
British Museum Payout for Nazi art theft family

Date: 28 April 2006

BBC News

The UK government is to compensate the heirs of an art collector whose drawings were stolen by the Nazis before ending up in the British Museum. Relatives of Dr Arthur Feldmann are to receive \$175,000 after a special panel decided they had "firm evidence" that the works had been seized in 1939.

The family says the Old Master drawings can stay in the British Museum.

The panel has asked the government to introduce laws permitting the return of objects plundered during the Nazi era.

The spoliation advisory panel, which decides claims about property stolen by the Nazis and now held in UK collections, heard the drawings were seized when Germany invaded Czechoslovakia.

Both Dr Feldmann and his wife died at the hands of the Nazis.

Uri Peled, Dr Feldmann's grandson, who lives in Israel, said: "We are sure that this is what our grandfather would have wanted, for them to be available to the public and for future research."

The drawings are by Niccolo dell'Abbate, Nicholas Blakey and Martin Johann Schmidt, with the fourth attributed to a follower of Martin Schongauer.

Three drawings entered the museum's collection through a sale at Sotheby's in 1946, while the other was part of a bequest to the museum in 1949.

Culture minister David Lammy said he hoped to seek public views on the panel's proposals "shortly".

He said: "I am currently taking expert advice on how to bring forward legislation to help put right these historic wrongs."

He added that the compensation payment in the Feldmann case was made by the government because the British Museum had "no idea" that the works were tainted and had acted "with honour throughout".