

Welcome

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German Lost Art Foundation

Germany has been acknowledging its responsibility in dealing with its colonial past for several years now. In March 2019, the Conference of Culture Ministers along with representatives of the federal government and central municipal associations adopted the “Framework Principles for dealing with collections from colonial contexts”. This was followed by the establishment of a German Contact Point for Collections from Colonial Contexts, which began its work at the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States in 2020, in July 2022, the “Joint Declaration on the Return of the Benin Bronzes” was signed. In just a few years, a great deal has transpired in German cultural policy in the area of cultural goods and collections from colonial contexts. These developments have also influenced the work of the German Lost Art Foundation.

The Foundation was established in 2015 by the Federal Government, the federal states and the central municipal associations. It promotes provenance research through financial grants and the documentation of research results in its research database *Proveana*. The Foundation’s focus was initially limited to the subject of Nazi-looted cultural property, but has expanded in recent years to include other fields of activity, including, the area of cultural property confiscations in the Soviet Occupation Zone and the German Democratic Republic. In January 2019 the German Lost Art Foundation set out the

conditions for the funding of provenance research projects on cultural goods and collections from colonial contexts and for basic and contextual research relating to this field.

Since then, funding recommendations for more than 73 long- and short-term projects totalling approximately 9,44 million euros have been made across nine application rounds. The projects are divided into the areas of basic and contextual research, in which, for example, the significance of trade networks in the acquisition of cultural objects is being researched, or museum collections which are assumed to have been looted in the course of so-called punitive expeditions are explored. High priority is given to the field of provenance research of human remains.

The project *The Global Networks of the Animal Trading Companies Reiche and Ruhe – Provenance Research on the Circulation of Animals, Humans and Objects in the 19th and 20th Centuries* uncovers international networks of the trade in animals and ethnographic objects as well as the (forced) mobility of people through the mid-20th century. By visualising the global entanglements of the animal trade and its actors, the results of the project will provide an important starting point for further research. This relates to the objectives of our projects in the field of basic and contextual research, in which the centrality of colonial endeavours in collections is researched beyond individual objects and groups of objects.

I would like to emphasise that we regard ourselves as a dynamic funding agency that regularly seeks to improve its funding guidelines in order to meet the needs of the applicants. In recent years, funding has been extended to private legal entities, and – in order to achieve a better participation by international partners – it is now possible to submit applications in English. This allows for projects to be co-developed with experts, interest groups and institutions as well as potential claimants and descendants from the countries and societies of origin of the collections.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude. As a funding organisation, the German Lost Art Foundation is dependent on potential candidates, and I'm grateful that the Georg August University of Göttingen and the Municipal Museum of Alfeld, with support of the Provenance Research Network in Lower Saxony, have submitted a convincing application out of which this volume originated.