



JEWISH
DIGITAL
CULTURAL
RECOVERY
PROJECT

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February 21, 2023

JDCRP Press Release on the Initial List of Jewish Collectors, February 2023

The Jewish Digital Cultural Recovery Project (JDCRP) Foundation announces the publication on its website <https://jdcrp.org> of an initial list of more than 2,100 Jewish collectors in eight of the European countries whose artworks and cultural objects were stolen, confiscated, or forced into sale by the National Socialists and their allies.

“This is the first time a central list has been compiled of names of persecuted European Jewish collectors,” said JDCRP Executive Board Chair Deidre Berger. “JDCRP views this roster as a tool for the professional community and the interested public to help reconstruct the vast dimensions and scope of the Nazi art theft, the largest art theft in history.”

The Initial list draws on various archival sources, including the Lost Art Database (status as of Dec. 31, 2020), the Database of Art Objects at the Jeu de Paume in Paris (also known as the ERR Database), and relevant literature. Listed are Jewish individuals from both western and eastern Europe who collected works of fine art, books, archival materials, or other types of cultural property.

“Let us remember that each of these names represents a dedicated collector personality with harrowing experiences of looting and loss, persecution and death, and often luckless attempts to recover the stolen property,” Berger commented. “The looting of artworks and cultural objects owned by European Jews was central to the Nazis' systematic attempt to eradicate Jewish culture and identity.”

The JDCRP initial list includes collectors from Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Poland. The preliminary roster is designed as a starting point to expand knowledge of these largely forgotten cultural figures. Berger noted: “The degree to which the Nazi cultural plunder marked the beginning of the Holocaust is not well understood. This chapter of history has been inadequately researched, and it plays little role in Holocaust education.”

This first-ever compilation of names of Jewish collectors in prewar Europe is an important development, according to JDCRP Deputy Executive Board Chair Wesley Fisher. “This roster documents the significant contribution of Jewish collectors to European cultural history before the Holocaust and demonstrates the enormous gaps they left behind in arts and intellectual pursuits.”

Jewish Digital Cultural Recovery
Project Stiftung

Media and Press Contact:
pr@jdcrp.org

For more information, visit:
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Fisher added: “We hope this list will encourage greater public and scholarly interest, as well as mobilizing resources for further exploration of the numerous unjustly forgotten Jewish collectors robbed and persecuted during the Nazi era.”

The Foundation plans on continuous expansion of the list, adding details such as thematic focal points of individual collections, to stimulate research into personal and object history. A concurrent JDCRP project listing Nazi-persecuted Jewish artists will be published later this year.

The assistance of the following institutions and provenance researchers in the compilation of the list is gratefully acknowledged:

The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany
Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste
Documentation Centre for Property Transfers of the Cultural Assets of
WWII Victims, P.B.O.
Dr. Milena Wozniak-Koch

The Jewish Digital Cultural Recovery Project Foundation, founded in 2019 by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) and the Commission for Art Recovery (CAR), is based in Berlin, Germany. The JDCRP is dedicated to building a comprehensive central open-source platform for archival source material, research, and education on the cultural plunder conducted during the National Socialist regime.

For further information please send inquiries to pr@jdcrp.org.

Please send additions or comments to info@jdcrp.org.