## Provenance Research:

## How Archival Documents Support the Recovery of Legacies

Provenance research uses archival documentation to reconstruct the history and fate of objects. First, JDCRP conducted a successful pilot provenance project on the theft and journey of looted paintings from the Adolphe Schloss collection. In a second phase, JDCRP launched projects on persecuted Jewish collectors to highlight the victims of the theft. The following in-depth case study, conducted by JDCRP Research and Documentation Officer Anne Uhrlandt, shows how provenance research can uncover the forgotten destinies of stolen objects and their owners. The research drew on archival evidence from 24 different archives in six countries.

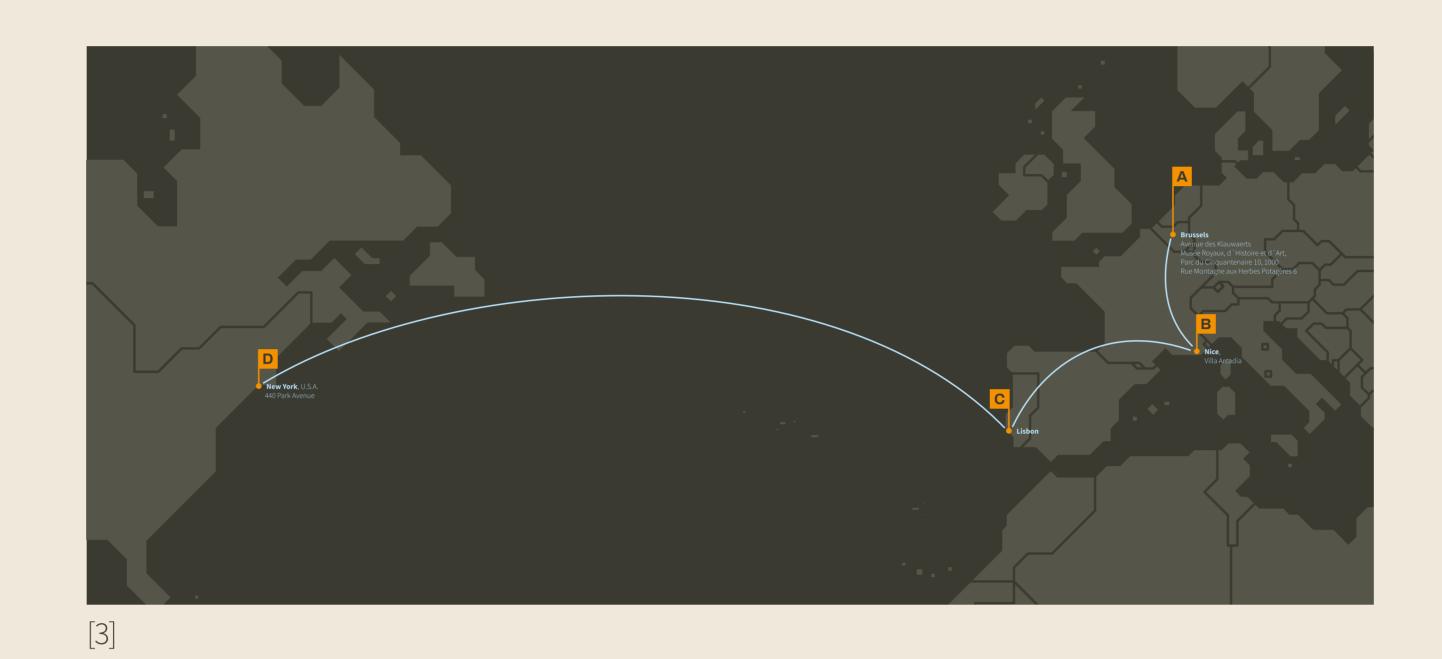
ELISABETH ANDRIESSE, NÉE SPANJAARD (1871-1963) AND HUGO DANIEL ANDRIESSE (1867-1942)

The looted art collection of Elisabeth Andriesse, née Spanjaard (April 26, 1871, Borne, the Netherlands-March 1, 1963, New York, USA) and her husband Hugo Daniel Andriesse (April 9, 1867, Vlissingen, the Netherlands-June 12, 1942, New York, USA) exemplifies the pan-European dimension of the cultural theft of the Nazis. There are 60 entries of objects in their collection stolen by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR), the chief Nazi looting agency, in the Jeu-de-Paume database, serving





The biographical research allowed a detailed reconstruction of the lives of Dutch-born Elisabeth and Hugo Daniel Andriesse, who lived for over 40 years in Brussels, Belgium, close to the van den Bergh Ltd margarine factory that Hugo Andriesse directed. They were a prominent and charitable society couple, often donating funds to needy recipients. Their private home in Brussels was richly decorated with paintings, chiefly Old Master artworks, valuable wall tapestries, Oriental carpets, and antiques.







The Andriesses escaped Belgium in February 1940 to the United States, via an adventurous route through France and Portugal. [3] They deposited their art and textile collection for safekeeping in the vaults of the Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels. However, the Nazis discovered their collection, and it was seized by the Nazi looting agency Devisenschutzkommando Belgien in November 1941. It was then transported to Paris, where it was inventoried by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg with some objects selected by Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe Hermann Goering for his private collection. After the war, Allied Forces recovered many of the objects, which were subsequently restituted to Elisabeth Andriesse. However, some of them remain missing.

The exhibition "Stolen Jewish Legacies: The Fate of the Andriesse Collection" presented the results of the research at the Jewish Museum of Belgium on November 7, 2024, in Brussels, the former hometown of the Andriesses. The exhibition, the first in Belgium to focus on the widespread looting by Nazi occupation forces of Jewish art collections, elicited strong public interest in the fate of the once socially prominent couple. The exhibition opening brought together for the first time six family descendants from the United States and Belgium. Family representative Sabra Anckner spoke movingly about the importance for descendants of tracing stolen objects, thus creating opportunities to reconnect with family history largely lost due to the Holocaust. [4] The Kazerne Dossin, the Holocaust Museum of Belgium in Mechelen, hosted a second

showing of the exhibition for a more extended period in February 2025. The opening event was attended by Elisabeth Andriesse, another family descendant from the United States/the Netherlands, who contributed personal memories of meeting Elisabeth Andriesse during her childhood. [5]

The fate of the Andriesse and related van den Bergh families was detailed by several experts, including Geert Sels, author of the book *Kunst voor das Reich: op zoek naar nazirookunst uit België* [Art for the Reich: In Search of Nazi-Looted Art from Belgium] (2022). Ingrid Vander Veken, author of the book Verloren [Lost] (2023), also recalled the fates of family members who did not survive the Holocaust. The research unexpectedly brought forth several looted objects that were shown during the exhibition. The Ministry of Economics of Belgium loaned to the exhibition a Dutch-language novel from the personal collection of Elisabeth Andriesse, bearing her handwritten signature, which first landed in the Soviet Union, then in the Netherlands, before being returned to the Belgian government, which is planning its restitution to the heirs of the Andriesses.

Exhibition research led to the discovery of a presumed lost wall tapestry once owned by Elisabeth and Hugo Andriesse. It was acquired after the theft by Hermann Goering and restituted post war to Elisabeth Andriesse, who donated it back to the museum in 1948, in appreciation for the museum's assistance helping her recover some stolen artworks. The tapestry, now in fragile condition, was exhibited at the Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels in February 2025, accompanying the Andriesse exhibition at Kazerne Dossin. A label referenced the looting story of the object and its donation by Elisabeth Andriesse in memory of her late husband Hugo Andriesse. [6]

Both the research and the exhibition demonstrated how archival-based evidence from provenance research can recover the stories of Holocaust victims forgotten for more than 80 years. Due to extensive media coverage, the lives and fates of Hugo and Elisabeth Andriesse, whose social and philanthropic activities were often reported in the news, were once again in the press, where articles paid tribute to their stolen Jewish legacy. The aim of JDCRP is to bring together in a central digital location archival material that will enable far more such research into the fates of victims of Nazi cultural plunder.





