



Wednesday, 17 January 2024,
5 p.m. Bonn time = 6 p.m. Tel Aviv Time

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RESTITUTION OF
NAZI-LOOTED ART

Speakers:
Stuart Eizenstat
Prof. em. James Bindenagel
Prof. Dr. Matthias Weller
Prof. Leora Bilsky

THE NEXT 25 YEARS

ONLINE CONFERENCE



Excerpt from lecture delivered at *Restitution of Nazi-looted Art: The next 25 Years* online conference, January 17, 2024:

Learning from Teaching the Restitution of Nazi-Looted Art in Comparative Perspectives

Professor Dr Matthias Weller

Mag.rer.publ., Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Professor for Civil Law, Art and Cultural Property Law; Director of the Institute for German and International Civil Procedural Law, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, Germany

For the last three years, it has been our objective and motivation to embark on a meaningful and respectful academic discourse in our joint classes of the Universities of Bonn and Tel Aviv on the restitution of Nazi-looted Art in comparative perspectives, and we are grateful and excited that this innovative project is being marked today by this public Conference, for which a truly eminent global audience has gathered.

It is my task here tonight to report a bit on how we structured our course programme and think about what could be lessons to be learned from teaching such a complex and demanding subject-matter as the restitution of Nazi-looted Art in comparative perspectives.

First of my points: We need more of such teaching. This will not surprise you, and it meets with a central demand that was formulated at the Terezin Declaration Conference in 2022, at the same time we do not see much of such teaching at Universities. To our knowledge, our programme has been the first and only one, both in Israel and in Germany, at least as far as the international and interdisciplinary concept is concerned.

Over the last three Winter Semesters, the course attracted, grossly speaking, 80 students from Israel and 80 from Germany for weekly lectures on screen, and we were rotating weekly between lectures on law and provenance research. We invited guest speakers from all kinds of backgrounds from all over the world, claimants, claimants' lawyers, provenance researchers from leading museums, directors of state institutions involved in the subject-matter such as the Deutsche Zentrum Kulturgutverluste, the German Lost-Art Foundation, and the German Federal Commissioner for Culture and Media, academic specialists for the practice in the respective jurisdictions that have established a restitution commission according to Articles 10 and 11 of the Washington Principles (Germany, but also Austria, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom), but also from Israel and Switzerland two countries that are currently in the process of setting up such commissions, and we even had the honour of welcoming high-ranking members from European Restitution Commissions who talked about their demanding work and their experiences.

Overall, I believe it was a unique and, to my mind, extremely rewarding and enriching experience. So my first take away for the next 25 years would be that teaching programmes and courses of such a kind or a similar approach should become a regular element in the curricula of Universities of all countries that participated in the Washington Principles.