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ONE-DAY EXHIBITION PRESENTED AT THE JEWISH MUSEUM OF BELGIUM

Stolen Jewish Legacies: The Fate of the Andriessse Collection

The dramatic story of the looting and partial recovery of a valuable Belgian Jewish art and textile collection was presented last night at the Jewish Museum of Belgium. “Stolen Jewish Legacies: The Fate of the Andriessse Collection” traces the lives and cultural impact of Dutch-Belgian philanthropists and art collectors Hugo Daniel Andriessse (1867-1942) and his wife Elisabeth Andriessse (1871-1963). Some of the Andriesses’ collection ended up with Luftwaffe Commander Hermann Goering, who amassed valuable works of art in his private collection by looting the property of Jewish owners throughout Europe during Nazi occupation.

Speakers at the presentation included: Barbara Cuglietta, Director, Jewish Museum of Belgium; Dr. Georg Häusler, Director for Culture, Creativity and Sport at the European Commission; Deidre Berger, JDCRP Executive Board Chair; Dr. Wesley Fisher, JDCRP Executive Board Deputy Chair; Anne Uhrlandt, JDCRP Exhibition Curator and Research and Documentation Officer; Frieda Coosemans, General Counselor at the FPS Economy (Economy Ministry of Belgium); Sabra Anckner, Andriessse family descendant; and Baroness Regina Suchowolski-Sluszny, Holocaust survivor and Co-Chair, Forum der Joodse Organisaties.

“Archival documentation used for the exhibition made it possible to uncover the details of the looting and the subsequent journey and whereabouts of the objects. We now know who seized the collection, where it was taken, and what happened to the owners and much of their collection,” according to exhibition curator Anne Uhrlandt, Research and Documentation Officer for the Jewish Digital Cultural Recovery Project Foundation (JDCRP). “The reunion of six family descendants from the U.S. and Belgium at the presentation is testimony to the importance of provenance work on looted cultural property for Holocaust victims and their families to reconnect with their family history.”

Nearly 80 years after the end of the Holocaust, the exhibition demonstrates how detailed archival research is necessary to uncover the stories of the fate of the millions of objects stolen from Jews throughout Europe by Nazi officials, their collaborators and allies. Experts estimate that hundreds of thousands of objects remain missing. JDCRP is constructing a central digital archival repository to facilitate research for these objects. The platform will link documentation from dozens of archives

worldwide, allowing the matching of relevant documents and searches for information at an individual document level.

“Using research material from dozens of archives, curator Anne Uhrlandt was able to reconstruct the lives of a once prominent couple whose social and cultural legacy to Belgian and European cultural and social history were forgotten,” said Deidre Berger, JDCRP Executive Board Chair. “The JDCRP is committed to bringing together all available digital archival resources to allow researchers and general users to recreate and tell many more such stories.”

“It sheds light on stories of Jewish collectors, of Jewish artists, and the cultural contributions they made to the city and to this country. But it also goes into the historical complexities and raises awareness of the scale and impact of cultural theft,” said Dr. Georg Häusler, Director of Culture, Creativity and Sport at the European Commission. “This project holds educational potential.”

During the course of exhibition research, a book from the personal library of Elisabeth Andriessse was discovered in the holdings of the FPS Economy (Economy Ministry of Belgium). The book was displayed during the one-day exhibition presentation.

“The novel *Armoede* from Elisabeth Andriessse’s personal library returned to Belgium after more than fifty years,” said Frieda Coosemans, General Counselor at the FPS Economy. “Indeed she would probably never have guessed that her book *Armoede* would be the centerpiece of this exhibition today devoted to her family.”

While presenting the book, Coosemans announced that the FPS Economy intends to restitute the book to the rightful heirs of Elisabeth Andriessse. The heirs plan to donate Elisabeth Andriessse’s copy of *Armoede* to the Jewish Museum of Belgium.

The research conducted in preparation for the exhibition also uncovered the postwar donation by Elisabeth Andriessse of a valuable tapestry to the collection of the Musée royaux d’Art et de ‘Histoire that was looted by the Nazis and recovered by the Allied Forces after the war in Germany.

JDCRP created the exhibition in cooperation with the FPS Economy and with the Jewish Museum of Belgium. The museum opened its doors for the one-day presentation, despite its closure for general renovations.

“The exhibition today is more than just an event; it is a tribute to resilience, to a family’s deep love for art,” said Barbara Cuglietta, Director of the Jewish Museum of Belgium. “For our museum it is also a way to highlight the personal stories of Belgium Jews persecuted during the war and to re-emphasize the importance of preserving our shared cultural heritage.”

“This exhibition demonstrates the value of assembling archival material to demonstrate the impact of the largest cultural theft in history and the ways in which cultural plunder contributed to the

Holocaust and was truly a pan-European phenomenon,” said Dr. Wesley Fisher, JDCRP Executive Board Deputy Chair and Director of Research for the Claims Conference and for the World Jewish Restitution Organization. “As the population of repository documentation increases, it will bring a new level of knowledge to help future generations confront issues of historical memory.

Six descendants of the Andriess family attended the evening presentation. Sabra Anckner, descendant of the Andriess family, described her relationship to the Caspar Netscher painting *A Woman Feeding a Parrot*, which was looted from the Andriesses’ collection in 1941, and later restituted to the Andriesses’ legal heirs. Today, it resides in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C, one kilometer from Anckner’s present place of residence.

“I stop by and say hello to [the Netscher painting] regularly. I honor Hugo Daniel and Elisabeth Andriess, and their legacy, by visiting the painting they loved so much,” said Anckner. “At least 127 members of the Andriess family perished in Sobibor, or Auschwitz, or in transit in Westerbork. Instead of having hundreds, or even thousands of Andriess cousins, there is just a handful, some of whom I am meeting for the first time tonight.”

“It was easy for the Nazis to rob, stripping people of everything they owned,” said Baroness Regina Suchowolski-Sluszny, a survivor of the Holocaust who today co-chairs the Forum der Joodse Organisaties. “Sadly, the people from whom these valuables were taken are no longer with us. But their families have a right to reclaim what was lost.”

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About the Jewish Digital Cultural Recovery Project Foundation (JDCRP): *The JDCRP was founded in Berlin in 2019 by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) and the Commission for Art Recovery (CAR). The Foundation is creating a cross-searchable digital platform for archival documentation, research, and education on the looting of Jewish-owned cultural property by the Nazis, their allies, and collaborators. For more information, visit <https://jdcrp.org>.*

Exhibition Curator: Anne Uhrlandt, JDCRP Research and Documentation Officer

The exhibition is part of a project co-funded by the European Union and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (the Claims Conference), sponsored by the Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future” (EVZ) and supported by the German Federal Ministry of Finance (BMF).