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# The Power of Experts: Walter Borchers (1906–1980) and the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR)

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## **Resume**

Considering the art market and collecting strategies in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there are some actors in the cultural institutions who, due to their knowledge, expertise, and network, had a decisive influence on the translocation of cultural objects. This is particularly true for museum staff recruited as experts by the ERR and charged with the examination of looted art in occupied countries (1939–1945). One of these art experts was Walter Borchers (1906–1980), an ethnologist and art historian who was appointed deputy director of the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (the Reichsleiter Rosenberg Taskforce or ERR) in Paris from 1941 to 1944. As Borchers must have handled most of the looted art in Paris during this period, the focus here will be on his work at the ERR and his scientific exchanges with experts outside the ERR with an emphasis on the importance of private archives.

“My work [for the ERR] was purely scientific: filing looted art in inventories,”<sup>1</sup> said the art historian Borchers according to his denazification file. Walter Borchers, art expert and ethnologist of European folkloric artefacts (fig. 1), is a good example with which to examine the role of art experts in the looting process in France. Based on Borchers’s private archive, this case study will shed light on the scientific work at the ERR and, specifically, Borchers, who joined the ERR as art historian and deputy director in Paris in August 1942.

Initially created in the occupied countries in Eastern Europe, the ERR—a special institution that organized the loot of cultural objects—was named after its director, art historian Alfred Rosenberg (1893–1946). Following the advice of Dr. Kurt Martin in the summer of 1940 regarding the precious art collections of Jewish families seized in Paris

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1 Thanks to Prof. Kurt Dröge, I could analyse private archives of Borchers sent meanwhile to the Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv (Osnabrück).



1 Portrait of Walter Borchers (1906–1980)

by the German Embassy, a special unit of art experts was created within the ERR.<sup>2</sup>

Borchers worked at the ERR in Paris from 1942 to 1944 and, until the summer of 1945, continued his duties at Schloss Kogl, in St. Georgen im Attergau, Austria. This article will shed light on the operating procedures of the ERR in France and its exchanges with experts in a variety of other institutions in both France and Germany. In his correspondence, Borchers, deputy head of the ERR, attests to how he consulted relevant experts, sending them photographic reproductions of artworks looted by the ERR team in Paris. These experts would then send them detailed expert analyses of the works, helping the ERR team use the information for labeling, creating inventories, and filing as well as evaluate the looted works of art.

The following analysis will briefly present the ERR, its methods, and the specific categories to file looted

artwork. This process was decisive in order to place the works of art either in the field of collecting – be it chosen for a public collection, museums and thus, above all, the special commission of Linz,<sup>3</sup> or be it for the private collections of National socialist power holders within their private collections such as the minister of Foreign Affairs Joachim von Ribbentrop (1893–1946), Reichsmarschall Hermann Goering (1893–1946), Martin Bormann (1900–1945), Albert Speer (1905–1981) and many more. Artworks not filed for collecting purposes could either be released for exchange, put on the local market, or even destroyed.

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2 For general and detailed information on the ERR, please refer to the ERR homepage and the research of Patricia Grimsted and Marc Masurovsky, URL: <https://www.errproject.org/guide.php> [accessed: 31.10.2021].

3 The ERR procedures are different from those of the Sonderauftrag Linz: the ERR would seize art works without ‘paying’ for them, whereas the dealers for the Sonderauftrag Linz were supposed to ‘buy’ the art.

Using the example of the expert analysis of looted tapestries, the following aims to demonstrate the effective relationship between the deputy head of the ERR, Borchers, and the tapestry specialist Heinrich Göbel (1879–1951), who helped file and categorize artworks looted in France under German occupation. Further, the ways in which retracing this network and these exchanges can be useful for provenance research will be shown.

### The Operations of the ERR regarding looted art

The most recent publication on the ERR is from Hanns Christian Löhr, a specialist in the field of National Socialist art theft, who presents all the details of this large looting organization in his detailed book *Kunst als Waffe*. Löhr omits, however, the specific art historical work of classifying and categorizing, which had a major influence on where the looted artworks ended up.<sup>4</sup> Rosenberg was also head of the Außenpolitisches Amt (Foreign Policy Office) and one of the leading Nazi ideologues. He directed the most important group responsible for handling looted art after the German embassy in Paris had been active for looting between September 1940 and July 1944. About a third of the total private art in France was lost then and is still considered missing to some extent. The art objects, particularly those owned by owners called Jewish, were—countered to all international regulations—confiscated, collected in the Musée Jeu de Paume, inventoried, photographed, and from there moved to Germany. Many items were on the way for private use by high-ranking Nazis, including Adolf Hitler, Ribbentrop, and notably Hermann Göring (1893–1946). Many of these looted items were intended for Hitler’s planned “Führermuseum” in Linz. Works considered ‘degenerate’ or not corresponding to the politically imposed concept of official taste were sold on the art market in France or Switzerland. For the preparatory work in Paris under German occupation (1940–1944), art historians and skilled professionals like Borchers were needed.<sup>5</sup>

Historian Marc Masurovsky describes the ERR as a “Special Task Force,” which started operations in occupied France soon after the invasion in June and early July 1940. It was then that the Führer authorized Rosenberg to direct the seizure of the cultural holdings of Jews, Masons, and other ‘enemies’ of the Third Reich—particularly those who had fled the country following the Nazi invasion. The newly created ERR was an operational offshoot of a large bureaucratic network of ideological and cultural opera-

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4 Hanns Christian Löhr, *Kunst als Waffe – Der Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg, Ideologie und Kunstraub im “Dritten Reich”*, Berlin, 2018.

5 Torsten Heese: “...ein eigenes Local für Kunst und Alterthum”: *Die Institutionalisierung des Sammelns am Beispiel der Osnabrücker Museumsgeschichte. 125 Jahre Kulturgeschichtliches Museum Osnabrück, Museums- und Kunstverein Osnabrück e.V.*, PhD diss., Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, 2002, in *Osnabrücker Kulturdenkmäler: Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte der Stadt Osnabrück 12*, Bramsche, 2004, URL: <http://sundoc.bibliothek.uni-halle.de/diss-online/02/02H210/prom.pdf> [accessed: 31.10.2021], p. 196.

tions developed by Rosenberg in the late 1930s.<sup>6</sup> At first, in France during the summer of 1940, the ERR concentrated on collecting books, archives, and other research materials as reserves for the *Hohe Schule*: The Advanced School of the NSDAP which was a project by the chief ideologist Alfred Rosenberg to create an elite university, a kind of academy for party officials.

In Paris, in the summer of 1940, important French-Jewish-owned collections of art were seized under orders from Ribbentrop and German Ambassador Otto Abetz, who had designs of his own for the cultural bounty to be reaped in occupied Paris, which he shared with his chief in Berlin. Units from, among other, the Geheime Feldpolizei (Secret Field Police or GFP), under the Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich (German Military Commander in France or MBF), assisted by art historians and experts, converged on high-profile galleries owned by world-renowned collectors and dealers, such as those of Jacques Seligmann & Co., Georges Wildenstein, Jacques Bacri, and Paul Rosenberg, to name only a few.<sup>7</sup> The collections of various members of the Rothschild family were priority targets. They were initially gathered for “safeguarding” in an annex of the German Embassy on the rue de Lille and inventoried by art historian, Dr. Robert Schmidt from Berlin Schlossmuseum. In the spring of 1941, the ERR’s offices, storage and hiding places were located at 54, avenue Iena in Paris—a building that had been confiscated from its Jewish owners, Yvonne and Pierre Gunzburg. When the Dienststelle Westen was created in the spring of 1942, it moved in there as well. The latter organization then widened its grip on the neighborhood, occupying the mansion at 2, rue Bassano, which was virtually next door, and requisitioning the basement of the Musée National d’Art Moderne on the quai Tokyo, just a few meters away, before storage room was made available at the Jeu de Paume and Musée du Louvre.

Places and actors have been identified by historian and sociologist Sarah Gensburger’s thorough analysis of a photo album she discovered in the Bundesarchiv (German Federal Archives or BArch) documenting the procedures of seizure, which she presents in her book *Witnessing the Robbing of the Jews*.<sup>8</sup> After the Louvre, the ERR turned its attention toward the Musée du Jeu de Paume, situated in the nearby Jardin des Tuileries—a museum of modern art, in which temporary exhibitions were held in peacetime.

6 The aim of the database, conceived and managed by Masurovsky, is to trace every single item looted by the ERR and find its location. See the ERR Project website, URL: <http://www.errproject.com> [accessed: 15.07.2020].

7 <https://www.errproject.org/jeudepaume/about/err.php> [accessed: 15.07.2020].

8 This album contains only pictures, no captions whatsoever, except for the transmittal memo to preserve these photographs on its first page. See Sarah Gensburger, *Witnessing the Robbing of the Jews: A Photographic Album, Paris, 1940-1944*, Bloomington, 2015, p. 15, with a memo indicating that the album was created by Erika Hanfstaengl in 1948; previously, in May 1945, Hanfstaengl had been on the Kunstschutz team responsible for ‘securing art’ in Italy and was later a member of the staff of the Munich Central Collecting Point. She was also the daughter of one of the leading art historians of the time, Eberhard Hanfstaengl.

On 1 November 1940, the stolen collections held in the Louvre were transferred here. The finest pieces were immediately put on display in anticipation of Göring's visit on 3 November; the Reichsmarschall came back for a longer tour on 5 November. Thoroughly satisfied with what he saw, Göring gave his approval to the work of the ERR and, even before leaving Paris, gave orders regarding the future use of these "artworks transported to the Louvre":<sup>9</sup> They were to be transferred, in descending order of priority, to the Führer's collection, Göring's own collection, the ERR's depots, and, lastly, the collections of the German museums. The rest would be sold on the international art market. In total, sixty administrative staff members were allocated for these tasks.<sup>10</sup>

According to Masurvosky's retracing of the ERR's actions, they carefully recorded their achievements in part to keep track of their valuable art loot but also to justify their activities and the increased funding they received under trying wartime conditions. They had to register and identify the provenance of a large number of the art objects they seized and keep track of their wartime destinations, which later proved helpful to those trying to trace and identify the works after the war. First, their art specialists prepared detailed inventories of each collection. Objects were assigned unique ERR alphanumeric codes reflecting the owner of the collection's name. While the work on inventories usually began at Jeu de Paume, many of them were later reedited once the collection reached the ERR's art repositories in the "Reich". While the ERR-registration cards included the same information as the original inventory entries, an undetermined number of items were never carded, some of which had been inventoried, others not. The ERR staff photographed many of the looted items that were brought to Jeu de Paume for processing. The photos from Jeu de Paume were often printed on very high-quality Velox photographic paper, a brand supported by the German subsidiary of the Eastman Kodak Company.

### The ERR Staff

Among the sixty staff were many art historians, who formed the Sonderstab Bildende Kunst, also known as Sonderstab Louvre, under the direction of Baron Kurt von Behr (1890–1945). Behr was later replaced by Berlin art journalist Robert Scholz (1902–1981), who had studied art history but had mainly worked as a journalist and editor in chief for the Nazi publication *Völkischer Beobachter*. Scholz was close with Rosenberg and acted as director of the Amt Bildende Kunst under the far-reaching control of Rosenberg's office of ideology, which was also known as Amt Rosenberg, or Dienststelle des Beauftragten des Führers für die Überwachung der gesamten geistigen und weltanschaulichen Schulung der NSDAP (Office of the deputy of the Führer for the supervision of the entire intellectual

9 Order from Göring, 5 November 1940, cited in Wilhelm Treue, "Zum nationalsozialistischen Kunstraub in Frankreich – Der 'Bargatzky-Bericht,'" in *Vierteljahrsheft für Zeitgeschichte* 13, 1965, pp. 285–337.

10 Gensburger, 2015 (note 8).

and ideological education of the National Socialist German Workers' Party). Even before 1933, Scholz had become a member of a specific militant National Socialist group called the *Kampfbund für deutsche Kunst* (Militant league for German culture or KfdK).<sup>11</sup>

Together with Borchers, Rosenberg's deputy director, Bruno Lohse (1911–2007), acted as managing director of the ERR beginning on 1 January 1943. Lohse was a trained art historian and art dealer during World War II. He became the chief art looter in Paris for Göring, who boasted of owning the largest private art collection in Europe. Lohse also held a military rank and power within the National Socialist hierarchy as a SS-Hauptsturmführer (head storm leader). In their work report for 1944, Borchers and Lohse mentioned the loot of 21 903 objects from 203 different private collections. The other academics involved in the loot were Günther Schiedlausky (1907–2003) and Dr. Annemarie Tomforde von Ingram (1916–1999), who wrote a thesis on gardens and their iconography in the 18th century and was married to the officer Hermann von Ingram.<sup>12</sup> Another member of the ERR between 1941 and 1944 was Dr. Helga Eggemann (1914–1970), whose expertise in French illumination rounded out the competencies of the ERR team. She too was a trained art historian, who had written her doctoral thesis on Jacquemart de Hesdin and renaissance book painting in Berlin in 1939.<sup>13</sup> She was the girlfriend and later wife of the finance lawyer Alexander Kreuter (1886–1977), an intimate associate of the finance expert, Hjalmar Schacht (1877–1970); Schacht, who lived in Switzerland and Munich after 1945, had his own art collection.<sup>14</sup>

The ERR team was mixed and multilingual, composed of young and qualified art historians from famous departments of well-known universities. The only ones with museum know-how were some of the older members, such as Borchers. In general, their areas of expertise mostly corresponded to the artworks that were looted. However, for highly valuable items (requiring authentication certificates), certain types of works such as those from Islamic cultures or East Asia, and decorative art (Gobelins, furniture, etc.), the ERR team sought outside advice.

All the above-mentioned art historians were charged with creating inventory cards, which they signed with abbreviations of their names: Borchers siglum, for example, was "Bo." But who was Borchers? Little information on him is available. Recently, Kurt Dröge published an extensive biography focusing on Borchers as a specialist of popular artefacts

11 Andreas Hüneke, *Der Fall Robert Scholz: Kunstberichte unterm Hakenkreuz*, Cologne, 2001.

12 After the war, both lived in Salzburg, Austria, where Annemarie adopted her nephew "to save her beautiful" last name. Today, her granddaughter runs an art gallery in Bolzano, Italy, phone interview by the author, 2018.

13 *Jacquemart de Hesdin und die Buchmacher am Hofe König Karls V. und des Herzogs von Berry*, Berlin 1936.

14 Regarding Schacht's involvement in the Aryanisation of the Galerie Heinemann, please refer to Anja Heuß, "Friedrich Heinrich Zinckgraf und die 'Arisierung' der Galerie Heinemann in München," in G. Ulrich Großmann (ed.), *Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums*, Nuremberg, 2012, pp. 85–94. See also Galerie Heinemann Online, "History of the gallery," URL: <http://heinemann.gnm.de/en/background.html> [accessed: 31.10.2021].

from Pomerania.<sup>15</sup> Born in Osnabrück, Germany in 1906, he studied German literature, ethnology, and art history in Vienna and Greifswald, Germany, and started his museum career in Stettin, Germany (now Szczecin, Poland) as volunteer, later as curator. During the war and Borchers's sojourn in Paris, colleagues in Stettin took care of his mother until she had to be transferred because of the war.<sup>16</sup>

While he has been appreciated for his engagement as director of the Städtisches Museum in Osnabrück,<sup>17</sup> less is known about his dealings in Paris.<sup>18</sup> In general, his time in Paris is hardly mentioned - only his work for the National Museum in Stettin prior to 1940 and his life after 1945.<sup>19</sup> He spoke French, English, Spanish, some Danish, and Swedish. Thanks to his experience creating small museums in Pomerania by drawing from private collections, he had firsthand experience in the acquisition and scientific handling of private cultural objects. More importantly, he also had contact with a large network including dealers, collectors, and museums, as stated by his colleague at the Städtisches Museum in Stettin prior to 1939, curator Dr. Helmuth Bethe,<sup>20</sup> later director of the Grassi Museum in Leipzig. When Borchers applied for the position of Direktor of Altonaer Museums (Director of the museum of the history of Altona) in Hamburg on 20 May 1949, his university friend Hans-Jürgen Eggers (1907–1975)—who had served as director of the Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg (today, the Museum am Rothenbaum. Kulturen und Künste der Welt or MARKK) since 1947—also wrote a positive reference letter for him. This was also confirmed by his previous university teacher in Greifswald Professor Otto Schmitt (1890–1951), then dean at the Technische Hochschule Stuttgart.<sup>21</sup>

According to the Allies' Roberts Commission report, "Walter Borchers, Obergefreiter in the Luftwaffe, came to the Paris art staff later in 1942 than the aforementioned art historians. He was highly esteemed by Scholz as a first-rate scholar, and ultimately was placed in charge of the Arbeitsgruppe Louvre (Working group Louvre task force) in all professional matters." At the time of Behr's removal, Borchers shared this responsibility with Lohse, but because of the latter's unwillingness to devote the majority of his time

15 Kurt Dröge, *Die historische Sachkultur in Pommern und Walter Borchers*, Norderstedt, 2018, pp. 46–50.

16 Letters in Borchers's personal archive (note 1).

17 For a biographical sketch of Borchers between 1942 and 1945, concluding in 1970, see Manfred Meinz, *Walter Borchers: Leben und Werk*, Osnabrücker Mitteilungen 86, 1980; and Josef Balzer, [Walter Borchers] *Sein Lebenswerk - sein Museum*, in *Westfalenspiegel* 9, 1970, pp. 37–38.

18 Regarding Borchers's activity for the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg in German occupied Paris, see Eva Berger, "Über die Gier nach der Kunst 'Alter Meister' im NS-Staat: drei Beispiele," in Thorsten Heese, "'Gegenstand meiner besonderen Vorliebe.' Die Gemälde der 'Sammlung Gustav Stüve' im Kulturgeschichtlichen Museum Osnabrück. Mit einem Beitrag von Eva Berger," Osnabrücker Kulturdenkmäler. Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte der Stadt Osnabrück, vol. 15, Osnabrück-Bramsche, 2013, pp. 72–83.

19 Meinz, 1980, (note 17), p. 37.

20 Borchers's personal archive, 30 July 1946.

21 Id., 23 September 1946.



to activities such as research and cataloguing, Scholz placed Borchers in charge and removed Lohse completely a few months later.<sup>22</sup> Scholz and Borchers kept in contact after the war, and Borchers even testified on behalf of Lohse and Scholz. A letter from Lohse's lawyer reveals that Borchers asserted that Kurt von Behr (1890-1945) had been solely responsible for the looting and that the ERR was not directly involved in any art theft.<sup>23</sup> Scholz and Borchers's correspondence, which has been preserved,<sup>24</sup> show how the letters of testifying their innocence were pre-dictated and personally delivered by third parties. Behr died, presumably by suicide, on 19 April 1945, just after contacting the American Allies and was thus not able to defend himself or testify in any proceedings in Paris.

After World War II, based on the accounts of various French and American Allied investigating officers—especially those of Rose Valland (1898-1980), a French museum delegate and undercover agent at the Jeu de Paume—it was learned that Borchers was a delicate, sensitive individual, who engaged in intrigue and gossiped constantly to the detriment of his staff. Highly temperamental, he accused several members of the service of theft and subsequently was obliged to apologize. On one occasion, Borchers was called before the Gestapo for irresponsible and disloyal remarks he had made semi-publicly. Although a serious scholar, his judgement in interpersonal matters was poor human judgement, and he was said to have antagonized a number of his colleagues, notably Lohse, Eggemann, and other female employees. His seriousness about his work is evidenced by the fact that Borchers continued to inventory the looted artwork even while under house arrest by the Americans at one of the National Socialist art depots, Schloss Kogl, in July 1945.<sup>25</sup> The team members with whom Borchers was closest in Paris seem to have been his assistant, Ursula Heintze<sup>26</sup> (fig. 2), and his secretary, a certain Ms. Wankerl, who was sent from Paris to the ERR Dienststelle (office) in Merano, Italy.<sup>27</sup>

Considering this sketch of Borchers's personality, it seems rather curious that an expert of Pomeranian art—seldom the object of looting in Paris—was in charge of the ERR and, moreover, inventories in a wide variety of fields. How did he manage to produce the ERR cards and offer reliable scientific information on the art objects? The increasing number of experts and dealers working closely with the ERR reveals that the field of people involved in the looting was steadily growing.<sup>28</sup>

22 On 2 February 1948, Borchers sent a notarized letter certifying his testimony about Scholz's responsibilities.

23 Copy of a declaration from 2 February 1948, Borchers's personal archives. The originals are probably with Scholz's and Lohse's denazification files.

24 Copy of the letter from Lohse's lawyer, Hermann Ulmer, Borchers's personal archive, 17 November 1947.

25 See Lieutenant J.S. Plaut, Consolidated Interrogation Report No. 1, 15 August 1945, Activity of the Einsatzstab Rosenberg in France, Office of Strategic Services Art Looting Investigation Unit APO 413 U.S. Army, URL: [https://www.lootedart.com/docs/ERR\\_complete\\_report.pdf](https://www.lootedart.com/docs/ERR_complete_report.pdf) [accessed: 31.10.2021].

26 See OSS (USS Office of Strategic Services) Art Looting Intelligence Unit (ALIU) Reports 1945-1946 and ALIU Red Flag Names List and Index.

27 Ibid.

28 Jonathan Petropoulos, "Kunsthändlernetzwerke im Dritten Reich und in der Nachkriegszeit," Collection



2 Ursula Heintze and Walter Borchers comparing lists (1942–1944) in Paris

## The Power of Experts

Gensburger provides a description of the ERR's mode of operation:

“The German staff of the ERR spent most of their time drawing up and modifying inventories. When artworks arrived at the Museum Jeu de Paume, lists were drawn up with the name of the artist, the title of the work or its description, dimensions and a number placing it in order on the list. Works' owners were designated by a specific ERR code manly composed by the initials of the owner names ('Ka' for Kann, 'R' for Rothschild, 'PR' for Paul Rosenberg). Once they had been processed, cataloged and photographed, the objects were sent on to the Louvre to be prepared for shipping. Some of the ERR photographs were collected in albums by the ERR in order, for instance, to be presented to Hitler so that he could choose from the selection of paintings on offer. Tens of thousands of images produced in the context of this work are today held in the Koblenz archives, series 323.”<sup>29</sup>

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Grünbaum (website), URL: <http://www.collectiongruenbaum.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Art-Dealer-Networks-Article-JCH-German.pdf> [accessed: 31.10.2021].

29 Gensburger, 2015 (note 8), pp. 65ff.

The photographers were Karl Kress (1900–?) und Rudolf Scholz, nephew of Robert Scholz.<sup>30</sup> This process was applied to all cultural object, including tapestries.

Borchers seems to have been very knowledgeable, but he could not have been an expert in every field.<sup>31</sup> Especially carpets and tapestries seem to have been of interest to him, but he preferred relying on the opinion of experts.<sup>32</sup> According to his private archives, it seems that he had been in contact with such French experts as tapestry expert Guillaume Janneau (1887–1981), who simultaneously served as Administrateur général du Mobilier National (General administrator of the national furniture depository) and director of the Gobelin workshops in Beauvais and Sèvres.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps because Janneau seemed reluctant to share his expertise, Borchers contacted another expert in the field—Heinrich Göbel (1879–1951).<sup>34</sup> Thanks to two letters in his private archives, we know that Borchers exchanged photographs and expert opinions with Göbel, a trained architect who, since 1910, had worked as an urbanist for the city of Kolberg in West-Pomerania (today, Kołobrzeg, Poland), as shown by his letterheads and the prefaces of his books from 1946. A fervent autodidact, Göbel became a highly esteemed expert on the history of tapestry, publishing four volumes of text and two richly illustrated volumes between 1923 and 1934. The aim of this history was not to present any new findings but was intended as a German-language synthesis of previous publications, such as the research of the French collector Maurice Fenaille (1855–1937). It still remains the most monumental German-language history of tapestries of the 20th century, containing 1 962 pages of text and 1 512 black-and-white illustrations.<sup>35</sup>

At least one of the Gobelins looted by the ERR, *Holdup in the Forest*, was analyzed by Göbel rather than Borchers, though it is the latter’s initials on the inventory card (fig. 3). Considering the thread, topic, tapestry order, and identifying marks, namely a heraldic emblem, Göbel discerned that the work was from a manufacturer in Brussels. He also suggested the owner may have been the consignor Markgrave Ludwig from Baden and

30 Greg Bradsher, “Karl Kress, Photographer for the ERR and the Third U.S. Army MFA&A Special Evacuation Team,” *Text Message (website)*, National Archives and Records Administration, 21 August 2014, URL: <https://text-message.blogs.archives.gov/2014/08/21/karl-kress/> [accessed: 31.10.2021].

31 On Borchers’s biography, see Heese, 2002 (note 5), p. 206.

32 Regarding the volume of stolen objects in this field, in the CCP DHM database alone 160 tapestries and 163 Gobelins are mentioned.

33 Janneau had to reply to the German authorities’ request regarding the issuing of export licenses for furniture and Gobelins/tapestries. Source: archives des Mobilier national, Paris, MM/1055/1, Manufactures de tapisseries pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale et suites, 1938–1947; and MM/624 Seconde Guerre mondiale et suites.

34 Please refer to Kurt Dröge, “Museumsvolkskunde in Werden,” in, Ruth-E. Mohrmann, Volker Rodekamp, and Dietmar Saueremann (eds.), *Volkskunde im Spannungsfeld zwischen Universität und Museum*, Münster/New York, 1997, p. 76.

35 Guy Delmarcel, “Ich würde zum Diener des Bildteppichs”. Some Biographical Notes about Heinrich Göbel (1879 – 1951), and Considerations about his Work, 2011, URL: <https://www.arts.kuleuven.be/studiesinwesterntapestry/gobel-biography-delmarcel.pdf> [accessed: 31.10.2021].

provided some information on the history of the market and collecting in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Borchers sent photos of the same Gobelin to an unknown expert in Brussels, probably to get a second opinion. In contrast to this expert's assessment that the work had been created in 1720, Göbel insisted on the accuracy of his date, 1710—an extremely precise estimate (fig. 4a and b). This example shows why correspondence between experts is crucial to provenance research. Borchers drew from the relevant information provided by Göbel to give a precise summary on the inventory card (fig. 5). The Gobelin was processed, sent to Germany, and, after the war, finally restituted to its previous owner, Jean Louis-Dreyfus, a French art dealer who had survived in Southern France.

3 Photograph documenting Inventory



During the inventory process, the artwork was assigned to a total of five previously mentioned categories: national collection (Linz), public collections (museums), private collections (National Socialist officials), and art not coherent with the other categories, which was sold on the black market; art considered 'degenerate' was sorted out for destruction. This selection process was imposed by Göring—who was not an art historian—and overseen by the ERR staff in Paris. The exact choices cannot be retraced today. However, although the destruction of artworks considered degenerate was documented in several sources, witnessed by Valland, and can be deduced from photographs, it is interesting that some such works reappeared after the war.

Borchers and Scholz had exchanges on this issue in the late 1960s, debating the accusations published by Valland in her book *Le Front de l'art*. The two head art historians of the ERR did not seem to agree on the question of burning paintings: In his letters, Borchers tells Scholz that they never burned art, only frames and postcards. Scholz's reply leaves some questions unanswered. Some of the photographs documenting the looting process suggested that the pile of paintings in the main room of the Louvre repository show a 'negative selection' meaning the works had been selected for destruction. About 170 paintings are visible in this image: some are still in their frames while others, perhaps in order to facilitate their transport, have had theirs removed. Inventory numbers are clearly written on the wooden stretchers. These numbers were assigned by the art historians who processed these collections on their arrival at the Jeu de Paume and presumably allowed the paintings in question to be identified. However, no record of them in the archives of the ERR has been found. It also seems that a fair number of paintings were not placed on this inventory. On 15 June 1944, Valland noted in her diary that 57 modern paintings of high

- 4 a Letter from H. Göbel to Borchers on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1942 regarding gobelin, page 1/2

Stadtbaurat Dr. Göbel. Kolberg, den 21. September 1942.

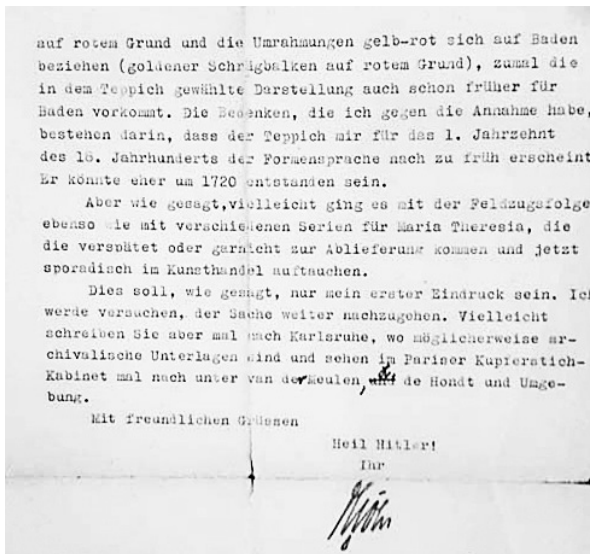
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Sehr geehrter Herr Dr. B o r c h e r s!

Soeben erhalte ich Ihren freundlichen Brief vom 15. d. Mts. (abgestempelt am 17.9.42). Ich bin gern bereit, Ihnen bei der Lösung des sehr interessanten Bildteppichs, der mir unbekannt ist, behilflich zu sein. Darf ich Ihnen den ersten Eindruck wiedergeben, den ich bei dem Stück hatte:

Dem Gefüge und der Rahmenbordüre nach handelt es sich um ein Brüsseler Erzeugnis. Nun gibt es im 1. und 2. Jahrzehnt des 18. Jahrhunderts eine ganze Reihe von sogenannten Feldzugs-Teppichen, die von den namhaftesten Brüsseler Wirkern wie Hieronimus Le Clerck, Jodocus de Vos und den van der Borcht ausgeführt worden sind. U.A. die Feldzüge des Max Emanuel v. Bayern, des Herzogs von Marlborough, des Lord Cobham usw. U.A. auch die des bekannten Feldherrn Ludwig von Baden, genannt der Türken-Louis. Ob die Folge für den Markgrafen von Baden noch zu seinen Lebzeiten zur Ablieferung kommt, steht dahin. Urkundlich steht aber zweifellos fest, dass sie in Brüssel gewirkt wurde. Allerdings fehlen die näheren Angaben über die dargestellten Motive, die nicht einfach zu ermitteln sein werden, da Ludwig von Baden als Reichsmarschall sich nicht nur in Ungarn gegen die Türken und andere Gegner, sondern auch in sonstigen Kriegen betätigte. Was nun die Trachten und Uniformen anbelangt, so fürchte ich, dass dieselben keinen wesentlichen Anhalt geben werden, da die Kostenzweizer für die Schlachtenszenen (Exercitie van den Orloghe) wie van der Meulen und namentlich Lambert de Hondt sich recht wenig um historische Genauigkeit und Uniformen kümmerten. Feststellen lässt sich jedoch, dass der Reiter auf dem bäumenden Pferd eine ungarische Kappe trägt, während die Kopfbedeckung des schiessenden Soldaten (Teilaufnahme, rechts unten) etwas orientalisches hat.

Was nun das Wappen anbelangt, so trägt es die Krone eines Marquis (Markgrafen im französischen Sinne). Das Wappen ist wahrscheinlich, wie in vielen Fällen, heraldisch verballhornt. Es ist nicht ausgeschlossen, dass die gelben Füllornamente



4 b Letter from H. Göbel to Borchers on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1942 regarding gobelin, page 2/2

quality with no inventory marks have been brought back from the Louvre depot [to the Jeu de Paume]. She further noted that Borchers was astounded that these paintings were not been recorded on the inventory and wanted to have them packed up as they are, without labelling them.<sup>36</sup> Today, it is impossible to identify any art works of this group.

Although Borchers had to submit a denazification file after the war, he was not negatively affected by the process. Even Valland testified to his personal and political integrity (fig. 6). His high level of expertise as an art historian probably had a certain protective function against the pressure he was surely under to join National Socialist organizations. It remains to be seen whether his homosexuality also contributed to his sense of belonging in protective networks within the Parisian occupation.<sup>37</sup>

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LEICA-PHOTO	KÜNSTLER	HERKUNFTSLAND	DATERUNG	INVENTAR-NR.	
	Therlis Morola ?		1. H. 16. Jh.	442 28	
	LEBENSZEIT				
FIM-NR.	GROSSFOTO	AUFBEWAHRUNGORT	WERT	INV. NR. ALTE SIG.	AUS. KISTE NR.
BID-NR.					
THEMA BZW. GEGENSTAND + BESCHREIBUNG wahrscheinlich, Überfall im Jahre Ludwig von Baden (17. Jhdh) Morola ? nicht zu identifizieren.					
MATERIAL	GRÖSSE	GERAHMT FASSUNG	BENZEICHNET SIGNATUR	VERLEIB	
	715 x 470 cm				
ZUGANGSTAG IN PARES IM REICH :		STANDORTWECHSEL	ZUSTAND BEHANDLUNG (AUCH GABE)	BEMERKUNG HERKUNFT SCHREIBER (AMBERG)	

EINSATZSTAB RR, Sonderstab Bildende Kunst, Berlin, W. F. Teilnachr. 3

5 ERR Card of Gobelin Drf22

36 Gensburger, 2015 (note 8), p. 85.  
37 Dröge, 2018 (note 15), p. 37.

The question remains of whether Borchers participated after 1945 in the process of art restitution organized by the Allies at the various Central Collecting Points (CCP) in occupied Germany. Unlike Lohse and Hofer, who shared some information about the looted artworks and their previous owners, Borchers did not get involved actively in the restitution processes. As a museum director in Osnabrück, he even chose three major artworks from what remained at the CCP as longtime loans by the Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>38</sup>

A b s c h r i f t

Munich 10 Juillet 1946

au Lt Walter Borchers  
M.F.A. and A. officer.

En réponse à Votre demande de renseignements au sujet du Dr. Walter Borchers j'ai l'honneur de Vous confirmer le témoignage que j'ai donné aux services alliés lors de la libération de Paris.

Je puis donner la certitude que le Dr. Borchers ne s'est jamais occupé que de l'expertise scientifique des objets d'art amenés au Jeu de Paume et de leur inventaire.

Je l'ai toujours vu agir en parfait honnête homme dans tous les sens du mot, et en homme de musée. C'est à son aide que nous devons d'avoir pu garder à Paris une partie des importants status de l'ancienne collection Bonnard.

Je l'ai entendu critiquer les méthodes employées par l'Einsatzstab Rosenberg et refuser de se laisser quitter lui-même des réquisitionnés à domicile.

R. Vallaud  
Chargée de la conversation du Jeu de Paume pendant l'occupation  
Secrétaire de la Commission de Récupération artistique. Capitaine. Beaux arts G.F.C.C.

- 6 Letter by Rose Valland dated 16<sup>th</sup> of July 1946 to Walter Borchers regarding his political attitude during German occupation in France. Copy in private archive Borchers

On 16 February 1970, shortly before his retirement, Borchers acquired a drawing of Bismarck (Mü-Nr. 2399/7) by the Prussian master painter Anton von Werner—which had been donated from private property to Hitler in 1940 who transferred it from his private property to the Linz stock.<sup>39</sup> Borchers purchased a second work from the CCP,

<sup>38</sup> Isaac von Ostade (Mü-Nr. 4267), Michel Sweerts (Mü-Nr. 11315), and Frans Ykens (Mü-Nr. 1717), see Eva Berger, 2013 (note 18), p. 75.

<sup>39</sup> Database on the “Munich Central Collecting Point,” website of the Deutsches Historisches Museum, URL: [https://www.dhm.de/datenbank/ccp/dhm\\_ccp.php?seite=6&fld\\_1=2399%2F7&fld\\_3=&auswahl=6&fld\\_4=&fld\\_4a=&fld\\_5=&fld\\_6=&fld\\_7=&fld\\_8=&fld\\_9=&fld\\_10=&suchen=Suchen](https://www.dhm.de/datenbank/ccp/dhm_ccp.php?seite=6&fld_1=2399%2F7&fld_3=&auswahl=6&fld_4=&fld_4a=&fld_5=&fld_6=&fld_7=&fld_8=&fld_9=&fld_10=&suchen=Suchen) [accessed: 31.10.2021].

*Campagna (Römische Landschaft)*, a small oil painting attributed to Eduard Schleich the Elder (Mü-Nr. 9496), but it was stolen from the museum in 1972.<sup>40</sup> This suggests that the provenance of further acquisitions of the museum may also need to be investigated.

This sketch and brief analysis shows that power and political influence caused conflict among members of the ERR team concerning the treatment of the looted works of art. The selection process was not transparent and depended on personal taste. Furthermore, it seems that some members took action, such as burning artworks considered less valuable, without informing the managing art historians. The process previously described as ‘scientific work’ seems instead to have been the arbitrary handling of stolen art objects dominated by personal greed rather than the objective attribution of artistic value—the scientific discourse of some disguised the illicit handlings of others.

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<sup>40</sup> Id., URL: [https://www.dhm.de/datenbank/ccp/dhm\\_ccp.php?seite=6&fld\\_1=9496&fld\\_3=&auswahl=6&fld\\_4=&fld\\_4a=&fld\\_5=&fld\\_6=&fld\\_7=&fld\\_8=&fld\\_9=&fld\\_10=&suchen=Suchen](https://www.dhm.de/datenbank/ccp/dhm_ccp.php?seite=6&fld_1=9496&fld_3=&auswahl=6&fld_4=&fld_4a=&fld_5=&fld_6=&fld_7=&fld_8=&fld_9=&fld_10=&suchen=Suchen) [accessed: 31.10.2021].