

# Restitution Summit: Handout for German Team

## Ukraine Museum Refuses to Return Looted German Paintings

The management of a Ukrainian art museum on Saturday, Nov. 8, 2008 refused to return to Germany dozens of paintings brought to the Soviet Union as a result of World War II.



### As the Red Army swept across Germany to Berlin, artworks went missing on the way

Officials from the Simferopol Art Museum in south Ukraine told Germany's Foreign Ministry the museum "had no plans to give up" the 87 paintings thought originally to have belonged to the Suermondt-Ludwig Art Museum in the German city of Aachen, a Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said.

A pair of Bavarian tourists photographed the paintings during a 2007 visit to Ukraine's Crimea province and sent copies of the shots to the

Aachen museum after finding the paintings listed as "whereabouts unknown" on the Aachen museum Web site.

The art works, mostly by Western European artists, had been transferred from Aachen to the German city of Meissen for safekeeping in 1942 and had been thought to have been lost or destroyed during the later Allied invasion of Germany.

According to the tourist, one painting featured an image of the inner court of Nuremberg's St. Lorenz Church and a still-legible German inscription on the frame identifying the work as part of the Aachen collection.

Meissen was in the Soviet zone of control during Allied occupation of Germany.

"It is explicit, here (in the Simferopol museum) are on display 87 paintings from Aachen's Suermondt-Ludwig Museum," said Philip Becker, curator of the museum's current "Schattengalerie" exhibition.

### Disputed paintings at center of ownership row

Text descriptions accompanying the exhibition in Ukraine gave the impression that the current ownership of the paintings had been resolved on the government level.

Becker said he was surprised to find out about the location of the art works a year after the Ukrainian exhibit began.

"The most important thing is to know where the paintings are, that they exist and that they are in good condition," Becker said.

Simferopol's spokeswoman told reporters the museum had no intention of returning the paintings.

The Ukrainian museum's management reportedly justified its intention not to give up the paintings, citing a Ukrainian law giving people or organizations having suffered property damage during the German invasion of the Soviet Union during WWII legal title to German property captured by Red Army troops in later stages of the war.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Ukraine Museum Refuses to Return Looted Art Works." *Deutsche Welle*, 8 November, 2008. DW. Web. 25 August 2015.



