

TEMPORARY EXHIBITION



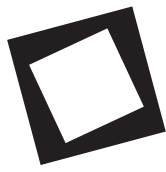
HUMBOLDT
FORUM

LOOT

10 STORIES

22.03.2024–26.01.2025

PRESS KIT



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In the exhibition *Loot. 10 Stories*, initiated by the Mauritshuis in The Hague, the Humboldt Forum presents ten case studies focused on looted art across three historical epochs: the Napoleonic Wars, the colonial era, and Nazi Germany. All the objects on show have their own provenance stories, which here stand in for countless others. In an artistic intervention, guest curators and creative directors Eline Jongsma and Kel O'Neill bring these stories to life using videos, virtual reality, and texts, showing possible approaches to objects like these in the museum context. Some of these artefacts are from Berlin collections in the Stadtmuseum Berlin, the Ethnologisches Museum, and the Gipsformerei (Replica Workshop).

This exhibition was initiated by the Mauritshuis in The Hague and developed together with guest curators and creative directors Jongsma and O'Neill. The project was realized in cooperation with the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, the Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin, and the Ethnologisches Museum and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst at the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz. It is supported by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media on the basis of a decision by the German Federal Parliament.

LOOT. 10 STORIES

Art and other objects are mirrors of historical and social development. Sometimes they tell of love, solidarity, or the future. But they also regularly tell stories of violence, abuse, and robbery. Napoleon reinforced his own power by displaying looted art treasures at his Musée Napoleon. Hitler had art confiscated to stock his planned museum. And particularly in the context of their years of colonial rule and exploitation, the European powers looted countless cultural belongings from all over the world and shipped them to Europe.

The exhibition *Loot. 10 Stories* examines different aspects of looted art and explores the implications. It was initiated by the Mauritshuis in The Hague, where the exhibition opened in 2023. In ten case studies it explores the past as well as the future of unlawfully appropriated objects, touching on issues like provenance research, restitution, and how museums see themselves today. The exhibition focuses on three historical periods that reflect the collections of the participating museums and institutions from the Netherlands, Germany, and France: the Napoleonic Wars, European colonialism, and the Nazi period. This international cooperation between different institutions shows varying perspectives and approaches to the exhibited objects.

Eline Jongasma and Kel O'Neill, guest curators and creative directors of the exhibition, embark upon a search for clues. In their artistic intervention they explore the stories behind the objects and the gaps in our knowledge of their provenance. They use virtual reality, video installations, and a digital 3D model, encouraging visitors to reflect on the issues: In what contexts were objects looted and how did they find their way into the museums? How do museums deal with looted artworks today? Both the design and the narrative of the exhibition are fundamental to its basic premise, which is to offer insights into provenance research and to posit possible ways of dealing with looted art and restitution in the future, as well as to show how returned objects can remain on display in museums. The exhibition also looks at objects that have already been returned or where the process of restitution is under way and at objects whose history cannot be fully reconstructed or whose rightful owners cannot be found. There are also objects for which, despite intensive research, it has not yet been conclusively clarified that they were unlawfully appropriated – as in the case of the Anet commode from the Stadtmuseum Berlin.

DAY OF DEBATE 10 OF 1000 STORIES: LOOT SPÄTI LOOT: A STAFF FROM SURINAME

“Ten among thousands”: the case studies shown here are just a few of many other possible object histories. The programme of events accompanying the exhibition therefore seeks to unfold the complexity of the theme and to explore background information and discourses relating to the issue of looted art.

For the event in the Späti series, *Loot: A Staff from Suriname* on 22 March, guests are Onias Landveld, a Dutch artist with Surinamese roots, and Andrea Scholz, curator at the Ethnologisches Museum. Landveld has taken a close look at one of the exhibition's key objects: a staff (c.1900) that was taken from the indigenous Maroons in Suriname during the Dutch colonial period and passed on to the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin in 1903 by a collector, and which is still held by the museum today.



1 Workshop with experts from the Rio Negro [Brasil] © SPK / photothek.net / Inga Kjer

On the Day of Debate on Looting, Restitution, and Collaboration: 10 of 1,000 Stories: Loot on 23 March, experts and scholars will provide insights into provenance research, share their knowledge, and point out possible solutions for how to address and present the history of artefacts in future. During the morning, visitors can hear both artistic and academic contributions to the exhibition; during the afternoon, they can pose their own questions. With Onias Landveld, Eline Jongasma, Kel O'Neill, Regina Stein, Alexis von Poser, Hartmut Dorgerloh, and others.

POSTCOLONIAL PROVENANCE RESEARCH AT THE ETHNOLOGISCHES MUSEUM AND THE MUSEUM FÜR ASIATISCHE KUNST

Numerous objects in the holdings of the Ethnologisches Museum and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst came into the collections during the colonial era and thus against the backdrop of asymmetrical power relations. The circumstances of acquisition and appropriation are diverse and range from purchase, exchange and gift to robbery and extortion. Research into these collection and object histories has long been part of museum practice. Nevertheless, the requirements in this area have changed and increased considerably in recent years. Building on the intensive work of some researchers on the colonial heritage of museums, the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin created the first permanent positions in Germany for provenance research on collections from colonial contexts in 2019. In their work, the researchers visualise the provenance and relationship histories of the objects and question the unequal power relations behind the acquisition of the objects. The results are constantly being expanded and made accessible to a broad public, for example in the publication “power||relations”, which is available free of charge online and in the exhibitions of the Ethnologisches Museum and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst im Humboldt Forum, as well as a provenance trail leading through the exhibitions.

GUIDED TOURS AND WORKSHOPS

Workshop for students: Transcultural thinking (7th-13th grade) for 90 €
humboldtforum.org/workshop/transcultural-thinking

Public Tour Colonial Presence, each Saturday 5 pm
also bookable for 160 €
humboldtforum.org/fuehrung/koloniale-gegenwart

Public Tour The Benin Bronzes. Restitution and what next?,
each Sunday 5 pm also bookable for 160 €
humboldtforum.org/guided-tour/the-benin-bronzes

PROVENANCE RESEARCH AT THE STIFTUNG STADTMUSEUM BERLIN

The Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin has been conducting provenance research since 2008 in order to fulfil its obligations in ensuring the legality of its acquisitions.

At first, collections were analysed to determine whether they included cultural property that came into the museum's holdings as a result of National Socialist persecution. Research initially focused on collection holdings acquired between the years 1933 and 1945. Over the past two years, research has been expanded to include the holdings of the former Märkisches Museum that were acquired between 1945 and 1995. In the post-war period in particular, objects entered the collection as a result of persecution. Their former owners had to be identified.

Both confirmed finds and suspected cases which are identified during systematic research are placed on the Lost Art database in order to enable any unknown heirs to be found and contacted and to make the objects accessible to further external provenance research. Several objects have since been returned to their original homes or purchased back by the rightful heirs. In a lot of cases, the investigations are still ongoing, because identifying heirs is an often complicated and ambiguous endeavour. However, the stories behind the objects that come to light during the research are just as important as the exact origin of the object itself. These include the fates of families, the history of certain companies and the convoluted trade routes that the objects have taken. The stories provide an additional narrative dimension to items in the collection beyond their mere historical significance as a piece of art.

Initially, provenance research was conducted from 2008 onwards using individual expert reports funded by the German Lost Art Foundation. From 2010, Berlin's Senate Department for Culture facilitated systematic provenance research. As part of the Masterplan 2025, the holdings belonging to the Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin's two former institutions were examined: the Märkisches Museum was founded in 1874 and provided the works from the acquisition period 1933–1945 and the entire pre-1945 collection came from the Berlin Museum which was founded in 1962. From 2018 onwards, the Stadtmuseum Berlin has held a permanent position for provenance research. At first, paintings and drawings were analysed, but they were soon followed by decorative works of art (silver, glass, ceramics, numismatics, furniture). There were also special finds, such as the so-called "Reichsbank furniture" in 2015, which is currently being examined in detail and includes the Anet chest of drawers which is on display at the moment as part of the special "Loot. 10 Stories" exhibition. The "Reichsbank furniture" collection consists of 47 pieces



1 Video still from the documentary about the Surinamese staff © Mauritshuis Den Haag, Jongsma + O'Neill

of French furniture from the 18th and 19th centuries, which were transferred to the Märkisches Museum by the GDR Ministry of Finance in the 1950's. It became apparent that no other furniture of this kind was known to exist in any other museum's collection.

It became clear during research that the trade routes taken by such works of everyday culture are more difficult to determine than those of valuable works of art. It is the former, however, that forms the core of the Stadtmuseum Berlin's collections. Subsequent provenance research has also focused on the confiscation of cultural assets due to persecution in the Soviet Occupation Zone and the GDR (e.g. confiscation of assets due to Republikflucht – desertion of the republic). It has also become clear time and again that, for the foreseeable future, critical provenance analysis needs to be conducted on all objects that entered the collections of the Stadtmuseum Berlin after 1933 (approx. 1.5 million items).

Five exemplary provenance research cases can be found on the Stadtmuseum Berlin website are listed on the website:
<https://www.stadtmuseum.de/en/provenance-research>

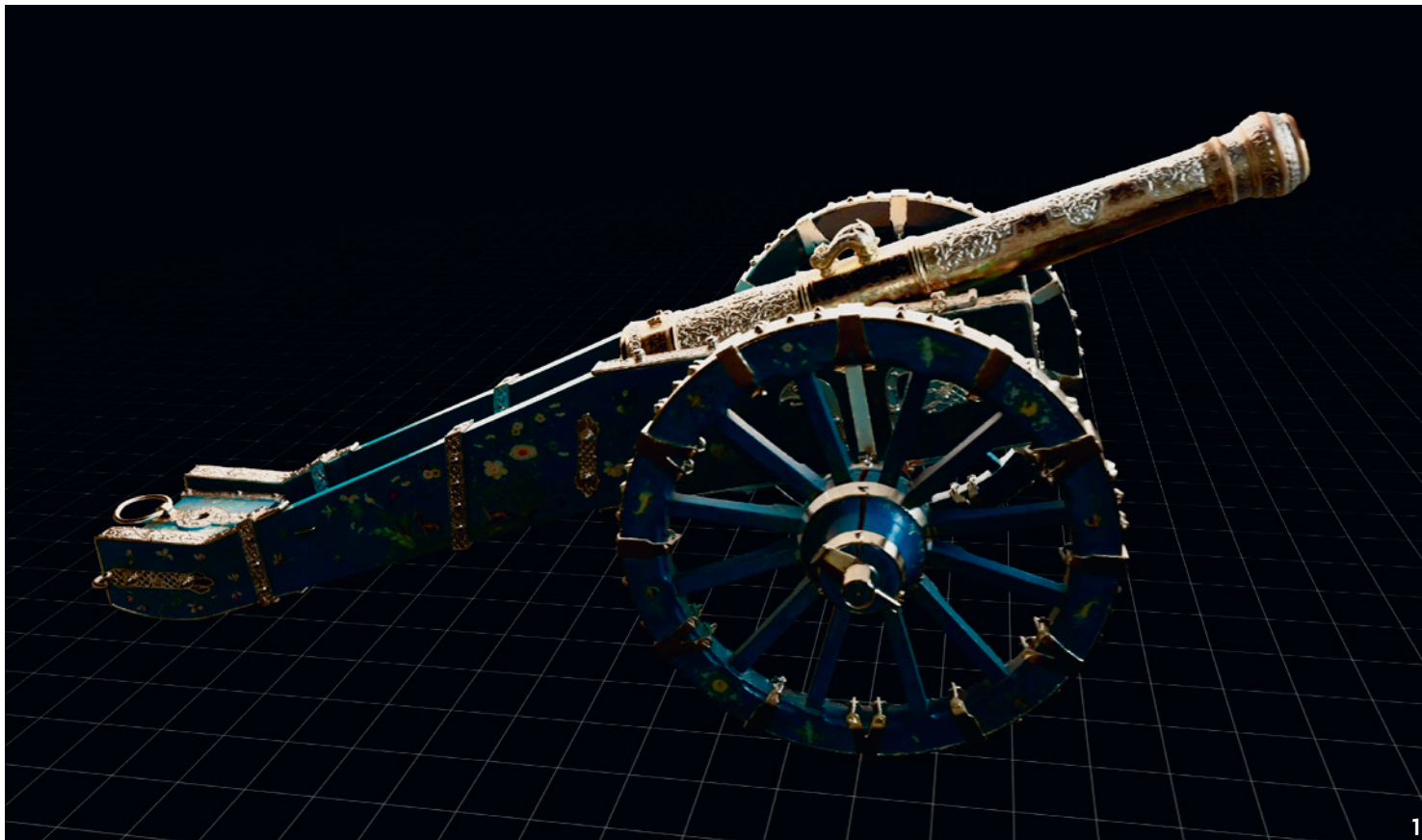
THE OBJECTS IN THE EXHIBITIONS AND THEIR STORIES



1 Still from the VR Quadriga on top of the Brandenburger Tor © Jongsma + O'Neill **2** Exhibition view in the Mauritshuis, The Hague © Mauritshuis **3** Exhibition view in the Mauritshuis, The Hague © Mauritshuis **4** Visitors in the Mauritshuis, The Hague © Mauritshuis

DIGITAL 3D MODEL OF THE CANNON OF KANDY

The original object was returned to Sri Lanka in 2023.



1 Digital 3D model of 'cannon of Kandy', 2023 © Jongmsa + O'Neill

In the video, visitors can see the process of creating a 3D model of the Cannon of Kandy, which is saved on the hard disk exhibited next to the screen. The original decorative cannon was looted in 1765 from the palace of Kandy in central Sri Lanka (Ceylon). By that time, the island's coastal areas had been occupied for over 100 years by the colonial Dutch East India Company (VOC), which gained most of its profits here from cinnamon.

During Dutch colonial rule, the people revolted several times against the exploitation and forced labour they underwent. The open support that King Kirti Sri Rajasingha of Kandy gave to the popular uprising of 1761 marked the beginning of a guerrilla war that lasted several years. After the conquest of Kandy in 1765, many valuables and cultural belongings were either looted or destroyed.

The Dutch colonial army shipped the cannon to the Netherlands, where it became part of the royal art collection and remained in the country even during the occupation of the French revolutionary troops in 1795. When the cannon arrived in the Netherlands, its backstory was changed. In Stadholder William V's cabinet of curiosities, it was still described as a war trophy from Ceylon. Then, during the French rule of the Netherlands (1795-1815), it was suddenly labelled a Tunisian cultural artefact said to have been brought back by Admiral Michiel de Ruyter. When the cannon was exhibited at the Mauritshuis in the 19th century, it was displayed in a room dedicated to Dutch history. In 1880, it was discovered that the inscription on the cannon was in Sinhala, a Sri Lankan language. Only then did it become clear that the object was a piece of Sri Lankan heritage.

After 60 years of repeated request from Sri Lanka the cannon returned to its country of origin in 2023. The digital 3D model will stay behind in the Netherlands.

Such digital reproductions raise questions about intellectual property and the autonomy of artworks and cultural belongings: Are digital models simply copies of original pieces, or do these virtual objects have an intrinsic value of their own? Can digital files ever belong to a single owner, or should they be treated as common heritage? Ethical questions like these are still awaiting answers.

ANET CHEST OF DRAWERS

France, c. 1750

Oak, mahogany, amaranth, rosewood, ebony, maple, 88 x 171 x 63.5 cm

Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin,

inv. no. I 52,294



1 Anet Chest of Drawers, France, c. 1750 © Stadtmuseum Berlin, Photo: Dorin Alexandru Ionita

ANET CHEST OF DRAWERS

The Anet chest of drawers is part of the Stadtmuseum Berlin's "Reichsbank furniture" collection. But how did this piece of French furniture end up at the Märkisches Museum, which specialises in the history of Berlin and Brandenburg? We will provide insight into ongoing provenance research.

The Anet chest of drawers is one of 47 historical pieces of furniture collectively transferred from the GDR Ministry of Finance in Unterwasserstraße in Berlin-Mitte to the nearby Märkisches Museum in the early 1950's.

WHERE DID THIS FURNITURE COME FROM?

A handwritten note by an unknown person on a historical index card indicates that the chest of drawers may have been salvaged from the "Reichsbank bunker", the public air-raid shelter in the Reichsbank extension in Kurstraße. The architectural history of the old Reichsbank and the extension built during and after the Second World War was therefore of interest in determining the origins of the chest of drawers.

HOUSE ARCHIVE: INSPECTION OF THE PIECE FOR DISTINCT FEATURES

Museum staff initially examined the chest of drawers from all sides for certain revealing features such as stickers, inscriptions with chalk or felt-tip pens, manufacturer stamps or markings from sale, storage, exhibitions,

or transport. Some interesting labels and inscriptions were found, as well as a branding stamp on the back of the chest of drawers. Specialised furniture literature reveals that this branding stamp in the shape of an anchor with an 'A' and a 'T' indicates early ownership by Château Anet, located roughly 80 kilometres west of Paris (France).

Another interesting inscription is "Rb 634", written in black. More numbers featuring "Rb" can be found on numerous other pieces of furniture in the "Reichsbank furniture collection". We assume that "Rb" stands for "Reichsbank". It is unclear when these numbers were written on the objects, whether it was after the Second World War, on the occasion of their transport to the Märkisches Museum, or upon their arrival there. It appears to be a continuous, albeit in-complete, count: The lowest "Rb" number in the collection is "Rb 148" and the highest is "Rb 1272". Could the Reichsbank furniture collection have included more than 1,000 items? If so, it may be possible to find furniture with "Rb" numbers in other museums and collections.

All of these features have been photographed and the photos and their labels are then documented in detail in the object's data record on the museum database. The more provenance features that are collected and the better and more accessible the data is made, the greater the

likelihood that other researchers will find the information and objects in question, making it possible to establish new connections between numerous objects scattered around the world.

STAMPS PROVIDE INFORMATION

Furniture experts from the Stadtmuseum Berlin and external specialists in French furniture art have examined the chest of drawers and the other pieces of furniture and have identified various pieces as authentic French furniture from the 18th and 19th century. Some can be attributed to well-known cabinet makers, or *ébénistes*, based on branding stamps.

Although the Anet chest of drawers does not bear a maker's (*ébéniste*) stamp, this is not unusual for the period. Historical studies of furniture thus attempt to identify other similar, so-called comparative pieces based on the type of construction and craftsmanship of the inlay work. In keeping with the fashion of the time, furniture was often made in pairs, for example to enable their symmetrical placement in a room. The chalk inscription "No 1" on the back of the Anet chest of drawers could therefore indicate that the chest of drawers had a matching piece at the time of transport, though this has yet to be substantiated. In order to find similar pieces of furniture and decrease the number of possible manufacturers, a large body of specialist furniture literature was consulted, including exhibition and (online) auction catalogues. We were able to find a larger group of "Reichsbank furniture" pieces at the traditional Parisian company Maison Jansen, which still manufactures individual models today.

The brand stamp is currently the only evidence that allows us to attribute the Anet chest of drawers to Château Anet. Based on the design of the body and the style of the floral inlays (*marquetry*), experts suspect that the chest of drawers may have been made as part of a collaboration between the French cabinetmakers Jean-Pierre Latz (1691–1754) and Jean-François Oeben (1721–1763). Evidence of this – entries in catalogues raisonnés, for example – has not yet been found. However, establishing the French provenance of the chest of drawers made possible another interesting discovery: the chest of drawers is depicted in the *Répertoire des Biens Spoliés* (inventory of expropriated goods), which led us to one of its previous owners in Paris.

PARISIAN ORIGINS

German-occupied France (June 1940–August 1944) was divided into two territories: Northern France, administered by the German military, and Southern France, administered by the French Vichy government. The arrival of National Socialist tyranny in the occupied French territories led to an expansion of the disenfranchisement and expulsion of Jewish people and other minorities, as well as the systematic theft of art on a massive scale. In order to document these cultural assets seized and missing in France, an inventory was compiled of all cultural assets taken from French territory (*Répertoire des Biens Spoliés en France Durant la Guerre 1939–1945*, RBS).

The catalogue was published between 1947 and 1949 in eight volumes plus additional volumes (suppléments) and was intended to provide art dealers and museums with reference works for the subsequent identification of cultural property missing from France, in case it was put on the market. The French Central Restitution Office (*Bureau Central des Restitutions*, BCR), which was based in Berlin under the Allied powers, published these volumes after the war. The BCR centralised the declarations submitted to the Office of Private Property and Interests (*Office des Biens et Intérêts Privés*, OBIP) by private individuals and dealers for the French side and processed the files. The OBIP staff travelled through the former German Reich in search of missing French cultural assets.

The volumes are organised by genre and list previous owners in addition to the OBIP file number and a brief description. Some entries also include historical photographs. These are particularly helpful for provenance research, as they often allow objects to be clearly identified, as in the case with the Anet chest of drawers:

By naming the previous owner “B. Fabre et Fils, Paris”, an established antiques dealer, we were able to view the OBIP files upon which the RBS were based in the Archives Diplomatiques in Paris: The Fabre dossiers there and in the Archives de Paris provide information on the extent of trade with the Reichsbank.

The paper also proves that building director and architect of the Reichsbank Heinrich Wolff (1880–1944) was active in Paris as a buyer with a Reichsbank budget. Like much of the other Reichsbank furniture, the chest of drawers was

apparently intended for the remodelling and refurbishing of the representative rooms of the (old) Reichsbank in Berlin. A further remodeling of the extension building after the Second World War then led to the furniture being transferred to the Märkisches Museum.

After the end of the German occupation and the liberation of France, all art dealers and art mediators who had “traded with the [German] enemy” had to explain the scope and extent of their activities in so-called “profits illicit” court proceedings. They were accused of having made unauthorised profits by trading with the enemy. The entire network of dealers and intermediaries who had worked with the Reichsbank found themselves on trial, as did dozens of other Parisian art dealers and interior decorators leading, in most cases, to the imposition of heavy fines and repayments to the French state.

In other cases, the art goods that had initially been seized at the end of the war were recovered. The Fabre files are currently being analysed. From Fabre’s point of view, they demonstrate a clear sale to the Reichsbank in Berlin and do not show any devalued prices. Fabre also made no claims or reclaims after the war for the furniture sold to the Reichsbank. This leads us to the tentative conclusion that the furniture was not part of a private Fabre collection, but rather part of the antique dealer’s regular stock of goods. What has yet to be clarified – and this is where further research becomes necessary – is how and from what source the Anet chest of drawers found its way into Fabre’s inventory.

Only when the history of the chest of drawers has been clarified conclusively, up to the time when the National Socialists came to power, i.e. at least before 1940 or 1933, can the ownership of the chest of drawers be considered unproblematic.

Until that point, the chest of drawers will continue to be rated “yellow” according to the traffic light system for provenance assessment in which “green” stands for unproblematic provenance for the period between 1933 and 1945; “yellow” for incomplete information for this period; “orange” for problematic provenance and “red” for clearly problematic provenance. In the latter case, a search for current heirs is required.



1 Back of the Anet chest of drawers © Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin
Photo: Dorin Alexandru Ionita

The provenance of the Anet chest of drawers must be examined further on the basis of its categorisation.

Further information:
<https://www.stadtmuseum.de/en/article/anet-commode>

DECORATED STAFF WITH FEMALE FIGURE

Suriname, ca. 1900

Wood, iron and metal foil, 78 cm

Ethnologisches Museum der Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz,

inv. no. V A 13776



This staff is part of a collection of over 40 objects from Suriname acquired in 1901 by the Ethnologisches Museum (Ethnological Museum, formerly the Royal Museum for Ethnology) in Berlin. They were purchased from Paul Körner, a German traveller to the region. Archival records reveal that a shop clerk at the Moravian mission station in Wanhatti stole it from an unsuspecting Surinamese villager. The owner and perhaps creator of the staff was a member of the Ndyuka, a Maroon community descended from enslaved Africans who had fled the plantations to settle deep in the rain forests of Suriname, in northern South America. The exact meaning of the staff is still unknown. The double-sided figure on the upper end likely represents an ancestor; the sections on the lower end refer to the clans of the Ndyuka.

Wood carving plays an important role in Maroon culture. In the mid-19th century, Maroon men began to decorate wood-carved benches, combs, stirrers, canoes and single-blade paddles with engravings and reliefs. While American and European researchers initially saw this as an authentic African art form, it is now clear that Maroon wood art has its own stylistic features. There are also major regional differences between Maroon communities in terms of their formal languages and craftsmanship. The Ndyuka, for example, tend to use more figurative motifs, such as lizards, snakes, birds and humans.

The Protestant Moravian Church began mission work early on, determined to spread the Christian faith across the world. The Moravians were very active in Suriname when it was under Dutch colonial rule. They studied the languages and customs of the indigenous people but also ran plantations to finance these activities. Slavery was the rule here rather than the exception.

The missionaries' regional activities and contacts made them useful middlemen for European museums seeking to create ethnographic collections. Over the course of the 19th century they began to systematically collect objects and artworks for export, using means that were not always legal. Many religious items were stolen to prevent their owners from engaging in ritual practices; others were surrendered by new converts.

The documentary in the exhibition follows the poet Onias Landveld, whose maternal uncle is a chief in the Wanhatti region. After Onias' encounter with the staff, the Ethnologisches Museum started an in-depth research and building a relationship with the Maroon community.

1 Decorated staff with female figure, Suriname, ca. 1900 © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum, Photo: Claudia Obrocki

REMBRANDT

Rembrandt (1606–1669)
Self-Portrait, 1669
Oil on canvas, 65 × 60 cm
The Hague, Mauritshuis,
inv. no. 840

Purchased from the Rathenau family with the support of the Rembrandt Association and private individuals, 1947



Before the war, this Rembrandt self-portrait belonged to the Jewish Germans Ernest and Ellen Rathenau and was on permanent loan to the Rijksmuseum. The Rathenaus managed to flee from Germany to the Netherlands in the 1930s, and later to the UK and the USA. Unfortunately, their attempts to get the Rembrandt to safety were unsuccessful. The painting was looted by the Germans and stored in the salt mine in Altaussee together with other masterpieces such as the Ghent Altarpiece by the Van Eyck brothers and Vermeer's Astronomer.

With Hitler about to lose the war, the National Socialists came up with a plan to destroy the stolen treasures. The miners that you see in the VR experience managed to thwart the plans to bomb the mine and helped to save the art.

In the end, many of the looted pieces were recovered thanks to the “Monuments Men”, a group of art specialists established by the Allies to work in war areas to protect cultural assets. After the war, Rembrandt's self-portrait was part of the first official art transport to the Netherlands. The painting was returned to the Rathenau family, who sold it to the Mauritshuis in 1947.

After the war, art retrieved from Germany was managed by the Netherlands Art Property Foundation. From 1948, this foundation proactively tracked down owners and organised special exhibitions where people could look for their stolen property. Because of strict restitution requirements, however, many items were never returned – to claim an object, people had to provide proof of ownership and involuntary loss of possession, and pay 2.75% of the appraised value to cover expenses. In the early 1950s, the remaining artworks were deemed ‘ineligible for restitution’. They were auctioned off or included in the national NK Collection and then loaned to museums such as the Mauritshuis.



1 Rembrandt, Self-Portrait, 1669, Oil on canvas © Mauritshuis, Den Haag 2 Still from the VR Rembrandt © Jongsma + O'Neill

To legitimise and demonstrate his political dominance, Adolf Hitler ordered many thousands of artworks, including paintings, sculptures, and porcelain, to be stored in one of the abandoned salt mines in Austria. Many of these pieces were meant for the Führermuseum that Hitler planned to build in Linz, but the museum was never realised.

Back in the early 1930s the National Socialists had begun to exclude Jews from Germany's social and economic life. With the beginning of the Second World War in 1939, the Nazi regime started a systematic, large-scale operation to seize or force the sale of precious belongings such as works of art from Jewish individuals and families.

KRIS (DAGGER)

Indonesia (Bali), c. 1800–1850

Metal, nickel, and wood, 48.5 × 9.5 × 4 cm

Ethnologisches Museum der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz,
inv. no. I C 298 a



“Carried by someone of high rank, captured in Kasoemba, Bali” read the 1851 description of this Balinese dagger in the Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin. The kris was part of a donation by Claus Rodenburg, a German collector who had worked for the Dutch colonial administration on the Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Java. In 1851, he gifted this kris to the King of Prussia, who included the dagger in his art chamber – a collection that would later become the Ethnological Museum of Berlin. The art chamber’s archives, which have been preserved, only reveal that the weapon was captured in Kusamba.

The Dutch invasion at “Kasoemba” (the village of Kusamba) took place during the Third Bali War in 1849. This infamous military campaign followed two earlier violent wars in the northern region of Bali. Once the north of the island had been occupied, the Dutch colonial army turned the focus of its illegitimate expansion to the southern Kingdom of Klungkung. Troops left the coast at Padangbai and later passed the Hindu temple complex of Goa Lawah, where they killed hundreds of Balinese people in battle.

The Balinese, though, were not willing to give up their territory without a fight. A resistance movement formed and despite the considerable bloodshed, the Kingdom of Klungkung held out against the Dutch colonial army until 1908, when it was the last free kingdom of Bali to fall under the colonial rule of the Dutch East Indies.

In Indonesia, krisses are not just viewed as weapons, but also as spiritual objects. As personal possessions, they are especially valuable to their original owners, who know their spiritual significance and history. The early provenance of the krisses that were captured in battle is often unknown. Today, museum collections contain many orphaned krisses whose deeper meaning has been lost to time. This kris has not been claimed by anyone – even the current King of Klungkung, Ida Dalem Semara Putra, has said that he does not want to assert ownership, possibly because the dagger has become meaningless.

1 Kris, ca. 1800–1850, Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Ethnologisches Museum, Martin Franken

HORSE HEAD FROM THE QUADRIGA

Johann Gottfried Schadow (1764–1850)

Horse head from the quadriga on the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, 1789–1793

Chased copper, 125 x 65.5 x 157 cm

Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin,

inv. no. I 52,374



1 Horse Head from the Quadriga of the Brandenburger Tor, 1793 © Stadtmuseum Berlin, Michael Setzpfandt, Berlin

This horse's head is all that remains of the original Quadriga, the sculpture that sits atop the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. But why did sculptor Johann Gottfried Schadow (1764–1850) design the Quadriga in the first place? And what role did Napoleon play in it?

The majestic Quadriga on the Brandenburg Gate, as well as its creator Johann Gottfried Schadow (1764–1850), both lived through a turbulent and crisis-ridden era known as the Sattelzeit. Though defined by events such as the French Revolution of 1789 and the European coalition wars of 1799 to 1813, it was also a period of increased social mobility, exemplified by Schadow, a master tailor's son, who was appointed head of the court sculptor's workshop in Berlin in 1788. As rector, Schadow taught at the Academy of Arts and became academy director in 1816. He was also responsible for the sculptural decoration of the royal residences. In this capacity, he worked closely with sculptors in Berlin and Potsdam, designing more than 350 sculptural works, including reliefs, statues, busts and tombs.

Schadow's approximately 2,200 drawings and large body of written work illustrate how the artist applied contemporary art theory to his work. He created new, sensual and universal works of art informed by wide-ranging sources and cultural traditions. Schadow's academic approach to making art prioritised the study of details over the study of the whole. In addition to "antique plaster casts", it was "beautiful nature itself" that served as the model for his works of art, which strived for idealistic beauty while still hewing closely to reality. In his early studies of animals, Schadow took his forms from "casts, paintings and engravings"; in his later work, horses, bulls and dogs had to be drawn "from nature itself".

THE BRANDENBURG GATE

While the idea of building a prestigious city gate⁴ was linked to the military alliance concluded between Great Britain and Prussia in June 1788, it was above all the impetus of King Frederick William II, who wished to erect a monument to his successful military intervention in the Netherlands in 1787. The Brandenburg Gate was meant to convey openness, allow for transparency in the landscape and connect the "beautiful parts of the city" with Berlin's Tiergarten. Head court architect (Oberhofbauamt) Carl Gotthard

Langhans (1731–1808) oversaw the speedy construction of the sandstone gate, which was opened to the public in August 1791.

The only thing still missing was the Quadriga, for which Schadow presented an overall model in April 1789, showing “the true form of a group of 4 horses and a carriage together with the Goddess Victoria”. His roughly “hand-sized” Quadriga model and three 81-cm-tall plaster horse models are known to have existed but have not survived. In order for the artist to better study horses in motion, one of the officials in the royal stables was instructed to ride in the manner of the model. There are several drawings of horses by Schadow, as well as sketches of ideas that may have served as models for the wood and metal sculptures. Sculptors Johann Christoph (1748–1799) and Michael Christoph Wohler (1754–1802) of Potsdam had been working on the original-sized wooden horses since May 1789. In mid-July 1789, coppersmith Emanuel Ernst Jury (1756–1823) of Potsdam began the copper engraving work based on the wooden models.

As he was working to full capacity on the four copper horses, Jury handed over production of the Victoria to the master tinsmith Köhler of Potsdam in mid-September 1791. Schadow, meanwhile, took part in an academy commission that assessed the qualitative progress of the woodwork and metalwork. Two of Schadow’s design sketches for the Goddess Victoria from 1792 connected with this assessment have been lost. After four years, in mid-1793, the parts were brought to Berlin by barge and installed on the gate by the end of June, with final work continuing through September. The king was delighted with “the extraordinarily well-made Quadriga”.

NAPOLEON’S QUADRIGA

Schadow had felt a “shudder” upon Napoleon I’s (1769–1821) march into Berlin, “as if beholding a sinister being”. He frequently met with Napoleon’s art agent, the artist Dominique-Vivant Denon (1747–1825), and arranged art purchases for him; however, neither their good relationship nor a petition from the artists of Berlin could prevent Napoleon from ordering the Quadriga to be brought to Paris immediately after his troops entered Berlin at the end of October 1806.

The coppersmith Jury organised the removal and dismantling of the sculpture by mid-December, and procured crates with packing materials, for which he received 1500 thalers. The art transport travelled by barge via Hamburg to Paris at the end of December and arrived there in mid-May 1807. Art historian Bénédicte Savoy (born 1972) has related the confiscation of artworks in Germany to a statement by Schadow’s friend, Carl Friedrich Zelter (1758–1832), who in 1807 wrote that “good things belong to the world, wherever they are [...] Our artists, who only moan because their own works have not been seized [...] are well punished for having neglected Albrecht Durer and Lucas Cranach”.

This was not the case for Schadow. His Quadriga was assessed in detail in Paris, extensively restored by the sculptor Charles Stanislas Canler (1764–1812) and a suitable location for it was sought in earnest. It became clear that the horses were valued as an artistic achievement when a plaster cast of a horse was made at the beginning of April 1814. The sculptor Henri-Victor Roguier (1758–1841) needed it for an equestrian statue of the Bourbon King Henry IV.

THE QUADRIGA RETURNS HOME

In March 1814, the coalition armies allied against Napoleon entered into Paris and in early April the Quadriga began its journey back to Berlin, this time by land. It became a triumphal procession for the newly captured “chariot of victory” which lasted until 9th June 1814. Restoration work on the statue, which had once again become necessary, was carried out in Grunewald Palace. Schadow was not involved. Around 50 blacksmiths, carpenters and servants worked on the Quadriga until 18th July. It was then transported to Berlin in late July. Schadow’s advice was now needed in order to mount it. Together with Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781–1841) and Chief Building Officer (Oberbaurat) Johann Friedrich Moser (1771–1846), he went to the Brandenburg Gate on 29th July “to assess the position of the horses”, which “Mechanicus Hummel” had to set up. The next morning, mechanical engineer Johann Caspar Hummel (1774–1850) once again sought Schadow’s counsel.

Since mid-May, Schadow and other Berlin-based artists had been busy preparing a festive illumination of the city to celebrate the victory over Napoleon. Schinkel designed

the accompanying festive decorations as well as the Iron Cross, a new feature to be added to the Quadriga. Schadow lent “the small model of the Quadriga” to medallist Daniel Friedrich Loos (1735–1819), who was planning a commemorative medal. In June, Schadow made a larger-than-life plaster model for ten papier-mâché Victoria figures that were to stand in front of the Brandenburg Gate. At the same time, he drew ideas for banners to be hung on private houses. By 4th August, he had to model two large plaster Victoria figures, his “Colossus”, for the Opera Bridge. The Quadriga was finally unveiled on 7th August as Frederick William III’s troops paraded through a festively decorated Berlin.

SCHADOW’S QUADRIGA?

The Quadriga was the result of the joint intellectual endeavours and practical work of many people from different groups and positions, backgrounds and generations. Schadow barely identified himself artistically with the work: The Quadriga does not appear in his first autobiography, published in 1808. After 1814, Schadow wrote a text about its creation. An autobiographical text from 1824 described the events of 1806/1807 and 1814, and Schadow’s autobiography from 1849 contains many of these events.

Schadow’s horses were once regarded as a symbol of status and triumph of aristocracy and power. Together with the Quadriga, they were originally part of a triumphal gate, the “Peace Gate”, commemorating a Prussian war in 1791. In 1945, when Berlin suffered widespread destruction at the end of the Second World War, the horses became the victims of war (it is believed that the Quadriga was deliberately shot at). The horse’s head became the symbolic spoils of the ideological battles that followed.

In early October 1952, this sole remnant of the ‘old’ Quadriga came to the Märkisches Museum, which today belongs to the Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin. The then director and art historian Walter Stengel (1882–1960) considered only one of the two horse heads to be worth preserving. He found the other Quadriga pieces, which were stored in a warehouse on the Museum Island, to be “hopeless”.

Further information:
<https://www.stadtmuseum.de/en/article/horse-head-from-the-quadriga>

THE MÄRKISCHES MUSEUM'S "SPECIAL SILVER INVENTORY"

Looted silver objects (cutlery, rattles, bracelets, scissors)
stolen from Jewish families between 1939 and 1940
Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin



1 Child's rattle in the shape of a stork, silver, bone © Stadtmuseum Berlin | Reproduction: Dorin Alexandru Ionita, Berlin

Nearly five hundred silver pieces, including spoons, charm bracelets, children's rattles and other objects, are stored in a metal cabinet in the Stadtmuseum Berlin's collection depot. The objects originate from compulsory levies placed on Jewish people from 1939 onwards, and provide insight into a project that the Stadtmuseum Berlin has been carrying out since 1996 to clarify the provenance of each individual object.

While these items cannot currently be traced back to their original owners, the silver holdings that Jews were forced to relinquish are a painful testament to the history of the millions who fell victim to the Holocaust. Since 1996, the Stadtmuseum Berlin has been researching the provenance of these silver objects, both to evaluate the museum's own past with a critical eye and to make information available to the public. In 2019, a digitisation project was launched with financial support from the then Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe to make the card index of the "Special Silver Inventory" public for provenance research and other interested parties.

HISTORY OF THE "SPECIAL SILVER INVENTORY"

The "Third Decree for the Reporting of Jewish-Owned Property" from 21st February 1939, in accordance with the "First Ordinance to the Reich Citizenship Law [Reichsbürgergesetz]", obliged Jewish people to hand over "objects made of gold, platinum or silver as well as precious stones and pearls within two weeks of the entry into force of this Ordinance" to public pawnshops throughout the Reich. As the owners of these objects received very little compensation, this can only be viewed as an act of theft. The silver was melted down and stored in bars at the Reichsbank in Berlin.

The then director of the Märkisches Museum, Dr Walter Stengel (1882–1960), and his assistant Dr Wolfgang Scheffler (1902–1992) were likely the only two people given the opportunity to select artistically valuable objects from the large collection and save them from being melted down. The reasons for their actions remain unknown.

From 21st June 1939 to 6th October 1941, the Märkisches Museum acquired around 5,000 forcibly relinquished objects from the Berlin branches of the municipal pawnshop and from the Reich's central purchasing office. The items, which range from spoons to ceremonial goblets, were produced between the Middle Ages and the 1920's.

Walter Stengel described these actions in the Märkisches Museum's acquisition book, published in 1941: "Special grants from the treasury made it possible to bring together a whole history of the development of the silver cake spoon alongside later examples and, more generally, to present a unique series on the silver culture of the last 150 years. This was a one-of-a-kind rescue operation. During the arduous, weeks-long work of inspection, the undersigned was supported in particular by Mr Paul Kothe, the city's chief architect. Dr Wolfgang Scheffler was responsible for cataloguing the pieces saved from melting down and the picture card index (over 3000 photographs) was assembled by Mrs Titze".

The circumstances under which the valuable objects recovered in this "rescue operation" came into circulation in the first place do not appear to be of any concern to the director. A special inventory comprising of two volumes was created in the collection, whose inventory numbers begin with the letter 'S'. These volumes were apparently compiled due to the high number of new objects received. In addition, the objects were not the property of the museum but rather of the city of Berlin. Some silver objects from Jewish ownership listed in the regular inventory.

The findings obtained from the research on the forcibly relinquished silver objects were included in several scholarly works by Walter Stengel and Wolfgang Scheffler. These works fail to mention the provenance unlawful seizure and transfer of these objects to the Märkisches Museum. In a macabre twist, one of the books by Wolfgang Scheffler has become a standard work on Berlin goldsmiths.



1 Fork, three-pronged, with decorated handle © Stadtmuseum Berlin | Reproduction: Dorin Alexandru Ionita, Berlin 2 Dinner knife, silver-plated © Stadtmuseum Berlin | Reproduction: Dorin Alexandru Ionita, Berlin

The Second World War began while the silver was still being acquired. When the Märkisches Museum was closed and gradually cleared out at the end of 1939, the silver collection also had to be removed from storage. While the subsequent destination of the silver objects is a matter of speculation, it can be assumed, based on a slim binder containing lists of ten boxes with silver objects, that they ended up in the Reichsbank. Of almost 5,000 documented objects, just under 500 of little material value survived after the Second World War. The whereabouts of the more than 4,000 missing objects are not known to this date.

After 1945, the silver objects and their history were deliberately not communicated. Outside the directorate, the museum staff did not know that the silver objects still existed. Officially, there were also no longer any historical inventory books, they were supposedly burnt in 1945. It was only around 1989, against the backdrop of the merger of the Märkisches Museum with the Berlin Museum, that the objects received renewed attention. During the 1992 exhibition “The Other Half” in Martin-Gropius-Bau, the public learned for

the first time about the Märkisches Museum’s Jewish-owned silver holdings. Four years later, the Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin launched a documentation project to examine the inventory book, photo card index and surviving silver inventory. This involved gathering sources, identifying the existing inventory and researching the processes that led to its creation. Dr Marlies Coburger published the results of the project in a comprehensive study.

In 2021, the case of the Märkisches Museum’s unlawful possession of looted property, which came to light in 1993, was brought to an end. Through an amicable settlement with the Jewish Claims Conference as the legal successor to the Jewish victims of Nazi persecution, a fair and just solution was found in accordance with principle 9 of the Washington Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art. The remaining silver objects are now property of the Stadtmuseum Berlin, rather than merely being in its custodianship. The Stadtmuseum Berlin is committed to using the silver objects to make the history of ostracism, deprivation of rights, looting and possible restitution public.

THE “SPECIAL SILVER INVENTORY” TODAY

In addition to the almost 500 silver objects that it holds, the Stadtmuseum Berlin has preserved almost all of the documentation on this collection: 3,000 index cards and 1,500 photo cards of objects, as well as Volume 2 of the special inventory. The contents of Volume 1 can largely be reconstructed by the access numbers on the index cards. These cards make it possible to gain a detailed impression of the scope and structure of the largely lost collection. They were systematically arranged in 18 folders according to groups of works. Most of the index cards also contain photographs of the objects. The pre-printed sheets in DIN A5 landscape format are divided into 14 columns with fields such as ‘object’, ‘material’, ‘marks’ and ‘signature’. The unlabelled columns were filled out in detail primarily by Wolfgang Scheffler. The fields ‘type of acquisition’, ‘origin’ and ‘location’, however, are mostly empty. The index cards have entry numbers, which can be used to determine their approximate date of arrival at the Märkisches Museum, as well as outline numbers, which indicate affiliation to individual groups of works.

The working cards digitized in the course of the 2019 digitisation project provide valuable information for provenance research and further questions of contemporary history. With its online publication, the Stadtmuseum Berlin also seeks to raise public awareness of active and critical examination of local Nazi history. The most important concern of the publication remains the hope that the silver objects will be identified by victims and their surviving relatives and that looted objects can be returned.

ONLINE COLLECTION

The digitised holdings from the “Special Silver Inventory” can be viewed at the Stadtmuseum Berlin’s online collection.
<https://sammlung-online.stadtmuseum.de/Home/Index?page=1&slid=607&smode=And>

Further information:
<https://www.stadtmuseum.de/en/article/the-markisches-museums-special-silver-inventory>

PAULUS POTTER

Paulus Potter (1625–1654)
Cows Reflected in the Water, 1648
Oil on panel, 43 × 61 cm
The Hague, Mauritshuis, inv. no. 137



JAN MIJTENS

Jan Mijtens, (c.1614–1670)
The Marriage of Friedrich Wilhelm, Elector of Brandenburg with Louise Henriette of Orange, 1646
Oil on panel, 58 × 74 cm
Rennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts, inv. no. DT.801.1.15



1 Jan Mijtens: *The Marriage of Friedrich Wilhelm, Elector of Brandenburg with Louise Henriette of Orange in 1646, 1646* © Musée des beaux-arts de Rennes, Jean-Manuel Salingue
2 Paulus Potter: *Cows Reflected in the Water, 1648* © Mauritshuis, Den Haag

These two paintings tell two different stories of the exhibition. In the years leading up to the French Revolution in 1789, Europe experienced a great deal of unrest. In many countries, people were no longer willing to accept the privileges enjoyed by kings, aristocrats, and the church. The Netherlands was no exception: in 1787 patriots attempted to overthrow Stadtholder William V – without success. This uprising was put down with military support from the king of Prussia, who was the stadtholder’s brother-in-law. When French revolutionary troops invaded the Netherlands in 1794 “to liberate the people”, William V fled to England. He left behind a large collection of Dutch and Flemish art from the 17th century, taking only his most prized possessions with him.

The 1795 Treaty of The Hague declared that not only was the Netherlands French territory but a large part of William V’s art collection was also the property of the French state. Among the works that were seized were the two paintings by Potter and Mijtens presented here. Almost 200 paintings ended up in the Louvre in Paris. On their arrival in Paris, most of the stadtholder’s paintings were in good condition. Only eight of the works underwent restorations in Paris, including Paulus Potter’s *Cows Reflected in the Water*, to prepare them for their new homes in various French museums. This can be seen as part of an “appropriation ritual”: by erasing any visible signs of use by previous owners, time was turned back, so to speak, to the moment the paintings left the easel. The French, convinced that they had become the rightful owners, were happy to invest in these restorations.

After Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo in 1815, the Netherlands retrieved as much of the looted art as possible. A large number of paintings were returned, including *Cows Reflected in the Water* by Paulus Potter. Many others, however – the Mijtens work among them – remained the property of France.

In 1818 the Netherlands ceased all efforts to bring home the remaining works. The Mauritshuis was designated as the destination for the pieces that did return from Paris, where they can still be seen today. The empty spaces on this gallery wall symbolise the art works that were not recovered.

The French art grab prompted many European countries to reflect on their national heritage. How could priceless works of art best be protected from looting, decay and destruction? The painful fact that important Dutch paintings could only be seen in Paris during the French occupation had made it clear that the Netherlands’ national heritage was vulnerable, reinforcing patriotic sentiments. It is no surprise, then, that many national museums were founded during this period, both in the Netherlands and in other European countries, where repatriated works were displayed alongside other national art.

PLASTER CASTS OF THE BENIN BRONZES

Germany, 1st half of 20th century

Painting models, plaster piece-mould, gelatin mould

Gipsformerei der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz,

inv. no. M-04147, M-04159, M-04160, M-04161, 04147, F-04160



1 Plaster cast of a Benin bronze © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gipsformerei, Foto: Thomas Schelper 2 Plaster cast of a Benin bronze © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gipsformerei, Foto: Thomas Schelper

The term “Benin Bronzes” refers to a group of memorial heads, sculptures, plaques, and other artefacts consisting of various material, mainly brass and bronze. As culturally significant objects from the Kingdom of Benin in what is now Nigeria, they were moulded in the early twentieth century and offered for sale as plaster casts. The historical plaster models and moulds on view here are from the collection of the Gipsformerei, the Staatliche Museen’s traditional plaster-casting workshop. The painted versions served as models for the Gipsformerei’s painters and look as much as the original objects as possible.

Around 5,000 objects stolen from Benin are stored in 131 institutions around the world. The renowned “Benin Bronzes” symbolise the colonial injustice associated with the Western craze for collecting. In 1884 the Berlin Conference divided the African continent among several European countries. Benin, in

Nigeria, became a British territory. The majority of Benin collections in museums all over the world can be traced back to the looting of Benin City in 1897. At that time, the British occupiers were guilty of mass murder, destruction, and plundering in the Kingdom of Benin. The Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin also profited from this infamous conflict, creating one of the largest collections of Benin art in the world.

Discussions about the future of the “Benin Bronzes” have been ongoing between European museums and Nigerian parties since 2010. The Benin Dialogue Group laid the foundations for intergovernmental summits to negotiate restitution. In 2022 the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin transferred the ownership of more than 500 original “Benin Bronzes” to Nigeria. A special exhibition on the second floor of the Humboldt Forum takes these recent processes into account.

The return of the pieces also means the end of the sale of plaster casts in Berlin. This has raised new questions: Who decides whether it is permissible for replicas of the original Bronzes to be produced? Should restitution of the objects mean handing over the rights of reproduction as well? What potential do replicas have for Benin exhibitions in the future? Museum institutions and their partners in Nigeria are seriously debating these questions.

LOOT. 10 STORIES

Duration	22 March 2024–26 January 2025
Location	3 rd Floor, Room 312
Opening hours	Mi–Mo, 10:30–18:30
Admission	Free, not ticket required
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