



MONUMENTS MEN FOUNDATION

For the Preservation of Art



(May 8, 2014) Washington, DC - Coinciding with the May 8 anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe in 1945, today at a ceremony at the U.S. National Archives, David S. Ferriero, Archivist of the United States, Dr. Greg Bradsher, Senior Archivist, Robert M. Edsel, Chairman of the Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art and author of *The Monuments Men*, and Harry Ettlinger, one of only six living Monuments Men, unveiled "Hitler Album 6," the last known original leather bound album containing photographs of paintings looted by the Nazis. The Monuments Men Foundation donated this album, which was found at Hitler's home in Berchtesgaden, Germany, in the closing days of the war and has since been in private hands, to the National Archives.

This album, created by the staff of a special task force, the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg, or ERR, documents the unprecedented and systematic looting of Europe by Adolf Hitler and the Nazis, a story recently brought to the screen by George Clooney in *The Monuments Men* film. The ERR was the main Nazi agency engaged in the theft of cultural treasures in Nazi-occupied countries.

"Today we are very pleased to accept a fourth album from Mr. Edsel and the Monuments Men Foundation," said Archivist of the United States David S. Ferriero. "The National Archives is the world's leading resource on Holocaust-era assets and these volumes enhance our role as that resource. We are grateful to the Monuments Men Foundation for its continuing work to recover cultural and historic treasures and documents that were stolen during World War II."

"Through our toll free number, 1-866-WWII-ART (1-866-994-4278), the Monuments Men Foundation works with veterans and their families, at no charge, to identify and return works of art and other cultural objects to their rightful owners," states Foundation Chairman Robert M. Edsel. "We are proud to continue our longstanding relationship with the National Archives with the donation of the Hitler Album No. 6, the fourth such gift in the past six years."

Album 6 was found when an heir to an American soldier stationed in the Berchtesgaden area of Germany contacted the Monuments Men Foundation. In the closing days of World War II, the soldier had entered Hitler's home in the Bavarian Alps and picked up the photographic album as a souvenir. The soldier's nephew inherited the album, but was initially unaware of their historical significance until meeting with Robert Edsel, Founder and Chairman of the Monuments Men Foundation. The Foundation often receives calls from veterans and their heirs, who don't know the importance of items they may have picked up during their service, or aren't aware that anyone is looking for the items," Edsel stated. "This album is just the tip of the iceberg for hundreds of thousands of cultural items still missing since World War II. The role of the Monuments Men in preserving cultural treasures during conflict was without precedent. We honor their legacy by completing their mission."

As the ERR staff looted, photographed and catalogued the French collections, they created leather bound albums, including the one being donated today. Each page of the album contained a photograph of one stolen item. A letter representing the family from which the item was stolen and an inventory number is noted beneath each image; for example in Album 6, "R2251" would be the 2251st object stolen from the Rothschild family. The albums were specifically intended for Hitler in an effort to keep him apprised of the ERR's progress in France. According to noted historian Dr. Birgit Schwarz, once Hitler received the first set of albums on his birthday in April 1943, he issued a directive that incorporated the confiscated items into "Special Commission Linz." This organization oversaw building the collection for the Führermuseum, an unrealized museum complex Hitler planned to build in his hometown of Linz, Austria,

as well as distribution of art to regional museums throughout the Reich. As the director, Hitler decided which items would be placed in certain museums.

Album 6 includes images of seventy-three paintings which represented very early thefts, and early inventory numbers such as EW1 (the first item stolen from Elizabeth Wildenstein). All the paintings from the album were listed on the ERR Database, with six of the paintings listed as not having been restituted. The first image seen in Album 6 is a painting stolen from the Rothschild family titled "Portrait of a Woman" by Nicolas de Largillière (inventory code: R437.) The painting was later found by the Monuments Men at the Castle of Neuschwanstein, and can be seen on the front cover of *The Monuments Men* by Robert Edsel being carried out of the castle by the Monuments Men, including James Rorimer, future director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Album 6 also includes an image of an important painting by Jean-Honoré Fragonard. "Girl with Two Doves," or "Mädchen mit zwei Tauben," (inventory code: R38) sold at auction in 2000 for over \$5 million after having been properly repatriated by the Monuments Men in 1946.

The dimensions of Album 6 are 13.5 x 11.75 inches and 3 inches thick. The album weighs approximately 8 pounds. There are 14 different families listed in the inventory list and there are three listings for MA ("Mobel Aktion") - meaning the owner is unknown. In Album 6, twenty-four of the paintings were stolen from the Rothschild family alone.

Two paintings featured in Album 6 are known to be in collections in the United States: "Landscape with Aqueduct" by Nicolas-Antoine Taunay (inventory code: SEL88), can be seen at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and "Portrait of Lambert de Vermont" by Nicolas de Largillière (inventory code: BOR54) which the Norton Simon Museum purchased from the Rothschild family in 1982.

In May 1945, thirty-nine original ERR albums were discovered at Neuschwanstein by the Monuments Men. They had been stored there by the Germans along with records that documented their confiscations and thousands of looted items. These albums were subsequently taken to the Munich Central Collecting Point where they were used by the Monuments Men to assist in the restitution process. In late 1945, these albums were used as evidence at the Nuremberg trials to document the massive Nazi art looting operations.

Today the National Archives has custody of the original 39 albums, as well as three additional albums, numbers 7, 8 and 15, discovered by the Monuments Men Foundation and previously donated to the National Archives. Albums 7 and 8, as well as Album 6 being donated today, were picked up by members of the 989th Field Artillery Battalion, stationed in the Berchtesgaden area in the closing days of the war. Mr. Edsel stated about this occurrence: "I hope discoveries such as these will encourage other members of the 989th Battalion and their families, as well as all veterans, to look in their attics and basements for any lost wartime items as they may hold the clues to unravel this unsolved mystery."

About the Monuments Men Foundation

The Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art is a recipient of the National Humanities Medal, the highest honor given in the United States for excellence in the Humanities field. The Foundation was created to raise public awareness of the 350 men and women from thirteen nations, many of whom were museum directors, curators, and educators, who protected monuments and other cultural treasures from the destruction of World War II. By 1945, these heroes of civilization had tracked, located and later returned more than 5 million artistic and cultural items stolen by Hitler and the Nazis. For more information about the Monuments Men Foundation, please visit www.monumentsmenfoundation.org.

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