

Application concerning the restitution of the china  
collection of my mother, Mrs. Hermine Feist (Wannsee).

The china collection of my mother Mrs. Hermine Feist, Wannsee, was generally known as the most important and most complete collection of German china in the world. The Nazi government forced us in 1935 to give it away against cancelling of certain debts of my mother far under the real value of the collection. I would like to buy it back for the same amount and would gladly offer it to the Victoria and Albert Museum or the Metropolitan Museum against certain conditions for our living over there.

The collection contains many more pieces of high quality than the famous china collection of the Dresden "Johanneum". It is composed of hardly less than a thousand pieces of which more than half are Dresden china. All other German china factories (Fulda, Höchst, Frankenthal, Nymphenburg, Ludwigsburg, Ansbach, etc., as well as Vienna) are fairly completely represented also. The collection was generally known for the Crinoline Groups, the Meissen Harlequins, the Meissen Birds and the Augustus Rex vases. While the collection is outnumbered by the Royal Saxon one, it contains nevertheless more pieces of rare quality than the latter. Nor has there been a collection anywhere else which could bear comparison with it.

For many years it had been the desire of the Berlin museums to gain possession of the collection. It was put up at my mother's house at Wannsee and mortgaged to the Dresdner Bank which was then partly government controlled. My mother died in November 1933 and left altogether two millions and a quarter of liabilities. The assets of the inheritance were composed of a series of important works of art (pictures, furniture, objects of art), but the main part of the assets was the china collection, and it was that which gave world fame to the Wannsee collections. During her lifetime my mother had received an offer of two million dollars for the collection by a group of American bankers represented by Mr. Jules Bache. After my mother's death the collection has been estimated by Maitre Baudouin, commissaire priseur de Paris, and by Mr. Hobson from Sothey's in London at a value in foreign currency many times higher than that we have been forced to give it away for.

Although I had tried to prevent it for a long time, the Berlin museums appropriated the china collection in 1935. In exchange, 1 1/4 million marks were deducted from my mother's debts with the Dresdner Bank and the tax authorities and another 1/4 million was paid to her creditors. Together with the china collection our five best pictures were taken:

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- (1) Madonna with child by Lucas Cranach
- (2) Papageienmeister (Master with the Parrot)
- (3) Oberdeutsche Heimsuchung (Visitation of Virgin Mary, by a primitive Master of southern Germany, a very famous picture)
- (4) and (5) Pesne, Portraits of the painter's grandchildren
- (6) two famous silver-animals by an Augsburg silversmith of the 15th century.

My mother has never transferred the whole of the collection to the Dresdner Bank, but only a few pieces whose absence would in no way make itself felt. Not has any legal action been brought on anything like it, after the death of my mother, because then I would have objected before the courts of law. Only 450,000 marks had been advanced to my mother by the Dresdner Bank; the rest of her debt was composed of interest and of some claims of the tax authorities. Had we not lived under the rule of the Nazis, I would have opposed to the confiscation of the collection. Its gradual realization would have enabled me to obtain far more than the sum constituted by my mother's debt, in foreign currency.

No deed of sale or anything of the sort was ever drawn up by the authorities. The collection was simply taken, and the indemnity which was given went to government authorities, to the Dresdner Bank and to some other creditors.

The china collection was set up in its entirety in the Berlin Schlossmuseum, and a catalogue was made of it by the director, Mr. Schnorr von Carolsfeld. In 1938 the museums edited a catalogue with the heading: Five Years of National-Socialist work in Museum Management (Fünf Jahre nationalsozialistischen Wirkens der Museumsdirektion), in which the Hermine Feist collection held one of the most important places. I am therefore led to believe that the collection was well taken care of when the museums were evacuated, and that, together with other contents of the Schlossmuseum, it is packed away somewhere.

With the aid of the catalogue I can easily identify all the pieces of the collection. The collection was well known also to English and French connoisseurs.

Before our emigration I payed approximately half a million for the "Judenabgabe" (Jew Tax), the so-called "Milliardensteuer" (Milliard tax) and for the "Reichsfluchtsteuer", a sort of ransom which had to be payed before it was possible to leave Germany, and of which I can equally demand the restitution. For the difference of one million marks I should now like to buy back the china collection.

My brother and I were my mother's only heirs. My brother was taken to the concentration camp at Oranienburg in November 1938. As a consequence of his treatment there,

Copy

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Dr. Alex Meyer  
Hotel Sonnenberg

Zurich, December 18th, 1945  
Aurorastr. 98

To Head Quarters of the American Military Government  
in Germany,  
U.S. Zone, U.S. Army,  
c/o. Postmaster,  
New York.

Sir,

As Jewish refugee I had stored up my personal goods and property, so far as I succeeded to withhold them from the confiscation of the Gestapo with H. de Bie, in Rotterdam, Graaf Florisstraat 13-b.

In August 1944, by order of the "Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg", den Haag, Jacob Mosselstraat 38, Gestapo agents seized all my property, broke up all cases and carried off every thing. According to the report of Mr. H. de Bie, Rotterdam, even the empty cases were carried away.

My property stored up in Rotterdam contained several well known pictures of famous artists as well as my entire household-furniture, embracing my library of some hundred books, valuable carpets, old Meissen porcelain etc. The pictures are specified in the enclosed list A, the valuable carpets, porcelain etc. in list B and the contents of the library in list C.

I hereby beg to take up my property according to the enclosed lists on the list of the stolen goods and I should be much obliged if any trace could be found.

The allied headquarters are surely informed about the "Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg" and they will have the possibility to make out by examination of its members, where the stolen goods have been taken.

I would be much obliged to you, if you would give me an answer about the result of your investigations.

Yours faithfully

/s/ Dr. Alex Meyer

/t/ Dr. Alex Meyer

Enclosures.

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HQ EUCOM  
ALLIED CONTACT SECTION  
GREEK LIAISON SECTION  
APO 757, US ARMY  
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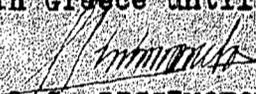
Frankfurt, 14-10-47

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Ref. No. 01/437

SUBJECT: Restitution of Property of Mr. BERLINCOURT  
TO : Restitution Control Branch, Karlsruhe  
APO 403  
Attention: Major William W. FURIE

1. Claim is herewith submitted for restitution of oil-paintings, drawings, engravings and water color paintings belonging to the Swiss national Mr. R. BERLINCOURT who had stored them in a Jewish house at CORFOU (Greece), from where they were removed and transported to Germany by the Germans, during their occupation in Greece.
2. All details concerning the above mentioned looted property are contained in the attached memorandum as well as in the attached Note Verbale No. 367, dated 22-7-47, of the Swiss Legation in Athens.
3. I would greatly appreciate your prompt action on the matter with the view of restitution of the looted items to the owner who was residing in Greece until 1942.-

  
Lt. Col. S. ZISSIMOPOULOS, R.H.A.  
Restitution Officer



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List of Paintings by Mr. René Berlincourt

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1-26

Landscape of Corfu with road and goats	75x55	1
Portrait of Mgr. Athinagras, Archbishop in America	90x70	2
Working potter	90x70	3
Still-Life (Acétylène)	45x40	4
Tavern with gramophone	75x55	5
Head of a philosopher with thistles	35x30	6
Magnolias and lute (still-life)	75x55	7
Park with sculpture (stone) in the sun	35x30	8
Landscape of Corfu and mountains of Albania with snow	45x30	9
Fisherman repairing his net	55x50	10
Gaiques on the quai, green reflects	35x30	11
Village at dawn, Cypress and olive-trees in autumn	45x40	12
Woman and quinces	90x70	13
Return of the peasants under olive-trees	60x50	14
Corfu landscape in sunshine	70x50	15
Women carrying water	60x50	16
Corfu landscape	35x30	17
Saltwort, flowers, nature	50x40	18
Agapanthes and red vase (still-life)	75x55	19
Peasants at the wine-press	110x90	20
Marble torso with Pompeian wall and peach tree in blossom	80x70	21
Black cow	50x40	22
Corfu landscape with working peasants	50x40	23
Landscape with church, olive-tree and road	45x40	24
Village in summer and green cypress-tree	75x60	25
Sunset on the olive-grove	35x30	26

drawings - engravings - water-colors

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OFFICE OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT FOR GERMANY (U. S.)  
Office of the Director of Political Affairs  
APO 742

RESTRICTED

February 1, 1947

MEMORANDUM

TO : Brigadier General W. M. Draper  
Director - Economics Division

Attn: R. P. Howard, Chief  
AFAA Section, Restitution Branch

FROM: Office of Political Affairs

We have just received from the American Legation at Bern a letter dated December 31, 1946, addressed by the Federal Political Department of Switzerland to the Legation on behalf of Mr. Rene Berlincourt, a Swiss national, formerly residing on the island of Corfu, now at St. Imier (Switzerland) hospital, a painter, who seeks to recover his collection of paintings which he left in the custody of a friend when he left that island in 1942. He presumes that the paintings were removed to Germany and may be held in the U. S. Zone of Occupation.

According to a note attached to the Political Department's letter, Berlincourt left his collection of oil paintings, drawings, water colors and engravings with Dr. Sanson-Stephanides, an attorney-at-law, who resided at Rue Manzaro 2, near the Municipal Theater. The house itself was owned by Messrs. Delbono Brothers, Jews. Each painting is signed with the artist's name "Rene Berlincourt" and dated "Corfu, 19...". The canvases were carefully rolled and packaged and labeled, inside as well as on the outside, with a notation to the effect that "these paintings are the property of Rene Berlincourt, Swiss national, address c/o Mme. Albert Kuhn von Moos, Degersheim, Ct. of St. Gall, Switzerland."

After the fall of Corfu, the letter reads, the Delbonos were deported and their apartment and the attic of their house were looted and the paintings belonging to the Swiss artist were removed by the

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Germans. The artist believes these paintings may have been brought to Germany and he appeals to the occupation authorities of the U. S. Zone to help him locate them.

A copy of the letter from the Federal Political Department, written in French, is enclosed herewith. Included in it is a descriptive list of the oil paintings, drawings, engravings, and water colors involved.

Your cooperation in helping locate this collection will be appreciated.

For the Acting Director:

*Wesley C. Haraldson*  
Wesley C. Haraldson  
Acting Economic Counselor

Enclosure:

December-31 letter from Federal Political Department of Switzerland to American Legation, Bern, re Rene Berlincourt, with attachment

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SCHWEIZERISCHES KONSULAT  
FRANKFURT/M

Für das Land Hessen  
sowie den Regierungsbezirk Montabaur und  
die Provinz Rheinprovinz

AKTENZEICHEN: Unter III.RS.ca. - St/FL/me

(16) Frankfurt a. M., den January 15, 1948

Myliusstrasse 30  
Ferial Amt Frankfurt a. M. 78486  
Postcheckkonto: Frankfurt a. M. 6795  
Sprechstunden 9-11 Uhr, ausser Samstag

To Office of Military Government for Germany, US.,  
Economics Division,  
Restitution Branch,  
Attn. Mr. Richard F. HOWARD,  
APO 742 Berlin US-Army

Dear Sir,

I wish to refer <sup>to</sup> your letter of December 16, 1947,  
concerning five old paintings belonging to Mr. Gaston CARLIN,  
contents of which I have duly noted. From the communication  
of the Central Collecting Point, Wiesbaden, it appears that  
one painting by Breughel "Virgin and child surrounded by a  
wreath of flowers", WIE 5220, 100 x 70 cm., has been located.  
Since the measurements of the painting do not seem to correspond  
I would appreciate your continuing your efforts in locating  
the painting of Mr. Carlin.

I am today in a position to give you the following  
additional description concerning the five paintings:

- 1) Said to be by Jan Breughel, the older:  
Madonna with child and angels playing music, surrounded  
by a wreath of flowers, not signed, size about 52 x 66 cm.,  
oil on wood, without frame. The painting has a crack.
- 2) Said to be by Barthel Bruyn (old German school):  
Portrait of a bearded man with brown fur collar, in front  
a death's head, prayer book with carnation, backwards  
two escutcheons, one escutcheon with guild sign, one  
escutcheon with gold loops, green background, not signed,  
restored, dated 1542, size 44 x 54 cm., oil on wood,  
without frame.
- 3) Gustave Ricard:  
Portrait of a young girl, signed G.R., in black frame.
- 4) Gustave Ricard:  
Portrait of a boy, monogram G.R., in black frame.
- 5) Said to be by Michelangelo Cerquozzi (Roman school,  
17 century):  
Old Roman woman with spinning wheel, background open window  
with olive-tree. Brown and blue colors prevailing, not  
signed, oil on canvas, gold frame with palmettes.

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I have now requested photocopies of the paintings  
and shall be glad to submit them to you as soon as possible.

Your continued efforts are indeed greatly appreciated.

Very truly yours

THE CONSUL OF SWITZERLAND :



(P. HOCHSTRASSER)



HEADQUARTERS  
UNITED STATES FORCES IN AUSTRIA  
USACA SECTION  
Reparations, Deliveries and Restitution Division  
Reparations and Restitution Branch  
APO 777, U. S. Army

ET/ew  
20 July 1948

Ref:  
Austrian Claim No. 96  
(Your Ref ED 007 REE/MFAA)

SUBJECT: Paintings Claimed by Miss Irene Carlin

TO: Office of Military Government for Germany (US)  
Economic Division, Restitution Branch  
APO 403, US Army  
Attention: MFAA Section

1. Reference is made to our letter to you of 8 Apr 1948 concerning the above claim.
2. Attached for your information and files is extract from field report by fine arts representative of this office covering the finding of the lost paintings.
3. Subject paintings are under the control of this headquarters and are presently stored in Salzburg.

FOR THE DIVISION CHIEF:



RAY B. LEE  
Deputy Chief, RD&R Division

1. Incl:  
extract in field  
report, period  
8 July - 13 July 48

Telephone: VIENNA B-47593

Copy furnished to:  
CCP - Munich  
FCO - Linz  
FC&R Section, ZCA - Salzburg

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