

Address for the return of paintings to the city of Dessau-Roßlau

Dear Ms Nuland, Mr Edsel

Ambassador Wittig,

All those involved in returning the paintings

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the last few weeks, the memory of the end of the Second World War has been brought back to us again, as the end of the Nazi rule is exactly 70 years ago. The trauma of the last weeks of the war has been brought alive as we have commemorated the liberation of several concentration camps by the allies. The most despicable deeds ever committed by humanity were made known to the world in those weeks.

In addition to human misery and suffering, which cannot be made up for, came a multitude of other crimes. Amongst others was the robbery of works of art by the Nazis all over Europe. During the victorious advance of the Allies, further works of art and cultural treasures disappeared. Sadly confusion lies at the heart of human tragedies. In the case of artwork and lost treasures and with gestures of good will, artworks can be returned and restored to their original homes.

Thanks to such fortunate circumstances, three important paintings can be returned to the Anhaltische Gemäldegalerie Dessau. It is not just a question of luck however. All art-loving citizens of the city of Dessau extend their gratitude to the Monuments Men Foundation whose persistence and dilligence has led to the rightful return of artworks misplaced during times of conflict and war. Presumably also, George Clooney's film 'Monuments Men', filmed in Saxony-Anhalt, the federal state of where Dessau is located, brought the issue to public attention. It is always a pleasure when film and real life events come together in an enlightening way.

All responsible for the return of the three paintings, can rest assured that they will be in an environment which will bring great joy and be meticulously taken care of. The city of Dessau with two UNESCO heritage-listed sites, the Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz and the internationally acclaimed Bauhaus, both display exceptional art treasures. A large number of tourists, including from the US, visit our cultural sites every year. Of course, near Dessau, lies Wittenberg the city of Martin Luther, and another significant UNESCO heritage-listed site.

The Anhaltische Gemäldegalerie is an internationally acclaimed museum with over 2,000 paintings of old masters and the biggest of its sort in the federal state of Saxony-Anhalt. Founded in 1927, the basis of the precious paintings and prints are from the Ascanian dynasty of princes. Special highlights include main works of 'Lucas Cranach the Elder' and 'the Son'. No doubt, the three paintings will be at home in the gallery.

Fate has taken a wonderful turn for these paintings and we would like to, once again, extend our gratitude and thankfulness for your co-operation.

Peter Kuras