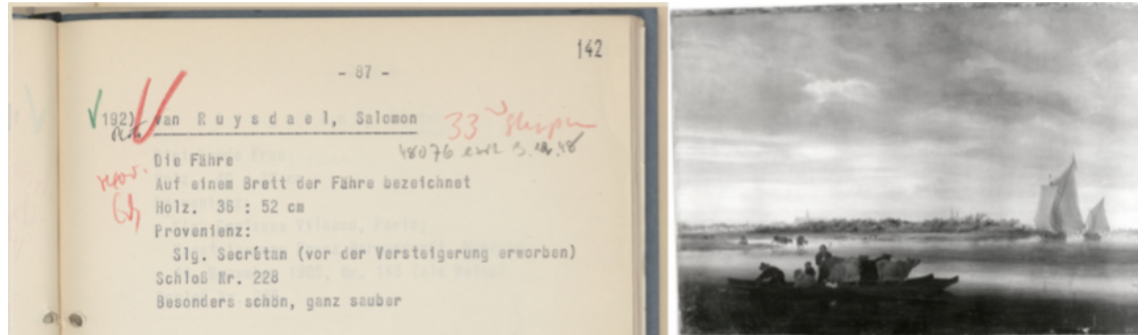


## RECONSTRUCTING THE GREATEST THEFT OF CULTURAL PROPERTY IN HISTORY

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Left: 1944 German Inventory of the Schloss Collection, Painting no. 192, BArch B 323/186; Right: Salomon van Ruysdael, *Die Fähre*, oil on panel, Restituted in 1949, BArch B 323/1041

Berlin, Brussels, Paris, November 16, 2020 — The Jewish Digital Cultural Recovery Project (JDCRP) announces its pilot project *The Fate of the Adolphe Schloss Collection* co-funded by the European Union's Creative Europe Programme and launched in January 2020. The pilot project is testing the feasibility of creating a comprehensive database of Jewish-owned objects of art looted by the National Socialists and their allies between 1933 and 1945 through the renowned collection of Dutch and Flemish Old Masters ardently amassed in Paris at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Adolphe Schloss and looted in 1943.

The National Socialists' systematic art plunder was especially intensified after 1938 when Germany annexed Austria and then invaded most of Europe. Objects of art such as paintings, sculptures, Judaica, and books were forcibly taken from private Jewish collections. The annihilation of Jewish culture and the unprecedented displacement of a vast number of cultural objects during the Nazi era have never been fully documented and the pilot project that concentrates on 333 paintings that were part of the Schloss family's collection includes all the phases of implementation of a comprehensive database, with a smaller volume and thematic scope that will allow for the JDCRP database to be designed and built based on the results.

Building on a holistic approach to the fate of all Jewish-owned objects the pilot project is creating an event-based model database that will tell the story of these objects while exploring how art dealers, art galleries, auction houses, collectors, looting agencies, determined the fate—licit and/or illicit—of the Schloss paintings, one-third of which are still unaccounted for and circulating in the international art market.

Digitizing thousands of documents and photographs from archives in France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United States from which critical information is being extracted, processed, and analyzed for inclusion into the model database, we are creating an information system that will be searchable and provide a visual understanding of displaced art objects through time and space as well as the forces and influences that give shape to their story.

The pilot project, led by Avishag Ben-Yosef, Project Manager, and Marc Masurovsky, Academic Director, is being developed in cooperation with experts from the JDCRP's network of archives, museums, art research institutions, and auction houses in Europe and the United States, as well as with digital humanities experts. It goes hand in hand with other European Union efforts to promote and safeguard Europe's cultural heritage, and to prevent illicit cross-border trade in cultural goods, with the Schloss collection serving as a testimonial to Jewish art collecting in Europe before the National Socialists rose to power.

Ruediger Mahlo, Chair of the Board of Trustees, and Dr. Wesley Fisher of the Executive Board of the JDCRP Stiftung, noted the great importance of this development: *'The greatest theft of cultural property in history was followed by an immense scattering of the archival documentation about the displacement of the objects. The central database called for by the 1998 Washington Principles should now become a reality due to advances in technology, the many good projects that have been done to date, and expansion to include institutions and experts across all of Europe and beyond.'*

#### **About the JDCRP**

The JDCRP was initiated in 2016 by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) and the Commission for Art Recovery (CAR) as part of an ambitious plan to expand and develop the database of objects plundered by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg that transited through the Jeu de Paume in Paris – the ERR Database created by the Claims Conference ([www.errproject.org](http://www.errproject.org)).

The success of the JDCRP is contingent on the strength and expansion of the JDCRP Network which encourages cooperation between archives, art historical institutions and government agencies in Europe and beyond.