

Nazi-Looted Painting Will Return to Florence

Roberta Cutillo (July 01, 2019)



Germany agrees to return a painting by Dutch artist Jan van Huysum, which had been stolen from a Palazzo Pitti gallery by retreating nazi troops during World War II.

“Vase of Flowers,” a still life painting by Dutch artist [Jan van Huysum](#) [2] will return to its rightful home on the walls of Florence’s [Palazzo Pitti](#) [3]. This restitution is the result of an agreement between the Italian and German ministers of Foreign Affairs, Enzo Moavero and Heiko Maas.

The painting - like countless others, many of which are still unaccounted for - was stolen by nazi troops on their way out of Florence during World War II. It actually resurfaced back in 1991 but the



restitution process proved to be very complicated.

A major issue with these cases has to do with the statute of limitations, which prevents authorities from taking legal action against a crime committed beyond a certain time limit, in this case 30 years.

However, last January, Eike Schmidt, the director of the [Uffizi Galleries](#) [4] - which Palazzo Pitti is a part of - publicly called for the artwork's restitution, arguing that the German government (he is himself a German citizen. ed.) had a "moral duty" to help bring it back.

Following this, the government contacted the descendants of the soldier who had taken the painting. When the painting first resurfaced, they had initially demanded to be paid €2 million for it and now refused to return it.

The authorities argued that, since the painting had been stolen, the soldier never had the right to pass it down. On the other hand, the family claimed that the artwork had been purchased at a market as a present to send home to his wife.

The result of the settlement between the family and German authorities has not been made public but it is now in the hands of the latter and, after 75 years, will be returning to Florence to hang on its spot on the wall, which is currently being filled by a black and white photo reproduction of the work that reads "stolen!" in English, Italian and German. Both Moavero and Maas will be present for the event, though the date is yet to be determined.

Dr. Schmidt expressed his joy in seeing this important piece return to where the Grand Duke of Tuscany Leopold the Second had it placed almost 200 years ago. He thanked the foreign ministers as well as the Italian Minister of Culture Bonisoli, the judicial authorities and the [Carabinieri Art Squad](#) [5] for the protection of cultural heritage, who all contributed to this complicated endeavor.

The Uffizi director also took the opportunity to call for German authorities to abolish the statute of limitations on Nazi looted art, something which many have argued for as such objects continue to emerge and it gets harder and harder for the rightful owners to recuperate them.

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Links

[1] <http://test.casaitaliananyu.org/files/florence-palaispittijpg-0>

[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_van_Huysum



[3] <https://www.uffizi.it/en/pitti-palace>

[4] <https://www.uffizi.it/en/the-uffizi>

[5] <http://www.carabinieri.it/multilingua/en/english/carabinieri-for-the-protection-of-cultural-heritage-and-anti-counterfeiting>