

PRESS RELEASE

Magdeburg, 9 January 2020

Opening of the Berlin-based “Help Desk” for enquiries about cultural assets seized in the National Socialist era

German Lost Art Foundation establishes point of contact in Berlin – art historian Dr Susanne Meyer-Abich was appointed director on 1. January 2020

Since the beginning of January there is a central point of contact in Berlin for enquiries from those whose cultural assets were seized as a result of persecution under the National Socialist regime, and their descendants. This “Help Desk” is funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media.

Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media Monika Grütters states: “Many potential restitution cases are highly complex even with regard to content. In order to facilitate orientation for victims of National Socialist persecution and their descendants, who often live abroad, and to provide contact names, an experienced art historian is now available in the Berlin advisory office. Those who experienced unimaginable suffering at the hands of Germans, either themselves or their ancestors, should not face bureaucratic hurdles but be given assistance.”

Gilbert Lupfer, academic director on the Board of the German Lost Art Foundation, says: “Victims of National Socialist looting of cultural assets and their descendants have for some time asked for more substantial expert advice to assist with their search for their families’ cultural assets, to identify competent contact persons and to enable a dialogue at eye level with museums, libraries and authorities in Germany. We are delighted to have found a new colleague in Susanne Meyer-Abich, who will certainly bring her long-term international experience and communication competence to this important and sensitive task.”

This is especially relevant, Professor Lupfer added, for those who do not live in Germany, do not speak German and are not familiar with the practices of German cultural federalism. “The new role of a trusted point of contact in Berlin was precisely designed to fill this gap and to provide initial assistance and support for those concerned.”

The art historian Dr Susanne Meyer-Abich was appointed director of the Help Desk for enquiries about cultural assets seized in the National Socialist era on 1 January 2020. She studied art history, English and Italian at Ruhr-Universität Bochum where she completed her PhD in 1995. From 1998 to 2016 she worked for international auction houses. From June 2016 Susanne Meyer-Abich worked as specialist translator for art and culture, and from November 2016 as editor of the Journal for Art Market Studies at Technische Universität Berlin.

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The Help Desk is staffed five days per week, with general telephone availability offered Monday to Thursdays 14h to 18h (Berlin time) and by appointment, via e-mail any time.

The German Lost Art Foundation in Magdeburg was established in 2015 by the German Federal Government, the Länder, and representatives of the leading German municipal associations. It is the main point of contact both nationally and internationally in Germany for all enquiries about unlawful seizures of cultural assets in the 19th and 20th centuries which are today held by collections in German institutions dedicated to preserving these assets. The main focus of the Foundation are cultural assets seized due to persecution in the National Socialist era, especially from Jewish owners. The Foundation considers its work an important contribution to redress suffered injustices.

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