

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State Department Hosts Press Conference for Return of Newly Discovered Album Documenting Hitler's Art Museum Ambitions

Washington, DC (January 22, 2010) - Today at a State Department press conference, Ambassador Klaus Scharioth, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United States; Dr. Heribert Rech, Minister of the Interior for the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg; Ambassador J. Christian Kennedy, the Department's Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues; Ambassador Stuart E. Eizenstat and Robert M. Edsel, President of the *Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art* and author of *The Monuments Men*, announced the discovery of a leather bound album containing photographs of works of art Nazi Leader Adolf Hitler intended for the planned Gemäldegalerie Linz, more commonly referred to as the "Führermuseum." This album, which has been in



private hands since the end of World War II, will be given to the Federal Republic of Germany following a three month exhibition at The National WWII Museum in New Orleans. It is representative of the millions of cultural items, missing since the end of the war, which the Monuments Men Foundation hopes to help recover in the coming years.

The Führermuseum was an unrealized museum complex planned by Adolf Hitler for his hometown, the Austrian city of Linz, to display the collection of art plundered or purchased by the Nazis throughout Europe during World War II. When Hitler made his final selection of the works of art he wanted to include in the Führermuseum, 31 albums known as "Gemäldegalerie Linz" albums, which contained exquisite photographs of these selected items, were created for Hitler. The albums represented his 'virtual museum' and were among his most treasured possessions. At war's end 19 of these albums were found at Hitler's home in Berchtesgaden by the Monuments Men as they began the process of deciphering Hitler and the Nazi's art looting operation; today they are located at the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin, where 16 are on display. Until now, the remaining 12 albums were presumed destroyed.

At the end of World War II, U.S. soldiers entered Adolf Hitler's home in the Bavarian Alps, and many of them, including Private John Pistone, picked up trinkets as a souvenir, proof that he had been inside. Pistone took an album filled with photographs of paintings, and for sixty-four years the album has sat on a bookshelf in his home in Ohio; its significance unknown, until now. When a friend noticed the album, he did some internet research and learned about the Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art, a not-for-profit organization that received the 2007 National Humanities Medal, and has been involved in the restitution of other valuable WWII documents. Upon hearing about the album from the friend, Mr. Edsel immediately traveled to Ohio and confirmed that Mr. Pistone's album, Gemäldegalerie Album XIII, is part of the series compiled for Hitler featuring art he personally selected for his Führermuseum.

Gemäldegalerie Linz Album XIII is a highly important discovery because it contains works of art by 19th century German masters, which were to be the core of the Linz collection. Hitler loved works of art by Makart, Menzel, Spitzweg, and Schwind because as a fellow artist he personally identified with them. They were men who were underestimated in the beginning of their careers, then found success and established careers in Germany. For example, Von Schwind was a member of the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, built a career in Munich, and then later returned to Austria amidst much praise. This was exactly what Hitler had wanted to do as well.

When Robert Edsel explained the importance of the album, 87-year old John Pistone was surprised by the significance of a book that to him represented nothing more than a souvenir of his wartime experience, proof that he had been in Hitler's home. After learning about the heroic effort of the Monuments Men and women during the war to protect so many of the world's great cultural treasures, Mr. Pistone agreed to work through the Monuments Men Foundation to serve as an example for other veterans and their families of the importance of returning these items to their rightful owners.

The Foundation receives on average one call a day from veterans and their heirs, such as Mr. Pistone, that don't know the importance of items they may have picked up during their service, or that anyone is looking for the items. Mr. Edsel stated "this album is just the tip of the iceberg for the millions of cultural items still missing since WWII, some of which will be located in the coming years. Mr. Pistone has set a great example for all veterans, just as the Monuments Men set the standard for the protection of artistic and cultural treasures during armed conflict and their post-war return. We honor that legacy by completing their mission."

Before returning to Berlin to join the other 19 albums at the Deutsches Historisches Museum, Album XIII and one of two other related documents the Monuments Men Foundation discovered, will go on display for 90 days at The National World War II Museum in New Orleans, beginning January 29. The album will also be on display at the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum in Abilene, Kansas May 7-9, during the museum's celebration of the 65th Anniversary of VE-Day, the end of WWII in Europe. There are still millions of items missing since the war. The Monuments Men Foundation hopes the exhibition will encourage veterans and their families to look in their basements and attics for any lost wartime items as they may hold the clues to unravel this unsolved mystery.

About the Monuments Men Foundation

The Monuments Men Foundation was created to raise public awareness of the 345 or so men and women from thirteen nations, many of whom were museum directors, curators, and educators, who protected monuments and other cultural treasures from the destruction of World War II. By 1945, these heroes of civilization tracked, located and later returned more than 5 million artistic and cultural items stolen by Hitler and the Nazis. The Foundation intends for their rich legacy to serve as a beacon for the preservation of such treasures in future armed conflict and to finish the task of locating and returning some of the hundreds of thousands of stolen and missing works of art and documents to the victims of the greatest theft in history. The Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art was one of ten recipients of the 2007 National Humanities Medal, the highest honor given in the United States for excellence in the Humanities field.

For more information about the Monuments Men Foundation, please visit www.monumentsmenfoundation.org.

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