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The Jewish Digital Cultural Recovery Project. Interviewing Dr. Wesley Fisher.

This morning, we interviewed for our readers Dr. Wesley Fisher, Executive Board of the Jewish Digital Cultural Recovery Project Stiftung, Director of Research of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany and World Jewish Restitution Organization and Head of Claims Conference-WJRO Looted Art and Cultural Property Initiative. **Many thanks Dr. Wesley Fisher!**



The Jewish Digital Cultural Recovery Project's goal is the creation of a comprehensive listing of all Jewish-owned cultural objects plundered by the Nazis and their allies from the time of their spoliation to the present. The project is a joint initiative of the Commission for Art Recovery and the Conference on

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- What is the aim of the Jewish Digital Cultural Recovery Project?

The aim is the creation of a comprehensive archivally-based listing of all Jewish-owned cultural objects plundered by the Nazis and their allies from the time of their spoliation to the present. This is being built on the experience of the Database of Art Objects at the **Jeu de Paume** (ERR Database – see <https://www.errproject.org/jeudepaume>), the only database so far to show what was taken, from whom

it was taken, and the fates of the objects. The expansion to all art and other cultural property in all the countries involved - along with expansion to reflect who the perpetrators were and the events that made this greatest theft in history possible – should be of great use to claimants, art dealers, auction houses, museums and provide materials for provenance research and Holocaust education.

- Can you explain what is the Pilot Project and the choice of the renowned art collection of Adolphe Schloss?

The Pilot Project, co-funded by the European Union, is an attempt to model the future database so as to be able to accommodate eventually a vast amount of scattered information. The test case chosen is the art collection of Adolphe Schloss consisting of 333 Old Masters' paintings that were confiscated in 1943. Of these, 262 paintings were transferred to the Führerbau in Munich from where they were stolen on April 30, 1945. Of these, 150 are still missing. The Schloss collection involves multiple archives in several countries, both German and French perpetrators, problems of identifying the fate of the objects, and numerous other issues – it is a microcosm of the various issues that need to be faced in creating a comprehensive database.

- What are the main objectives for 2021, 2022?

Improvement of the database followed by transfer of existing data into it; expansion of the JDCRP network to include institutions in countries beyond France, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Austria, and the USA so as to begin to bring in and make accessible archival information on cultural objects taken in the rest of Europe; activities concerning cultural objects other than fine arts, provenance research education, Holocaust education.

- The main challenges?

The archival records on looted cultural property are not yet open in a number of countries despite the greater accessibility in others of such things as postwar claims. Privacy regulations can be a problem despite how many years have passed. And the sheer size of the initiative.

- Do you think restitution to rightful owners should be the aim objective in Holocaust restitution art claims?

The JDCRP is obviously highly relevant to restitution, but it is a major effort primarily in provenance research, not in restitution as such. Restitution to rightful owners is

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the theft in addition to knowledge of the murder, as well as the disposition of art that cannot be traced to its original owners and remains unclaimed and heirless.

- Can you give one example of the robbery and shows how historical research can uncover the traces of lost objects?

To take an example recently in the news, a member of the family of **Mme. Léone-Noëlle Meyer** saw on our predecessor Database of Art Objects at the Jeu de Paume that the painting by **Camille Pissaro** “Bergère rentrant des moutons” (1886), which had been stolen by the Nazis from Mme. Meyer’s father was currently at the **Fred Jones, Jr. Museum of Art at the University of Oklahoma** (see https://www.errproject.org/jeudepaume/card_view.php?CardId=4785).

Many thanks!

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