

Provenance Research, Memory Culture, and the Futurity of Archives: Three Essential Resources for Researching the Nazi Past*

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INTRODUCTION

Provenance research is understood to be one of the central tasks of cultural institutions in Germany. The search for Nazi-looted cultural assets in libraries, archives, and museums (LAMs) is endorsed by the state and funded generously. Because the process was slow to begin, today, many decades after the end of World War II, numerous cultural assets that were confiscated from their rightful owners or sold under pressure of persecution during the Nazi era are still found in the collections of cultural institutions.

Germany did not come to terms with Nazi-looted cultural assets until after the Washington Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets, held in December 1998 in Washington D.C. At that meeting, representatives from 44 countries, including Germany, and numerous non-governmental organizations negotiated the material consequences of the Holocaust, some fifty years after the end of the war.¹ The Washington Principles adopted at this conference, sometimes referred to as the Washington Declaration, laid the foundation for systematic provenance research to find cultural assets stolen from the Jews. The individual articles of the Washington Principles specify that collections in cultural institutions should be checked for the presence of Nazi-looted property. Any objects found to have been looted should be returned to the victims or their heirs. In cases where that is not possible, other just and fair solutions should be sought together with the previous owners or their heirs.

At the time of the conference, the end of the East–West conflict made it possible to obtain and evaluate previously inaccessible archival documents and thus to reexamine many unresolved property concerns. After the reunification of Germany, it became necessary to review the restitution process in the former German Democratic Republic.

The Washington Principles are not legally binding under international law but are rather a set of recommendations, primarily intended to serve as a standard for the participating states, so that within their own legal systems they could find ways to solve the problem of restitution of con-

* This review essay has been completed in 2020 and covers resources available at the time. Unless otherwise stated, most of the websites listed here were accessed April 28, 2021.

1. <https://www.state.gov/washington-conference-principles-on-nazi-confiscated-art/>.

fiscated art and cultural assets. The representative of the American delegation at the Washington Conference, Ambassador Stuart E. Eizenstat, expressed the expectation that by formulating these principles, the discovery of Nazi-looted art would no longer be left to chance, because with internationally coordinated efforts, searches could be conducted systematically:

For decades the search for Nazi-confiscated art was the lonely effort of survivors of the Holocaust and their families, aided by organizations devoted to their welfare. In the last few years, it has become a serious international issue... We must use this conference to give new vigor to the work of restitution, so that people who have been deprived of their property for most of their lives can find justice. (Eizenstat 1998, 412)

One year later, in December 1999, the German government affirmed its determination to implement the measures proposed in Washington with the proclamation of the Common Statement of the Federal Republic of Germany.² The Common Statement attests that the German federal government, the Länder (states), and the national associations of local authorities will bring their influence to bear on the relevant institutions so that works of art that have been identified as Nazi-confiscated property and are recognized as the property of specific claimants, are returned to the legitimate former owners or to their heirs. The Common Statement emphasizes that the identification and return of Nazi-looted property is one of the tasks to be fulfilled by public cultural institutions and their sponsors, and it calls upon institutions and individuals to apply the principles and procedures laid down at the Washington Conference.

Over the years, the German government has published various editions of *Guidelines* to the Washington Principles and the Common Statement, and has provided advice for independent provenance research on Nazi-looted cultural assets in public and private LAMs. The latest edition of the *Guidelines*, published in June 2019,³ documents the last twenty years of provenance research and describes the importance of researching Nazi-looted property for those who have not yet begun. The *Provenance Research Manual*⁴—published in 2019 as a joint project of the German Lost Art Foundation in cooperation with museum, library, and provenance research associations—serves as a toolbox for the identification of cultural property seized during the Nazi regime and contains practical tips, case studies, and important addresses, sources, and websites.

2. The Common Statement (Gemeinsame Erklärung) is often referred to as a Joint Declaration, the full title is: Statement of the German Federal Government, the Länder and the National Associations of Local Authorities regarding the tracing and return of Nazi-Confiscated Art, especially with regard to Jewish property.

Deutsches Zentrum für Kulturgutverluste (German Lost Art Foundation), see

<https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Webs/EN/Foundation/Basic-principles/Common-Statement/Index.html>.

3. https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Content/08_Downloads/EN/BasicPrinciples/Guidelines/Guidelines.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=8.

4. https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Content/03_Recherche/EN/Manual.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2.

In response to their self-imposed obligation to implement the Washington Declaration and the Common Statement of December 1999, the German federal government, the states, and local authorities have taken numerous measures to optimize the search for Nazi-looted property and to accelerate the return of property to the owners and their heirs. These efforts have resulted in the development of the Lost Art Database, begun shortly after the Common Statement was adopted, and launched online in April 2000. To this day, it documents lost and found notices of cultural assets that were displaced or relocated as result of the events of World War II and items that were illegally confiscated by the Nazis under threat of persecution. In 2003, an advisory commission, founded jointly by the German federal government, the states, and local authorities, was set up to mediate disputes concerning the return of stolen cultural goods, in particular those of former Jewish ownership.⁵ Later, the Coordination Office for Provenance Research was created in Berlin, primarily for the purpose of allocating funds to LAMs and other institutions in support of provenance research.

On January 1, 2015, the German Lost Art Foundation (Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste),⁶ based in Magdeburg, was established as an umbrella organization of the three initiatives: the database, the advisory commission, and the coordination office. According to its mission, the German Lost Art Foundation is the central point of contact, nationally and internationally, for all matters pertaining to cultural goods that were unlawfully seized. It uses German federal funds to initiate, coordinate, and support projects carried out by LAMs to research cultural assets suspected to be Nazi-confiscated property. The foundation's responsibilities extend to identifying and restituting cultural assets relocated during the war, under Soviet occupation, and in the German Democratic Republic. Since April 2018, the foundation has also been dealing with cultural assets in colonial contexts. World War II

The Washington Declaration was reaffirmed in Germany by the new Act on the Protection of Cultural Property,⁷ which became effective on August 6, 2016. While the law serves to protect cultural objects, combining all regulations on preventing the exodus of cultural property out of Germany, it stipulates explicitly that cultural objects that have been introduced into Germany unlawfully must be returned. Thus, the ban on the export of cultural property abroad does not apply in cases of Nazi-looted property, which has to be restituted. In addition, the law states that due diligence must be performed when buying and selling works that seem suspicious.

5. Advisory Commission on the return of cultural property seized as a result of Nazi persecution, especially Jewish property, https://www.beratende-kommission.de/Webs_BK/EN/Start/Index.html;jsessionid=B70BD2C523F71A-91E8033F20B3363881.m1. The request for intervention may be lodged by the former owners or their heirs, or by institutions or persons currently in possession of the cultural asset. The prerequisite for intervention by the commission is the agreement of both sides to enter into mediation with the commission, which may result in a recommendation for action.

6. <https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Webs/EN/Foundation/Tasks/Index.html>.

7. http://www.kulturgutschutz-deutschland.de/EN/EverythingAboutTheProtectionOfCulturalProperty/TheActOn-TheProtectionOfCulturalProperty/theactonthe protectionofculturalproperty_node.html.

An important consequence of the Washington Conference was the Conference on Holocaust Era Assets,⁸ held in Prague in June 2009. While it focused on Nazi-looted cultural objects, many other issues relating to the Holocaust were discussed, including the welfare of Holocaust survivors; ownership of immovable property; Jewish cemeteries and burial sites; Judaica and Jewish cultural assets; archival materials; education, remembrance, and research; and memorial sites. The Terezín Declaration, a joint statement adopted by the delegations of 46 participating countries, affirmed support for the implementation of the Washington principles. The signatories urged “all stakeholders to ensure that their legal systems ... facilitate just and fair solutions with respect to Nazi-confiscated and looted art” and to make certain that “claims to recover such art were resolved expeditiously” (Berman 2010). They stressed the importance of supporting intensified and systematic provenance research.

Looking back and evaluating the meaning of the Terezín Declaration at the international academic conference held in Prague in 2009, Ambassador Eisenstadt, who again led the American delegation, acknowledged the important advances in provenance research and awareness of Nazi-looted property since the implementation of the Washington Principles. At the same time, he emphasized the singular meaning of the Terezín Declaration as a reassertion that the Washington Principles included art and cultural objects as Nazi-looted property and placed special emphasis on provenance research (Eizenstat and Yazdgerdi 2019, 21–22). The Terezín Declaration also recognized that restitution could not be accomplished without knowledge of potentially looted art and cultural property and thus stressed the importance of encouraging and supporting all efforts to identify and catalog the items in question found in cultural institutions and other repositories.

The general public became aware of the subject of provenance research mainly as a consequence of two events. First was the spectacular 2012 discovery of the Gurlitt trove, a large collection of paintings suspected of being looted art.⁹ Second was the 2014 feature film *The Monuments Men*, directed by George Clooney,¹⁰ which describes the history of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives program (MFAA), established by the Civil Affairs and Military Government sections of the Allied Armies. Participants of an international symposium held in Berlin in November 2018, on the twentieth anniversary of the Washington Conference, declared that the Washington Principles had been successfully implemented, and that provenance research had become widely recognized as a critical subject, both by the public and by the professional world.¹¹

8. <http://holocausteraassets.eu/program/conference-proceedings/declarations>.

9. For an up-to-date overview of the Gurlitt case, see <https://www.lootedart.com/R404QY486811>.

10. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2177771/>, accessed March 20, 2022.

11. https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Content/01_Stiftung/DE/Veranstaltungsnachlese/2018/2018-11-26_Fachkonferenz-20-Jahre-Washingtoner-Prinzipien-Wege-in-die-Zukunft.html.

This essay describes three essential resources for provenance research of Nazi-looted cultural objects. Two are freely accessible online research guides: the Lost Art Database and the *Handbook on Judaica Provenance Research: Ceremonial Objects*. The third is a new book by Dora Osborne, *What Remains: The Post-Holocaust Archive in German Memory Culture*. At present, as cultural institutions are conducting provenance research with increasing vigor, researchers face enormous difficulties in finding adequate information. The titles discussed here provide reliable assistance in the selection and use of relevant and up-to-date resources.¹²

1. LOST ART DATABASE

On April 10, 2000, the online Lost Art Database was launched to replace printed indexes of lost objects in archives, libraries, and museums.¹³ The database contains information on cultural objects that were displaced or relocated as a result of Nazi persecution or the events of World War II. It is assumed that items once owned by Jews were illegally confiscated by the Nazis under threat of persecution. Found objects with gaps in their provenance are treated as Nazi-looted artifacts because it is difficult or impossible to determine whether the loss resulted from the war or from National Socialist persecution. Objects under suspicion of being Nazi-looted artifacts and those for which unlawful theft could not be ruled out are also included in the Lost Art Database (Figure 1). Since January 1, 2015, the database has operated trilingually in German, English, and Russian, in accordance with the foundation's general principles for the registration and deletion of reports in the Lost Art Database.¹⁴ The database not only serves as a cumulative register of lost objects but also promotes fair and just restitution in confirmed cases of Nazi-looted property, by connecting previous owners or their heirs with current

The screenshot shows the search results for a search request in the Lost Art Database. The page has a breadcrumb trail: Start > Lost Art-Database > Search. Below this is the title 'Encyclopedia Judaica' and a sub-header 'Search request - details'. A table lists the following information:

Lost Art-ID	477144
Permalink	http://www.lostart.de/EN/Verlust/477144
Author	Klatzkin
Title	Encyclopedia Judaica
Type of object	Book
group of reported objects	Library objects
Description	Judaica; 10 Bd.
entry published since	26. September 2013

Below the table is a 'Contact' section with the following information:

Contact
 DGZ-Ring 12
 13086 Berlin
 Germany
 Phone: +49 (0) 30 18 7030 0
 Fax: +49 (0) 30 18 7030 1140
poststelle@badv.bund.de; Kunst-BRUEG-Archiv@badv.bund.de
 homepage: [external link](#)

Figure 1. Search request, book collection of Dr. Kurt Stavenhagen from Frankfurt am Main, confiscated by the Security Police 1944 in the Port of Amsterdam. Lost Art Database, <https://www.lostart.de/de/Verlust/477365>

12. Not discussed here is the Central Registry of Information on Looted Cultural Property 1933–1945 database (<https://lootedart.com>). Operating under the auspices of the European Association for Jewish Studies, it is a repository of information on Nazi looting as well as on contemporary efforts to research and resolve outstanding issues.

13. <https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Webs/EN/Databases/Lost-Art/Index.html>.

14. General principles are at: http://www.lostart.de/Content/04_Datenbank/EN/Grundsaeetze.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=17.

owners. A simple reporting procedure has been established in the database to facilitate access for Holocaust victims and their descendants and for other interested parties such as researchers, journalists, and lawyers.

The database contains two main parts: a file of objects sought by original owners and a file of objects found, whose provenance is dubious. The first file supports searches for cultural objects that were lost to public institutions, private institutions, or individuals as a result of Nazi rule and World War II. New search requests are made via a form on the site. Owners or custodians of cultural assets whose provenance is uncertain or incomplete can search for original owners here, regardless of whether the objects have been sought elsewhere.

Bibliotheca Judaica - Hebraica - Rabbinica Pinczower - Porges

Found-object report - details	
Lost Art-ID	273513
Permalink	http://www.lostart.de/EN/Fund/273513
Editor	Harrassowitz
Title	Bibliotheca Judaica - Hebraica - Rabbinica Pinczower - Porges
Place of publication	Leipzig
Date of publication	1931/1932
Type of object	Book
group of reported objects	Library objects
Signature	IKG 22. 4
Description	Bücher-Katalog 431-435
Holding	Sammlung Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (IKG) (vormals "Stürmer"-Bibliothek / Sl. Julius Streicher)
Provenance	Buchhandlung & Buchbinderei / J. Bulka / Nürnberg / Zufuhrstr. 12 / Tel. 61306 (Stempel)
Restitution	yes
Circumstances of	Nürnberg (Dauerleihaabe der Israelitischen

Figure 2. Found-object report, a collection of 8,000 books found after the war in the offices of the antisemitic newspaper *Der Stürmer* and restituted to the Jewish community in Nürnberg. The Jewish community then offered it to the City Library of Nürnberg on permanent loan. Lost Art Database, <https://www.lostart.de/de/Fund/273513>

In 2020, the archive contained more than 170,500 objects described in detail and several million summarized descriptions of objects, registered either as search requests or found-object reports from 1,160 domestic and foreign institutions and individuals.¹⁵ On average, the site gets about 220,000 monthly page views and 25,000 visits. Over the years, there has been a steadily increasing commitment by cultural institutions in Germany to review their holdings and to iden-

In the file of found-object reports, the recorded cultural objects are known to have been illegally confiscated or relocated due to the war or to have uncertain or incomplete provenance, which may indicate an unlawful dispossession or a war-related relocation. Individuals or institutions that have suffered a loss of this kind can search here to discover whether a particular cultural object has been reported (Figure 2).

Entries in the database may be browsed by country and then by institution or individual. Descriptions are based solely on information provided by users and are checked only to ensure that they are comprehensible. Entering a cultural object or a collection into the database does by no means establish that it is Nazi-looted art.

15. Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste, 2000 bis 2020. 20 Jahre internationale Transparenz durch Lost Art, see: http://www.lostart.de/Content/01_LostArt_Meldungen/2020-04-10_Wuerdigung20JahreLostArt.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3 (German).

tify objects with unclear provenance. To date, 781 institutions have registered with the Lost Art Database, of which 186 reported a total of 45,458 objects with provenance gaps; an additional 141 individuals have posted 198 found objects. The database contains search requests from Italy, Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine, as well as found-object reports from Finland, Israel, Luxembourg, Austria, and Switzerland. In autumn 2013, the Lost Art Database was central in establishing national and international transparency for the objects in the Gurlitt collection, under suspicion of being Nazi-looted art.

A third module of the database, called Provenance Research,¹⁶ contains information obtained through the evaluation of primary and secondary sources and specialized literature. Links are provided to numerous other databases, including the Holocaust-Era Assets Records at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA);¹⁷ the joint American-German project, German Sales 1930–1945: Art Works, Art Markets and Cultural Policy;¹⁸ and the Nazi-Era Provenance Internet Portal Project.¹⁹

In January 2020, a new research database called Proveana was launched to publicize the results of research projects funded by the Lost Art Foundation.²⁰ Proveana is intended to provide national and international transparency and to promote fair and just solutions for restituting Nazi-looted cultural assets. Thematically broader than the Lost Art Database, Proveana contains four research areas: cultural objects confiscated by the Nazis (Nazi-looted art); cultural objects relocated due to the war (war booty); cultural objects confiscated in the Soviet occupied zone and in the German Democratic Republic; and cultural assets and collections from colonial contexts. While the database may be freely searched for information, the research reports themselves, which are available as PDF documents, are accessible only to users who have registered with the foundation and have a legitimate interest.

Over the years, many objects identified as Nazi-looted art in the Lost Art Database have been successfully restituted but these represent only a small fraction of the total. Because cases are often negotiated and closed privately, the foundation does not publish statistics.

16. <https://www.lostaart.de/Webs/EN/Provenienz/Index.html>.

17. <https://www.archives.gov/research/holocaust>.

18. https://www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/Englisch/wir/projekt_germansales.html.

19. <http://www.nepip.org>.

20. www.proveana.de/en.

2. HANDBOOK ON JUDAICA PROVENANCE RESEARCH: CEREMONIAL OBJECTS

The idea for this online handbook, written by Julie-Marthe Cohen, Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek, and Ruth Jolanda Weinberger (2018),²¹ emerged during preparations for the Terezín Declaration.²² The handbook provides support in tracking down stolen or lost Judaica objects whose traces disappeared in the aftermath of World War II and is intended primarily for museum and auction house staff, researchers, collectors, and lawyers. A fundamental resource that is cited frequently is the *Tentative List of Jewish Cultural Treasures in Axis-Occupied Countries* (Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction 1946), documenting Judaica collections in prewar Europe.²³ In the handbook, the term “Judaica” refers to Jewish ritual objects only; manuscripts, books, and archival materials related to Jewish culture are explicitly excluded. The authors intend to devote a future publication to these materials (Cohen 2021).²⁴

The handbook covers classical provenance research—tracing an object in hand to its original owner—and research to establish the location of a lost object. This second type of research is called “quovadience,” a term coined by Cohen and Heimann-Jelinek while working on their publication *Neglected Witnesses: The Fate of Jewish Ceremonial Objects During the Second World War and After* (2011). This new term seems appropriate for the second category of research, where ownership of the object is known, but not the location, which means “starting from much less information” (Brown 2017). Part One is a historical overview of prewar Judaica museum collections and the Nazi agencies that engaged in looting them. It presents in detail the dispersion of Jewish ceremonial objects in the West after World War II and describes the establishment and the role of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc. and other agencies involved in this process. The redistribution of ceremonial objects, books, manuscripts, and Torah scrolls is documented with supporting lists and illustrations. The next section summarizes the dispersion of Jewish ceremonial objects in the East, carried out by Soviet trophy brigades or resulting from postwar nationalization. While the trophy brigades’ original intent was to search for cultural objects as reparations for the enormous losses of the Soviet Union, objects were later removed indiscriminately, no matter whether they were Nazi loot from Jews or from other victims of the Nazi regime. The first part concludes with a brief examination of the fate of Judaica in individual countries of the East after World War II.

21. The book is available in electronic open access format: <http://art.claimscon.org/wp-content/uploads//2018/02/Judaica-Handbook-2.20.2018.pdf>.

22. <https://www.state.gov/prague-holocaust-era-assets-conference-terezin-declaration>.

23. Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction. 1948 (also available online at <http://forms.claimscon.org/Judaica/appendixA.pdf>).

24. The handbook was preceded by the *Descriptive Catalog of Looted Judaica* (<http://art.claimscon.org/home-new/looted-art-cultural-property-initiative/judaica/descriptive-catalogue-of-looted-judaica>). Published online by the Claims Conference in 2009 and updated in 2016, the *Descriptive Catalog* provided a comprehensive summary of the history of Nazi looting of Judaica and of postwar Judaica restitution efforts, arranged by country. For a comprehensive international study about legal basis and practice of restitution concerning Nazi-looted art, see Schnabel and Tatzkow 2007.

The second part deals with Judaica objects and is especially intended for those who are not familiar with this type of material culture. It includes a detailed typology of Judaica and provides tools for object identification based on inscriptions, dates, material, style, size, hallmarks, and old labels—all indicators of the origin of the objects in question. The text is generously illustrated to familiarize researchers with all types and forms of Jewish ceremonial art.

Part Three includes a guide to archival research on Jewish ceremonial objects, explaining how provenance and location can be established based on primary-source materials. It reviews various types of archives, including those in museums and communities, as well as an extensive list of archival resources of Nazi organizations and plundering agencies, the Allied Forces, and Jewish organizations. Special attention is given to the US National Archives online database of World War II documents.

Part Four contains a one-page description of Judaica and online databases, compiled by the Claims Conference, and a spreadsheet of Judaica objects in online databases of looted art. Entries are listed alphabetically by country and are based on an analysis from 2016, thus they are not up to date. Some digitized exhibition catalogs are also listed.

Various appendices provide organizational charts of Nazi departments, the fate of single museum collections, and the story of individual objects. Appendix B for Part Three is a 50-page overview of Fold 3, an important and rich database that is difficult to use. Fold 3 contains the records of the Office of Military Government for Germany, U.S., and of the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force, which can be accessed freely online.²⁵ A selected bibliography and a list of abbreviations conclude the handbook.

The publication of the handbook fills an important gap in provenance research, as only a few experts have knowledge of this specialized field of applied arts. Researching the origins of Jewish ritual art is particularly difficult, as most of the objects, usually kept in private homes, do not have the outstanding significance or value of well-known paintings or sculptures. The handbook offers indispensable support in the clarification of ownership structure, thus promoting investigations that are relevant for Jewish museums as well.

The handbook is of particular value to provenance research in Germany. There is a high probability that Jewish ritual objects held in German museums today were forcibly dislocated or confiscated between 1933 and 1945. German museums are increasingly challenged by calls to reappraise their collections, partly as a result of international debates on cultural property and restitution. In order to facilitate and enhance provenance research focusing on Judaica, a German translation of the handbook was financed by the Federal Republic of Germany in 2019. Systematic knowledge of Jewish objects, collectors, and dealer networks is not yet sufficiently available.

25. https://go.fold3.com/holocaust_art.

3. BOOK REVIEW: *WHAT REMAINS: THE POST-HOLOCAUST ARCHIVE IN GERMAN MEMORY CULTURE*, BY DORA OSBORNE (2020)

The Nazi past and the function of archives are addressed from a completely different point of view in Dora Osborne's 2020 book, *What Remains: The Post-Holocaust Archive in German Memory Culture*. The book investigates how German artists relate to the material evidence of the Holocaust or its traces (see also Osborne 2015). With an epistemological, philosophical, and aesthetic approach, Osborne attributes a metaphysical significance to the term "archive" seeing it as a "broadly defined material legacy" that stands for all materials, "extending from the bureaucratic documents produced by the Nazi regime to the ash that remains at the sites of the concentration camps" (Osborne 2020, 10). The book does not focus on archives as institutions or as resources of traditional historiographic pursuit but instead regards archives as part of the discourse of memory. The book examines the manifold ways in which archival material, in the metaphysical sense, is addressed and represented in German memory culture across different media and genres. It views memory culture, specifically of National Socialism and the Holocaust, as a concept that itself must be the subject of theoretical reflection. Thus, the book analyzes how the use of archival materials in the creation of art objects has shaped German memory politics.

Osborne asserts that with increasing distance in time from the historical events, and with the disappearance of contemporary witnesses who can deliver their testimonies, there is an "archival turn" in works of art that confront the Nazi past.²⁶ Artists must resort to archives, documents, and, most importantly, visual material, to better understand the traumatic events. In this context, the archival turn in Holocaust memory gains great significance for German culture and memory politics.

In the first chapter, Osborne describes what she calls the post-Holocaust archive. Unlike Holocaust archives, which contain the remaining material traces of the Holocaust, the post-Holocaust archive encompasses the symbolic and ethical status of the archive after Auschwitz. It does not represent specific content, i.e. exclusively the documents being material remnants of the Holocaust, but rather reflects the process of dealing with the traces of the Holocaust. With respect to the German culture of remembrance, Osborne argues that memory is shaped by objects of art, which themselves are the results of exploring archives. In this way, memory is a constant process and is influenced by artistic practice. Osborne is interested in the aesthetic impacts of art and its ability to evoke the memory of the Nazi past in a way that can be sensually experienced. Consistent with Jacques Derrida's seminal book on archival theory, *Archive Fever*,²⁷ Osborne (19–20) adopts the notion that "Modern memory is above all, archival" and espouses the theory of Aleida Assmann that archives represent two forms of memory, *Speichergedächtnis* (storage memory) and *Funktionsgedächtnis* (functional memory). While storage memory represents the repository

26. Throughout the book Osborne uses the German terms "Aufarbeitung" (processing), "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" (coming to terms with the past) and "Erinnerungskultur" (culture of remembrance).

27. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, translated by Eric Prenowitz, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

of the surviving material of a particular era, functional memory is the archival material that is circulated and displayed and becomes part of the cultural and historical narrative of the society.

In the following three chapters, Osborne examines in great detail various artistic expressions of the German culture of remembrance, namely memorial projects, documentary films, theatrical works, and prose narratives. She illustrates how the focus of individual projects has changed over the past few decades from works of art as purely aesthetic to artistic endeavors based on archival content (for example, artist Guenther Demnig's Stolpersteine: stumbling stones made

of small brass blocks for individual victims of the Nazi regime, installed in the street in front of victims' last known address; Figure 3). By analyzing individual artistic expressions in depth, she demonstrates the double meaning of the archival turn. On the one hand, the use of archives becomes a prerequisite for artists who wish to convey the historical evidence of the Holocaust through their works. On the other hand, their resulting projects often lead to the creation of a new archive in which the material and immaterial results of the respective projects are collected.

Figure 3. Stumbling stones for Bertha Arnholz and Hugo Arnholz, Halle (Saale), Germany. Credit: Reise Reise. Wikimedia Commons contributors, "File:Halle Stolpersteine Am Güterbahnhof 1.jpg," Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository

Reiterating the claim that witness testimony plays an essential role in remembering and commemorating the Holocaust, Osborne adopts the belief of many scholars—including Ruth Klüger, a German-Jewish Holocaust survivor and professor of German studies—that personal testimony will persist after the last witnesses are gone. Projects such as the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University, and the USC Shoah Foundation (Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation) founded by Steven Spielberg, together containing tens of thousands of video testimonies of Holocaust survivors, demonstrate the growing understanding of the importance of Holocaust witness testimony as well as the efforts to ensure that these memories are preserved and made widely available. The archive of witness testimony itself becomes a significant part of the post-Holocaust archive.



Figure 4. Candles placed by neighbors on existing Stumbling Stones, demonstrating how these objects serve for active participation in commemorating the Kristallnacht events, November 9, 1938. Image: Rachel Heuberger, Frankfurt am Main, November 9, 2020

Osborne believes that the archival turn fulfills an irreplaceable function that secures Holocaust memory in the post-witness era. The archives, with their countless sources still to be examined, enable artists to serve as guarantees that the memory of the Holocaust will remain alive in the future. Although her book is not meant to explore historical and educational aspects of confronting the Nazi past Osborne reaches the same conclusion as historians, Jewish studies researchers, and educators: that the use of archives plays a crucial role for memory culture even in the realm of art objects. By providing access to primary resources, archives will maintain their indispensable function as the basis for future memory of the Holocaust. At the same time, Osborne raises awareness that archives are not created by chance but are the result of individual decisions. By definition, archives reflect what is deemed worthy of preservation and what is not (“exercising violence,” in Osborne’s formulation). With her elaborate theoretical approach, Osborne sensitizes readers to the fact that sources must always be evaluated (Figure 4).

Osborne’s argument on the increasing importance of archival work—the archival turn in German memory culture—finds its latest expression in the decision by the German government to choose the artist Maria Eichhorn to represent Germany at the Venice Biennale in 2022.²⁸ Eichhorn is known for her focus on the consequences of the National Socialist regime in German society up to the present day. In 2017 she established the Rose Valland Institute, an independent, interdisciplinary artistic project to research and document the expropriation of property formerly owned by Europe’s Jewish population and the ongoing impact of those confiscations.

The struggle to cope with the Nazi past and the Holocaust includes the ongoing process of researching and establishing historical facticity, which serves as the basis for the material compensation of victims and lays the foundation for the creation of a culture of remembrance. Engagement with Holocaust memory and the Nazi past in all its complexity has not declined over the years; on the contrary, it has gained increasing significance and has produced a constantly growing number of resources of all kinds. The flood of information, originating in the ongoing digitization of collections and the steadily growing number of relevant databases, poses challenges for researchers that can only be met with suitable tools like the three resources presented here.

28. <https://www.ifa.de/en/exhibitions/german-pavilion-venice-biennale/>.

While the Lost Art Database documents Nazi-looted cultural assets and serves as a guide to objects with uncertain provenance, the *Handbook on Judaica Provenance Research* presents a methodology developed to facilitate the identification of Jewish ceremonial objects. It is not by chance that the focus of both resources is art objects and not books (although the Lost Art Database does contain some book collections): the provenance of printed material, with the exception of incunabula, is far more difficult to establish than that of art objects. Osborne's book, on the other hand, analyzes the archival turn in German memory culture, providing a historical and theoretical setting for confronting the Nazi past.

With direct witness testimony coming to an end, archives of all kinds play a vital role in preserving the past, while at the same time securing the existence and futurity of cultural institutions. The initiatives and analysis presented here are encouraging signs that the Holocaust will not be forgotten by future generations.

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