The Collectors:

Jewish Contributions to European Jewish Heritage

The Nazi looting campaign focused on the targeted confiscation of cultural objects owned by Jewish collectors. JDCRP's transnational project, "Documentation of Persecuted Jewish Collectors," highlights the significant cultural contribution of pre-war Jewish collectors to European cultural heritage.

Each entry includes details on the collector's life, family and business connections, type of collection owned (e.g., fine arts, books, Judaica or musical instruments), its theft and loss, the persecution history of the owner, and post-war attempts by survivors and descendants to recover what was stolen.

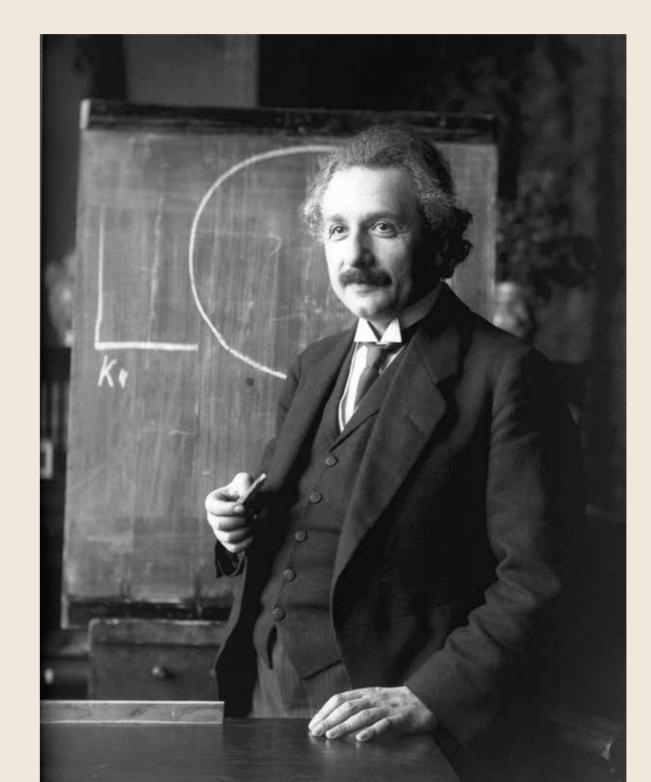
JDCRP's current research has so far identified more than 5,000 persecuted Jewish collectors from 18 countries. More detailed information has been uncovered on about 3,500 of the collectors. Of that number, there is to date a concentration of collectors in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, and Poland. The collectors researched thus far are likely only a small percentage of the estimated overall numbers. More research is needed to document additional collectors, particularly those in countries where there is little previous research.

The research findings help piece together often forgotten stories of victims of the Nazi regime's relentless campaign to seize all Jewish cultural and religious property. Looted collections included larger, well-known collections of valuable paintings as well as smaller, more modest collections of less monetary value but of significant personal value.

Case Study 1:

THE LOOTING OF ALBERT EINSTEIN'S CULTURAL PROPERTY, GERMANY

Albert Einstein (1879-1955), Nobel Prize laureate and renowned physicist, peace activist, and music lover, left Germany in 1932 for the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, never to return to Germany. After his departure, Nazi officials looted paintings and carpets from his Berlin apartment and summer house in Caputh. It is not known whether his book collection was also looted by the Nazis.



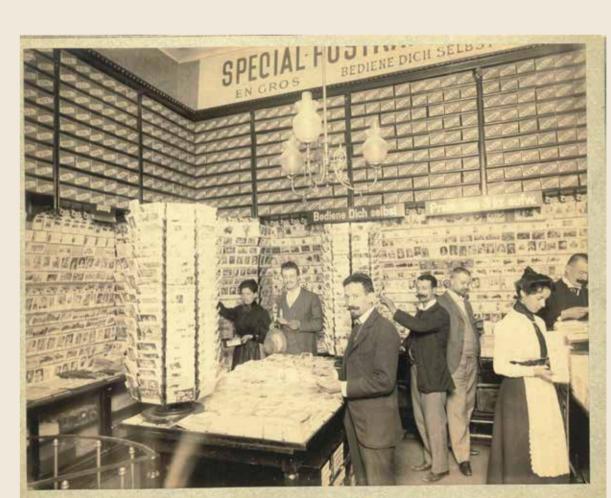




Case Study 2:

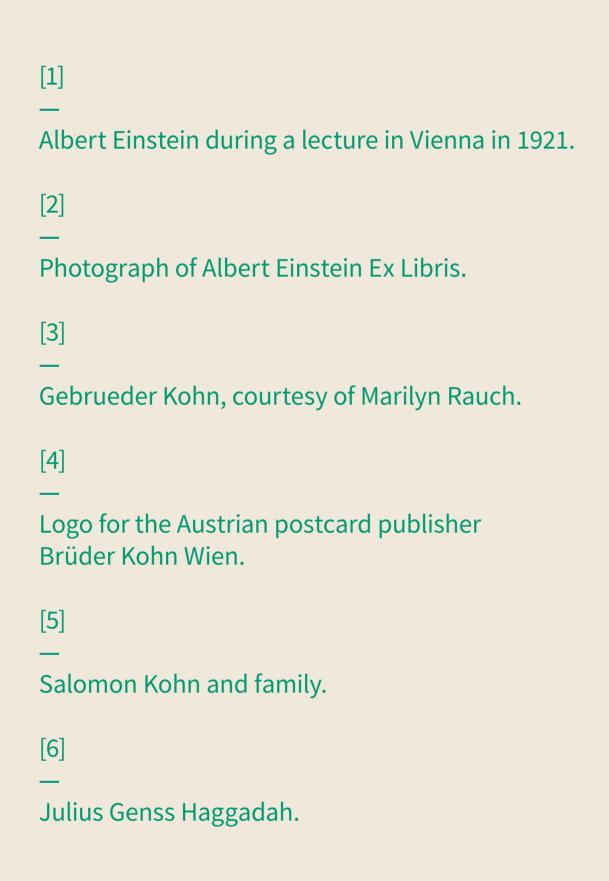
THE LOOTING OF THE SALOMON KOHN COLLECTION, AUSTRIA

In 1898, together with his two brothers, Salomon Kohn (1873-1944) became the co-founder and co-owner of the postcard publishing house Brüder Kohn in Vienna, as well as the creator of the Viennese art postcard. In 1889, Kohn began to publish popular art postcards with motifs of the city, celebrities of the day, and caricatures by important graphic artists. In 1938, the publishing house and his apartment were "aryanized," including the confiscation of his collection of original paintings and drawings, some of which were commissioned by him for his art postcards, as well as photographs and rare postcards. Kohn was removed from his managerial position but remained an unpaid employee in his own business for another two years. Kohn and his wife were ultimately arrested and murdered in Auschwitz. His son, Walter Kohn, a 1998 Nobel Prize laureate, and daughter, Minna Pixner (Kohn), were able to escape and survived the war.











Case Study 3:

THE LOOTING OF THE JULIUS GENSS COLLECTION, ESTONIA

Julius Idel Genss (1887-1957) was an Estonian art collector, lawyer, bibliophile, and author who amassed as many as 20,000 books and 5,000 artworks. A large portion of his collection was stolen by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR), as documented by surviving archival records preserved in Ukraine's State Archive in Kyiv. Large parts of his collection are still missing today. Genss was an engaged member of Estonia's Jewish Community. He managed the office of the Jewish cultural administration and served as a member of the council of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Between 1934 and 1939, Genss organized three exhibitions that focused on Jewish-themed art, culture, and heritage, including works by artists such as Marc Chagall, Max Liebermann and Lyonel Feininger.



