

**REPORT ON *THE FINAL REPORT TO THE ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY BY THE HUNT MUSEUM EVALUATION GROUP, JUNE, 2006.***

On January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004 Dr. Shimon Samuels, of the European Office of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Paris sent an open letter to Mary McAleese, President of the Republic of Ireland, requesting that she retract the “Irish Museum of the Year Award” which had recently been given to the Hunt Museum in Limerick. In the letter, which was also made public in a press release, Dr. Samuels alleged that Mr. and Mrs. John Hunt, both deceased, whose collections form the core of the museum, had been suspected of being German spies in 1940, that they had had “close personal ties with the head of the Irish Nazi Party (NSDP-AO)” and that they had done business with “notorious dealers in art looted by the Nazis,” the implication being that objects in the Hunt Museum might have been confiscated from Holocaust victims. Dr. Samuels asked that “the entire holdings of the Museum as also all items sold by the Hunts to other collections” be placed on the Internet so that claims could be made, and that the Irish government “enunciate a new transparency in regard to its own wartime neutrality by sponsoring a full and independent investigation into the role of John and Gertrude Hunt.”<sup>1</sup>

The only documentation for the allegations provided in the letter was a reference to a review of *The Hunt Museum Essential Guide* by art-historian Erin Gibbons published in the Spring 2003 issue of the *Irish Arts Review*. In the review Ms. Gibbons had “alluded to the extensive pre-war Nazi connections of John Hunt and Gertrude, his German born

wife.” Dr. Samuels also mentioned “further sources” but these were not specified. No object in the museum was identified as having been looted, nor did the Samuels letter mention any collections, public or private, that might have been victimized.

It is now clear that the basis for the allegation of trading with Nazi dealers was a wartime intelligence file on the Hunts held in an Irish Military Archive. The file contains three letters to Mr. and Mrs. Hunt from the art dealer Alexander von Frey, who is known to have been involved in the trading of confiscated art during World War II, and several other documents. I will analyze the content of that file below. The sources for the allegations of espionage and ties to the Irish Nazi Party leader have not been established.

Ms. Gibbons stated to the press on 13 February, 2004<sup>2</sup> that she had “no evidence to suggest that any of the items in the museum were looted.” She did not refer specifically to the Military Archives file, but said that she had “made a definite link between the Hunts and two art dealers named on Nazi Holocaust files in America,” who, in turn, were linked to other major Nazi dealers. Her evidence for the latter statement clearly came from post-war Allied reports on Nazi looting and principally from the index of the “OSS Final Report of the Art Looting Investigation Unit” which has been widely published.<sup>3</sup> The list, which contains hundreds of names, some innocent and some not, cannot be considered definitive: it is rather a finding aid for the more complete documents prepared by the post-war investigators, none of which contains any reference to the Hunts.<sup>4</sup> In these documents von Frey is indeed linked to other dealers who trafficked in looted art, but they are not, in turn, linked to the Hunts. Ms. Gibbons, perhaps aware of this, stated

further, that she had to “do further research to discover the level at which they (the Hunts) were operating.” In the same article she said that she had been in contact with the Simon Wiesenthal Center and that she felt “a moral imperative” to go public on the issue.

Ms. Gibbons and Dr. Samuels also seem to have drawn on an unpublished essay written by Judith Hill for the Museum in 1998. This essay, which was revised a number of times, had been rejected for publication by the Museum on grounds of inaccuracy and length. I was sent three versions by the Hunt Museum.

In the original version of the essay, dated May, 1998, Ms. Hill wrote as follows:

“ Private collectors such as William Randolph Hearst, Robert von Hirsch, the Frankfurt businessman, Burrell, and on a smaller scale, Philip Nelson in Liverpool were encouraged by low prices, especially depressed between 1931 and 1935, although prices would mount in the fifties and increase exponentially in the 1960’s. Supplies of art objects were good in a period when the market was still relatively small and political events released art from collections. Here the Hunt’s backgrounds gave them advantages. The Irish connection encouraged them to attend the auctions of Protestant estates, at which, through ignorance, demoralization or haste to sell, the prices were extremely low. At a time when export restrictions were not rigorously enforced, their purchases were easily exported and the Hunts excited a certain resentment in London circles for their relatively easy profits. The prospect of war precipitated sales in Europe, and after

the war German families might sell heirlooms for much needed income. Here Gertrude's knowledge came in useful. Evidence that Gertrude retained a taste and an eye for *Schatzkammer* pieces can be found in two seventeenth century items in the Hunt collection—the sea green tankard with gilded mounts and a lapis lazuli tazza. Widescale Nazi thefts and the looting endemic in wars exacerbated the hazards of art dealing and further created opportunities for the unscrupulous by blurring provenance and leading to ambiguous ownership; this too coloured the environment in which art changed hands in the mid-twentieth century.

The Hunts fitted seamlessly into this world. While Hunt could explain to Philip Nelson how he had acquired what he believed to be a royal Gothic ring for a price which indicated that those bidding against him had not noticed the tiny rose and initial on the bezel...etc”

In a second version of the essay, dated June 1998, the opening sentence of this paragraph is expanded to give more detail on prices and sales. A new paragraph, starting at “Supplies of art objects” has been edited and reference to an “extended visit to Germany” by the Hunts in the late forties is added.<sup>5</sup> The rest remained the same. In a third, undated, version, typed in a different font, the lines below have been completely deleted. In several newspapers the following sentences were quoted out of context and in a different format:

“Wide scale Nazi thefts and the looting endemic in wars exacerbated the hazards of art dealing, causing many items to lose provenance: this too coloured the environment in which art changed hands in the mid-twentieth century. The Hunts fitted seamlessly into this world.”<sup>6</sup>

In April 2004, in a letter published in the *Limerick Leader*, Ms Hill declared that alterations had been made to her essay without her knowledge and permission. She protested the publication of the excerpt from her essay, noting that “two separate paragraphs of my essay were put together and quoted to give a misleading impression of my account of the Hunt’s activities” and protesting “the misleading impression that I was focusing on the Hunts as dealers in looted European art, whereas I only included the reference to looted art as background to the European art market in which they operated at the time.” She said that she did not investigate “whether the Hunts were directly involved in dealing with illegally acquired objects” and that she had “no proof that this was the case.” She also noted that earlier radio broadcasts saying that her essay had stated that the Hunts were Nazis and that they had had relationships with known Nazis were incorrect, declaring that “At no point did I state that John and Gertrude Hunt were Nazis. At no point in my essay did I state that John and Gertrude Hunt had relationships with known Nazis.” Examination of all three versions of her essay confirms these statements.

As far as is known, the Wiesenthal Center, did not, prior to the publication of the allegations, reveal the contents of the Military File to, or consult with, the Director and

Board of the Hunt Museum, the Hunt Family, any agencies of the Irish government, any government affected by Nazi looting in World War II, or any international or national agencies, private or public, which specialize in the tracing and restitution of works of art displaced in the Holocaust era.

The publication of the allegations received major coverage in the Irish press. Dr. Samuels expanded on the contents of the January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004 letter in a number of print and radio interviews, asserting that he could “go so far as saying that they (the Hunts) were Nazis.” (Morning Ireland, 10/02/ 2004) and challenged a proposed investigative committee as follows: “ if the findings of the committee include any findings that we already have then that will show that there has been indeed transparency. If the findings do not include ours then in that case that will point to some type of inefficiency or lack of transparency on the part of the documents given to the review board.” (RTE RADIO I, 22/02/04) Both the original letter and this statement, which Dr. Samuels would repeat several times, engendered passionate speculation, accusations and denials from the Irish arts community, during which time possible sources for the information continued to be suggested, but no tangible documentation was produced. The chairman of the museum board and the Hunt family immediately denied the accusations, but stated publicly that they would retribute any works of art in the collection which could be shown to be Holocaust-era loot. <sup>7</sup> On February 20<sup>th</sup>, Virginia Teehan, director of the museum, declared that the Museum had begun a process of investigation based on “best international museum practice as outlined in various international declarations, including the UNESCO-endorsed International Council of Museums code of ethics.” <sup>8</sup>

In late February, 2004, an expert panel was appointed to investigate the allegations.<sup>9</sup> This panel, which was to be funded by the Museum itself, was soon dissolved as it was felt that being funded by the Museum would cast doubt upon its objectivity. A new Evaluation Group was eventually formed, this time funded by the Irish government and administered by the Royal Irish Academy. The new panel did not have representatives of either the Hunt Museum or the Wiesenthal Center.<sup>10</sup> It did include Ms. Helen Wechsler of the American Association of Museums, who, it was felt, could advise the Hunt Museum on current international practice in dealing with Holocaust era issues, which were new to the Irish museum community. The panel was also advised by Nancy Yeide of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, who is a recognized expert in the field of Holocaust Era provenance research. The Group began work in May 2005.

In its Terms of Reference<sup>11</sup> the Evaluation Group, was required to oversee and advise on the preparation and publication on the internet of a website which would include images and all known provenance information and documentation related to the objects in the Hunt Museum. Priority was to be given to objects thought to have been acquired between 1933 and 1945. In addition, any Hunt family files relating to the collection were to be examined by an independent expert. A meeting was to be arranged with representatives of the Wiesenthal Center to examine the documentation they had to support their allegations, which also was to be evaluated by an independent expert. Findings were to be shared with other museums that had objects formerly belonging to

the Hunts, and the Museum was to place on the web “all documents which have a material bearing on the matters enquired into.”

An Interim Report by the Evaluation Group was published in February, 2006. The Report noted that the website project had been completed by late October 2005 and that specialized provenance research, using guidelines set by the American Association of Museums, which have become the international standard, had begun. As is the international norm in such cases, this work was carried out by the Museum itself, principally by the Director, Virginia Teehan, assisted by a trained archivist and a web-designer, both hired for the purpose. The Interim report does not mention any meeting between the representatives of the Simon Wiesenthal Center and the Museum. Shortly after the announcement that the website was up, Dr. Samuels stated to the *Irish Times* that he did not have confidence in the independence of the Evaluation Group and therefore would continue to withhold the evidence in his possession for the allegations made against the Museum, once again emphasizing that “If this information does not appear on the Hunt Museum’s website and if it is not included in the Royal Academy of Ireland’s final report, then we will go public with it.” Dr. Samuels also said that he was concerned about the time being spent on the report, given that many of those intimately concerned were now very elderly. He did not identify any particular individuals or collections. In the same article Dr. Michael Ryan, Secretary of the Evaluation Group, urged anyone with information on the collection to come forward, noting that the museum “was entitled to know the basis of the allegations against it.” As far as is known, no one did so. On Nov. 25, 2005, Dr. Ryan wrote to Dr. Samuels to ask if he



could identify any particular claimants among those “intimately concerned.” Dr. Samuels did not reply to this request.

It is clear that a number individuals with connections to the Museum and the investigation were, by the time of the Interim Report, aware of the existence and perhaps of the contents of the Military Archive file, but for reasons that are attributable to intra-Irish politics, did not reveal this knowledge. The Evaluation Group, once aware of the file, seems to have decided that it could be ignored for purposes of the Final report as not being relevant to the objects in the museum, but only to the Hunt’s personal histories, which they declared to be a separate issue. The fact that, inexplicably, the Wiesenthal Center continued to conceal the existence of the file, certainly encouraged this mistaken point of view.

Most, if not all, of the continuing research seems, once again, to have been carried out by Museum Director Teehan, a trained archivist, but not an expert on Nazism, refugees, espionage or looted art. Ms. Teehan did consult experts on these issues at the National Archives in Washington, DC, which contains vast quantities of relevant Axis and Allied files, and at the Public Record Office in London. She made inquiries of many other art world and government sources, none of which produced information that confirmed the allegations of dealing in confiscated works of art, Nazi party membership or espionage by the Hunts. Nor is there, so far, any documentation of wartime contact with Adolf Mahr,<sup>12</sup> who left Ireland permanently in 1939, before the Hunts settled there. I have myself reviewed many of the records Ms. Teehan consulted and find her work thorough and her

conclusions accurate. For its part, the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, renowned for its Nazi tracing ability, did not, to my knowledge, offer any research assistance or provide any documentation regarding the possible Nazi affiliation of the Hunts from its dossiers, and did not respond to various requests for information sent from the Evaluation Group.

The results of the investigation were made public at a seminar for the Irish museum community on June 19, 2006 in Dublin.<sup>13</sup> It is unfortunate that the Evaluation Group chose not to invite any representatives of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre to participate in the seminar, where they would have been expected to discuss their methodology and the basis of their allegations regarding the Museum. During the course of the seminar the existence of the Military Archive file was finally made known to the public, not by one of the presenters, but by a member of the audience: Mr. Eamonn Kelly. This dramatic revelation renewed media interest in the case and most of the information in the file was soon published. On June 21, the Wiesenthal Centre, in a press release, also finally disclosed that the Military Archive file had been the principal source of its allegations and Dr. Samuels gave his version of its contents. As he had previously stated he would do, he now condemned the Evaluation Group for not including the file in its Report.

The Wiesenthal Centre press release also contained a list of other complaints and accusations: Samuels pointed out that private files held by the Hunt Family, which the family had declared not to be relevant to the collection, should be examined. He suggested that dealer's records should have been searched but did not specify which dealers. He cast doubt upon the objectivity of Ms. Teehan's research, accused her of

carrying on a pro-Museum campaign, and complained that Ms. Gibbons had been excluded from the investigation. He also alleged that individuals associated with the Hunt Museum had seen the file but not revealed its contents to the Evaluation Group. Dr. Samuels therefore demanded that a public statement be made “as to whether any agents, representatives or persons acting on behalf of the Hunt family or Hunt Museum had ever had access to the Irish military archives” and declared that the Evaluation group had not acted independently or with transparency. The press release was followed by a letter from Dr. Samuels to the Secretary of the Evaluation Group<sup>14</sup> in which he stated that the Group had never addressed the charges of the Irish researchers involved in the debate or called upon their expertise, and demanded that the investigation process be reopened. Dr Samuels was subsequently offered the opportunity of meeting with the Evaluation Group but failed to respond. In a further reponse to this letter, Dr Michael Ryan, Secretary of the Evaluation Group, in October, 2006, requested that I analyze the methodology of the Group, respond to the criticisms of the Wiesenthal Centre, and suggest further action.

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Analysis of the methodologies of both the Wiesenthal Centre and the Evaluation Group reveals that both made unwise decisions in setting guidelines and in regard to the inclusion in their statements and reports of relevant documentation. The sensational and calculated manner in which Dr. Samuels announced his suspicions in an open letter containing serious personal allegations and implied criticism of the wartime actions of the Republic of Ireland, then holding the Presidency of the EU, was both undiplomatic

and offensive. It is impossible to understand why the Wiesenthal Centre did not reveal its documentation immediately, as the discovery of a “red flag” dealer’s name associated with an art collection is certainly a valid reason for an inquiry. The decision to challenge the Irish authorities in a sort of blackmail game was unprofessional in the extreme. If the Military File had been revealed immediately and expert opinions solicited, considerable time and expense could have been saved. The Evaluation Group, on the other hand, was certainly misguided in its decision not to include the contents of the Military File in its formal report, as the private and professional lives of free-lance dealers such as the Hunts cannot really be separated.

Since the Military File is the only documentation so far produced for the allegations, it is important to examine its contents in detail and to put them in context:

File *G2/4371-- Mr and Mrs Hunt* is in the Military Archives at Cathal Brugha Barracks, Rathmines, Dublin 6. The archives are open to the public. As is proper, the archivists do not, without permission of the individual, reveal to any researcher who else has seen a particular file. It would, therefore, not be appropriate to publish a list of those who had seen it. According to the Archivist, Col. Victor Laing, files of the type in question were kept during the war, and for a time afterwards, on individuals who were of foreign origin and particularly on German nationals. The Irish authorities wished to be informed of any espionage or fifth column activities and to enforce the trade regulations imposed by their neutral status. In the immediate post-war period the issue of extradition of certain German citizens from neutral countries to Germany became an important international

issue and records of the whereabouts of German nationals were therefore maintained into the fifties.

The Hunt file contains about 30 pages. There is an undated newspaper clipping which indicates that Mrs. Hunt was granted Irish citizenship (records held by the family show that this occurred in 1947) Two documents indicate that the Irish police kept careful track of Mrs. Hunt during the war. They were aware that John Hunt was engaged in archeological work at Lough Gur and advised against Mrs Hunt working at Foynes, which was a strategically important flying boat station, however there is no evidence of any wrongdoing by the Hunts and Mrs Hunt was, in fact, engaged to advise on the décor of the terminal.

The file contains two telegrams to and from Kurt Ticher, well known as a silver collector in Ireland. These were of interest to the Irish authorities because Ticher, a German Jewish refugee, naturalized in 1936, was on the Allied proclaimed lists as being interested in trading with areas under German control and because the items he was trying to import were highly suspicious, consisting of watches, timing devices, wiring and the like. The Military Archive also has a file on Mr. Ticher (*G2/0221 KurtTichauer, Kurt Ticher*). In contrast to that of the Hunts, it contains hundreds of pages tracking his business transactions, as well as his efforts to bring the rest of his family to Ireland from Germany. In yet another file, *G2/X/109 Miscellaneous Enquiries*, there are some 500 shorter sub- files on people under surveillance at the time. In a quick survey, I found no reference to the Hunts in that file. The Hunts also do not appear on the Allied proclaimed

lists contained in the files of the American Legation in Dublin. Mrs. Hunt is mentioned there only on a list of German nationals resident in Ireland.<sup>15</sup>

Most of the Hunt file consists of three letters to the Hunts from Alexander von Frey, a dealer then living in Lucerne, Switzerland, and his wife. They are dated 4 April, 1944, 1 January, 1945 and 13 November, 1946 respectively. It is clear from the letters that the couples were friends and that it was through von Frey that Mrs. Hunt communicated with her mother, who remained in Germany during the war. The von Freys also sent food parcels to Mrs. Hunt's mother from Switzerland. The letters discuss the possibility of future business, but there is no reference to any specific transactions. (Similar letters from von Frey to numerous business acquaintances in the United States are contained in American wartime intercepts by the Foreign Funds Control agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, who were also tracking any attempt to transfer assets to enemy controlled regions)<sup>16</sup> In the letters to the Hunts, von Frey describes some of his dealing activity in Switzerland, none of which involves the Hunts or confiscated art. In the 1946 letter, the war being over, discussion of possible future business becomes more detailed as von Frey clearly is hoping to get out of Switzerland, where he cannot work legally. There is considerable discussion also about acquiring residence visas. In 1946, and for many more years, finding a place to settle was the main business of displaced persons. Von Frey, a Hungarian national, would have been particularly reluctant to return to his homeland where the Communists, of whom he is very critical in these texts, were taking over.

Post war Allied records show<sup>17</sup> that von Frey was indeed in contact with many other dealers who traded with the Nazis and was involved in at least one Nazi exchange with the ERR in which three paintings looted from Jewish collections were transferred to Switzerland from France and fed into the Swiss art trade. (The paintings were recovered after the war.) Von Frey was interrogated by American OSS officer James Plaut on January 5, 1946. During the interrogation he expressed the desire to procure a visa to the United States “in order to reopen business connections with the New York art trade.” Plaut recommended strongly that no visa be granted. Despite this, von Frey managed to get to the US in 1948 where he remained until his death in 1951. There is no mention of the Hunts in these records.

In the June, 2006, press release Dr. Samuels states that the letters prove that “Alexander von Frey and John Hunt traded with two prominent dealers, Arthur Goldschmidt and Herr Buhrle”, who in turn were associated with the Nazi dealers Haberstock, Hofer and Wendland. Von Frey does describe specific pre-war Hunt dealings with Goldschmidt in which Hunt has lost money, but the objects involved are not identified. American FBI and FFC intercepts also have considerable information on Goldschmidt, who was in contact with the cited Nazi dealers, and which indicate that he had had financial difficulties with several other colleagues. The American intercepts do not mention Hunt in association with Goldschmidt. OSS records indicate that late in 1940, then in the unoccupied zone of France where many Jews had taken refuge, Goldschmidt sold at least two paintings to Haberstock, who was on a buying trip in France.<sup>18</sup> The reports do not

indicate that the paintings were confiscated. As von Frey recounts, Goldschmidt fled to Portugal in 1940 and then on to Cuba in 1941.

The relationships between all the dealers mentioned should be viewed in their historical context. The European art world of the twenties and thirties, as now, was small, international and unregulated, and most of these dealers would naturally have known and traded with one another for many years before the war. The fact that dealers once knew and dealt with each other is, therefore, not sufficient basis for assuming that they shared political ideas or participated in looting. Von Frey certainly did trade with the Nazis, but that fact alone does not prove that the Hunts did. One should also not forget that, as the political and economic situation deteriorated, art deals became a matter of survival for many Jews attempting to escape the Continent. While their colleagues, Jewish and otherwise, often took advantage of them, the transactions could help those in danger. In the Nazi world, one could sometimes buy survival by selling to the right official. Thus the position of individuals like Goldschmidt is not entirely clear, and the great complexity of the wartime situation requires careful analysis of individual cases.

The claim that the Military file proves a connection between the Hunts and Emil Bührle is mistaken. The name used, four times in one letter, is Buhl, not Bührle, and the individual described, an unreliable dealer who sells forgeries, certainly bears no resemblance to the extremely rich collector and armaments manufacturer Emil Bührle. It is possible that the Buhl in the letter was a dealer in antiquities at Freiburg who was suspected by the SS of smuggling works of art from German occupied Alsace into



Germany.<sup>19</sup> Buhl does not appear on the Allied lists. Another dealer on the OSS list who is mentioned in the letters is Lindpaintner, but only in the sense that Buhl sold forgeries to him, and not in direct connection with the Hunts. Archival sources examined do not show any link between Lindpaintner and the Hunts.

The Hunt Military File also contains a letter, dated November 4, 1940/1? from John Hunt to R.A. Masters, Esq, which refers to business dealings with Felix Harbord, a decorator and dealer who worked both in England and Ireland before and after the war. Harbord, for a short time (May-Oct 1945), was posted as a Monuments and Fine Arts Officer at the British Collecting Point at Schloss Celle near Hannover. Some time after he left that post it was discovered that many of the hundreds of cases of recovered art objects stored in the Collecting Point had been rifled. The thefts were the subject of an investigation by the British authorities. As Dr. Samuels suggests, the records of this investigation and the records of the Collecting Point should be examined to see if any of the missing objects could be matched to those in the Museum.<sup>20</sup> Dr. Samuels' allegations that Felix Harbord took objects from the Collecting Point and sold them should also be documented.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

An examination of the Hunt Museum Collection was certainly justified both by its lack of provenance records and by the discovery of the Hunt's relationship with a dealer who is known to have trafficked in confiscated art.

For most of the objects in the collection, there is essentially no provenance at all. The lack of documentation was a matter of great concern both to the present director and to her predecessor, Ciaran MacGonigal,<sup>21</sup> when they took office, but in the setting up of the new museum, and given the constraints of a tiny staff and little funding, no serious provenance research seems to have been undertaken. Study of the collection is particularly challenging as it covers so many disciplines and because so many objects are not unique. I have examined both the documents at the museum and in the personal holdings of the Hunt family. For most of the objects there are no dates of acquisition, receipts, or invoices. There are no stock books or insurance records which enumerate the Hunt holdings. (According to the family solicitor the Hunts never bought insurance for their collections.)<sup>22</sup> What records there are consist mainly of receipts from Sotheby's, loan documents, and excerpts from scholarly texts. These, where applicable, are included in the provenances. Highest priority should, therefore, be given to continued provenance research according to the framework set up by the Evaluation Group. Virginia Teehan, Director of the Museum, should be commended for her truly extraordinary accomplishment in setting up the website and document listing in so short a time, and for keeping the Museum going while simultaneously doing research in several countries. She should certainly have been provided with more help and it is clear that the small Museum staff cannot undertake extensive future research alone. It has been suggested that all the entities involved join forces to fund a special provenance internship. This would be good training for researchers and any information gathered could be shared with the many agencies working in the field of restitution. It is, of course, possible that

further provenance research may reveal that objects in the collection are from confiscated collections, in which case it has been promised that they would be returned.

The Wiesenthal Center, in the June 21, 2006 press release, correctly points out that no dealer's records were examined. The question is which dealers to investigate. Obviously von Frey's records would be of interest, if they can be located. As noted above, von Frey and his wife emigrated to the United States in 1948. Several American museums mention him in their provenances,<sup>23</sup> which would indicate that he continued to do business there. None of the provenances I have seen contain links to the Hunts, however this could be explored further. After his wife's death in 1987, a sale of the von Frey collection was held on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1988 at Sotheby's, London. That auction house might be able to supply some information as to the whereabouts of any Frey archive.

It is regrettable that Dr. Samuels chose to pursue the inquiry in such a confrontational and often personally offensive manner, and that he has at times misstated what was in the Military File and made unverified allegations. As I mentioned earlier, both the suppression of this documentation by Dr. Samuels and the exclusion of much of it from consideration by the Evaluation Group, were not useful. The lack of communication among various elements of the Irish arts establishment, the Hunt Family, and the Wiesenthal Center, in the end, only delayed the conclusion that the presently available information and research provides no proof whatsoever that the Hunts were Nazis, that they were involved in any kind of espionage, or that they were traffickers in looted art.<sup>24</sup>

In order to complete this investigation researchers should review the files of the Schloss Celle case, mentioned above, and also look to see if there is relevant information on the Hunts or their collections in the archives of any Irish Government agency other than the Military Archive. The Wiesenthal Center should share any further documentation in its possession with the Hunt Museum and could pursue research in the areas of its own expertise. It would seem sensible for all involved to meet in order to pool the results of such inquiries. Agencies and specialists in the looting of Holocaust Era assets should be notified of any concrete findings and asked to place links to the Hunt Museum on their websites. The broader issue of Ireland's wartime neutrality, as the Evaluation Group stated, is certainly beyond the scope of any investigation of the Hunt Museum collections.<sup>25</sup>

There has been much talk about moral obligation during this inquiry. It is, of course, important to recover and return items unlawfully taken during World War II, but it is equally obligatory, in the pursuit of justice, to protect people and institutions from unproven allegations.

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Washington, DC

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<sup>1</sup> Hunt Evaluation Group Final Report to the Royal Irish Academy, June 2006, pp 3-4. ([www.ria.ie](http://www.ria.ie))

<sup>2</sup> Irish Times article by A. Beesley, "Consultant links Hunts to Nazi dealers" 13 Feb, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, N. Yeide, K. Akinsha, A. Walsh, *The AAM Guide to Provenance Research*, Washington, DC, 2001. pp. 259-291.

<sup>4</sup>see NARA RG 239/ Boxes 74-84a 350/77/2/06-07. Records of the Commission relating to the ALIU of the OSS. This includes CIRs #1 Activity of the ERR in France; CIR # 3 The Goering Collection: CIR#4 Hitler's Museum and Library; Boxes 84-84a 350/77/2/07 DIRs on Lohse, Hofer, Muhlmann, Bornheim,

Haberstock, Schiedlausky etc.; MFAA report on S/Ldr Cooper's visit to Switzerland, 22 March, 1945. etc.

<sup>5</sup> Gertrude Hunt had herself described such a visit in an interview published in 1978. Emmanuel Kehoe "The Remarkable Gertrude Hunt." *The Sunday Press*, April 23, 1978.

<sup>6</sup> Irish Times, article by A. Beesley "Limerick Museum Centre of Looted Nazi Art Claims." 7 February, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Article by Larissa Nolan "No art from Nazi Looting in Hunt Museum" Date and newspaper not identifiable from photocopy.

<sup>8</sup> Letter to the Irish Times, 20 February, 2004

<sup>9</sup> Its members were Justice Donal Barrington, formerly Irish Supreme Court; Anne Webber, Chairman of the European Commission for Looted Art, London and Mr. Hugh Tait, formerly of the British Museum.

<sup>10</sup> The members of the panel were Mr Sean Cromien, former Secretary General of the Department of Finance (chairman); Dr Michael Ryan, MRIA, Director of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin; Dr. Anne Kelly, School of Art History and Cultural Policy, University College Dublin; Ms Helen Wechsler, American Association of Museums.

<sup>11</sup> Final Report, Appendix I, pp. 17-20.

<sup>12</sup> See on this issue a new biography of Mahr by Gerry Mullins.

<sup>13</sup> For an excellent commentary on the seminar see Thomas R. Kline, "Wiesenthal Center Challenges Hunt Museum on Looted Art Issues." In KUR: Kunst und Recht #4 Aug-Sept. 2006 (www. Kur-journal.de) pp. 99-102.

<sup>14</sup> Email to Dr. Ryan, 27 July, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> See NARA RG 84 Ireland. Records of the Dublin Legation 350/61/29/07 Boxes 3-10; RG 84 M1231 Ireland Internal Affairs; Microforms S1535-S1538.

<sup>16</sup> NARA RG 239/ Box 7 FFC Confidential Report NY-82818-B, Jan. 18, 1944.

<sup>17</sup> see note 3.

<sup>18</sup> NARA RG 239 Boxes 85-85A 350/77/2/07 Consolidated Interrogation Report #4: Linz: Hitler's Museum and Library. 15 Dec. 1945. p.48.

<sup>19</sup> Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt "Cultural Looting of the Ahnenerbe" Report prepared by the Monuments and Fine Arts Section, OMGUS Berlin, March 1, 1948. Entry 427 "Needs for an Alsatian Office Defined" Dettenberg to Ahnenerbe. VIII/27,41. D326 AHNENERBE B41/e2/st 1 Strassburg. Collection of L.H. Nicholas.

<sup>20</sup> see account of events in Celle and reference to the investigation in Friemuth, Cay *Die geraubte Kunst*, Braunschweig, 1989, p. 165. "H.L. Parry, PSO III. Special Enquiry Bureau, Public Safety Branch, HQ Land Niedersachsen: Enquiry on Losses at Schloss Celle, 27 April 1948. Also perhaps FO 1046/155 Proceedings of Schloss Celle administrative committee, 1948-9.

<sup>21</sup> See C. MacGonigal "Big Brothers and Country Cousins; Relations between Regional and National Museums" *Museum Ireland*, Vol. 13, 2003 This lecture (p.13) contains allegations about the Hunts very similar to those in the Samuels letter of Jan 26, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> John M. O'Connor, Solicitor, to Trudy Hunt, 21 May 2007.

<sup>23</sup> For example: Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas. Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Angel with the Superscription and Angel with the Crown of Thorns*; Detroit Institute of Arts #38.71 Karl Blecher *The Waterfall* and # 40.133 Giovanni da Giambologna *The Bird Catcher*.

<sup>24</sup> Requests from me to Dr. Samuels (Letter May 1, 2007, emails May 22, 23, June 7) for any further documentation that the Simon Wiesenthal Centre might possess remained unanswered as of August 8, 2007, though Dr. Samuels did indicate in emails of June 4 and June 8 that he would be in contact.

<sup>25</sup> This may have already been addressed in Clair Wills, *That Neutral Island: A Cultural History of Ireland during the Second World War*, Faber and Faber, London, 2007.