of Nazi violence, the museums' (co-)perpetration, and the rightful owners are excluded.

35 Klaus Albrecht Schröder, *Monet to Picasso. Masterworks from the Albertina. The Batliner Collection*, Vienna 2017.

36 Matthias Frehner/Klaus Albrecht Schröder, *Die Sammlung Othmar Huber. The Othmar Huber Collection*, Vienna 2020.

Audio guides, apps, and other forms of museum representation

In the audio guides and apps provided by the described museums, only one reference to Nazi-confiscated objects, provenance research, and restitution could be found, namely in relation to the aforementioned painting *The Entry of Charles V into Antwerp* in the *History of the Belvedere* exhibition.

In addition to this rather problematic finding, the NHM's audio guide was also a negative: as already mentioned, the exhibition *History of the Natural History Museum* is located in a stairwell of the NHM. Two opposite staircases lead up to the top: the showcases located on the landing of the left-hand staircase cover the period from 1750 to 1870, while the showcases of the right-hand staircase refer to the periods from 1870 to 1918 and from 1918 to the present day, with one half of the "1918 to the present" showcase devoted to the period of National Socialism and its aftermath. The audio guide, however, directs visitors exclusively to the showcases that deal with the history of the museum up to 1870, without even mentioning the second part on the opposite stairwell. Two chapters of this audio guide, titled "NHM Top 100" refer to objects in the showcases on the suggested side of the staircase, while the ones on the more recent history are omitted. In order to learn about the period after 1870, visitors have to go back downstairs and upstairs on the opposite side to the other two showcases, which seems unlikely given the museum's signage and the way audio guides are used.

At the foot of the left staircase, a sign points to the exhibition and directs visitors only to those showcases covering the period up to 1870. It can be assumed that many visitors do not learn anything about Nazi confiscation, provenance research, and restitution due to the (missing) signage, as it is not obvious that the second part of the exhibition is located on the opposite staircase.

In addition, the already mentioned showcase on the period from 1918 to the present day, which also contains references to Nazi violence, provenance research, and restitution, shows the 50th volume of the NHM's annals from 1940, in which the then director, Hans Kummerlöwe, made his priorities clear: "Der Wissenschaft und Wahrheit! darüber aber: Dem Vaterland, der Nation unserem Ewigen Großdeutschland" (Science and truth! but above all: The Fatherland, the Nation our Eternal Greater Germany). It is not only in the context of these statements that it seems extremely questionable that only a few metres further down the stairwell, between the portraits of the other former directors of the museum³⁷, there is an uncontextualized

³⁷ It should be borne in mind that the exhibition has been under revision since August 2021 and that the portraits of the former directors are no longer on display.

portrait of the committed National Socialist Kummerlöwe, who already joined the NSDAP Leipzig in 1925³⁸.

Conclusion

Looking at the results of the (re-)presented narratives across the institutional boundaries of the individual museums, certain recurring patterns can be identified in the representation of objects confiscated in the course of Nazi persecution, provenance research, and restitution:

First, the federal museums surveyed hardly, or not at all, present Nazi-looted objects, provenance research, and restitution in their media, such as exhibitions, audio guides, apps, but also in their shops. This silence can by no means be considered neutral because it means that parts of their own (institutional) history as well as the biographies of the objects and, above all, the biographies of the victims of Nazi violence are silenced. Such indifference is not an option as long as Nazi-looted objects are in the museums – regardless of whether these objects were purchased after successful restitutions or whose owners could not yet be traced. If the objects are part of the collections and/or are shown in exhibitions, it is the responsibility of the institutions to also include their biographies and the histories of their rightful owners. To exclude them promotes the erasure of Nazi crimes and violence associated with them as well as the struggle for reparations – which in some cases continues to this day. Closing the gaps in the exhibitions created by restitution can also be seen as a form of silence or concealment.

Second, representations – if they do occur – tend to be (self-)critical and comprehensive. Negative examples, such as the trivializing choice of words, the lack of information essential for interpreting the objects on display, or the uncontextualized presentation of a portrait of a self-confessed National Socialist as museum director, are exceptions, but should be recalled here.

Third, the first two approaches of the museums described above – the mostly lacking representation of Nazi-looted objects, provenance research, and restitution in general, as well as the absolutely (self-)critical but separate references – result in a fundamental inconsistency that spans all areas of representation. This is particularly noticeable in the fact that the representation of Nazi confiscation, provenance research, and restitution is demarcated from the other contents in almost all cases

38 Maria Teschler-Nicola, Richard Arthur Hans Kummerlöwe alias Kumerloeve (1903–1995). Erster Direktor der wissenschaftlichen Museen in Wien in der NS-Zeit, in: *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 142 (2012), 279–304.

observed. This procedure can be observed on various levels: spatially, the topics are dealt with separately from the other exhibitions. Except for individual objects in the TMW and a panel painting in the Belvedere, the topics are addressed in separate areas, for example in those areas dedicated to the history of the museums or in the *Inventory No. 1938* exhibition. In terms of personnel, there is also a demarcation from other contents: the topics of Nazi confiscation, provenance research, and restitution are repeatedly covered by the same academics – the provenance researchers – who are usually exclusively responsible for them. This presumably contributes to the fact that the results of their studies are not included in the exhibitions. There is also a demarcation in the preparation of the relevant contents: they are often not presented in a way that is comprehensible to all visitors, but rather seem to be aimed at an already sensitized audience.

Although it is not the subject of this paper, it is worth mentioning that a temporal demarcation often occurs in the form of special exhibitions. The temporal level entails yet another facet: the challenges posed by Nazi confiscation, provenance research, and restitution are often presented by museums as part of the institutions' history, as part of the past. Current issues and problems are hardly ever taken up, and are sometimes mixed up with the presentation of (their own) history, as is the case at the Belvedere or the NHM, although there are also examples outside these areas that could be used to approach the topic. While museums today devote themselves to the present, provide space for current research results and try to shake off the dust of the past decades, they are prone to historicization when dealing with Nazi-looted objects, provenance research, and restitution, in the sense of a conclusive gesture that leads to an artificially induced temporal distancing. The topics examined are by no means exclusively historical phenomena, but current challenges that museums must face if they are to fulfil their legal mandate to deal with the collections entrusted to them in a lively and contemporary manner.³⁹

Furthermore, the social and ethical responsibility of federal museums plays an essential role because the narratives conveyed by powerful institutions such as federal museums, as already mentioned in the introduction, form a horizon against which people can orient themselves politically, culturally, and socially. Even if, for example, the sale of souvenirs may seem insignificant at first glance, it reflects the self-image of federal museums – and thus also of Austria – in dealing with cultural property seized as a result of Nazi persecution. The image of Austrian culture created in this way is taken up and (further) consolidated by the visitors.

Transferring the picture that emerges from the study of the federal museums to Austrian society, clear overlaps can be observed regarding the inconsistent handling

39 § 2 para. 1 Bundesmuseen-Gesetz 2002.

of Nazi violence and its consequences. While provenance researchers are constantly submitting new dossiers of affected objects to the Art Restitution Advisory Board, the majority of the Austrian population is of the opinion that Austria has made sufficient reparations⁴⁰, and 40 per cent believe that the Second World War and the Holocaust should no longer be discussed.⁴¹ One of the reasons for this is probably the fact that Nazi-looted objects, provenance research, and restitution are presented so inconsistently in the media – even by the museums directly affected. It is the task of the institutions concerned – also with a view to their own credibility – to include these topics in their representations in order to inform society about these aspects of Austrian (museum) history and to counteract oblivion. Finally, it remains to be said that the museums and their present staff cannot be held responsible for their problematic heritage. However, it is also fair to point out that the museums should deal with this heritage in a conscientious and transparent way and help ensure that what happened is not forgotten.

40 Ilsebill Barta-Fliedl/Herbert Posch/Monika Schwärzler, *Inventarisiert. Enteignung von Möbeln aus jüdischem Besitz*, Vienna 2000, 8; Alexandra Grass, *Zahlungen leisten, dann Schlusstrich ziehen*, in: *Wiener Zeitung Online* (7 April 2005), https://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/politik/oesterreich/348118_Zahlungen-leisten-dann-Schlusstrich-ziehen.html (4 April 2022).

41 https://www.sora.at/fileadmin/downloads/projekte/2017_SORA-Praesentation_Demokratiebewusstsein.pdf (4 April 2022).