

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No. 785015

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HISTORIC MONUMENTS
MAR. - MAY 1944

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No. 785015

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PRESERVATION

OF

WORKS OF ART

IN ITALY

DISTRIBUTION:
7/8

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R E S T R I C T E D

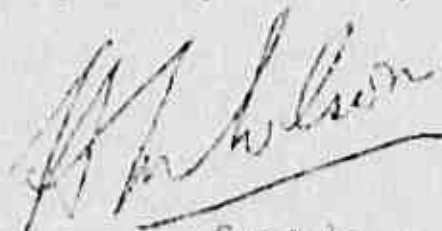
F O R E W O R D

In war great damage to buildings, including churches and those of great historical value, has to be accepted when it is operationally unavoidable. To add to such destruction either by wanton action or through thoughtlessness is a crime against civilization.

The objects of this pamphlet are to:

- a. Outline the history of Art in Italy.
- b. Emphasize that whereas the Germans look upon collections of objects of Art belonging to occupied countries as fields for vandalism and lucrative looting, it is the duty of each member of the United Nations when in occupied territory to regard himself as a trustee for such possessions.

I wish all officers and men to study this little pamphlet which should help to give a true perspective of the importance of preserving all that is old and rare in any country which they may enter in the course of the war.



General.
Supreme Commander,
Allied Forces Mediterranean Theater.

Allied Force Headquarters
8 May 1944

R E S T R I C T E D

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1. What Is a Work of Art?

Man is distinguished from the beasts by his power to reason and to frame abstract hopes and ideas. Art, like literature and science, is one of the supreme ways in which that power can be expressed in tangible and visible shape. We all have, in varying degrees, these ideas and feelings at the back of our minds, but most of us lack the power to express them. The artist is the man who, by his special skill, can put them for us into concrete shape, whether in stone or paint or words.

Art is not the mere copying of nature. If it were, the wax-works at Madame Tussaud's would be greater works of art than the sculptures of Michelangelo. An artist needs technical skill, like any other craftsman. But only if he has also inspiration and vision will his product be a work of art, and the deeper that vision the greater the art. The work of an artist like Raphael or Botticelli ranks with that of the great thinkers, writers and scientists, among the supreme achievements of the human race.

2. What is the Value of a Work of Art?

A work of art has a money value, often very large. The "Blue Boy" by Gainsborough, was sold for £180,000; and Titian's "Bacchus and Ariadne" fetched £250,000. Even so, works of art are not like diamonds. However valuable a diamond may be, you can always get another like it. But the "Mona Lisa" or the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican are unique. Their creators are dead, and no money could ever replace them.

But, apart from the money value, what useful purpose does a work of art serve? Should we not be just as well off without any? The answer is best given by the fact that, whatever the reason may be, wherever man are, they do find themselves compelled to try to express the artistic sense within them, and their fellow-men do get inspiration and pleasure from their work. Some of the earliest known works of man are not "useful" at all, in the sense that tools and weapons are useful, but paintings of animals and ivory-carvings, such as are found in the famous Stone Age caves of the Pyrenees; and even the most primitive of present-day tribesmen have an art of their own, often surprisingly advanced both in ideas and in technique--for example, the wood-carvings of West Africa. We ourselves, quite unconsciously, every day enjoy the inherited artistic tradition of centuries in our homes, in our furniture, and in our cities. There have been a few nations completely without art or learning, like the Hun or the Vandal; but they perished swiftly, and their names remain only as a by-word for ignorant savagery.

3. Why is Italy so Rich in Works of Art?

Of all European countries, Italy is the richest in art treasures. For over twenty-five centuries there has been an almost uninterrupted tradition of artistic creation; and in spite of a long and troubled

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history, Italy has succeeded to an astonishing degree in preserving its artistic heritage. Even today there is scarcely a town or village that does not boast at least one building of historical or artistic value.

The most powerful single influence has been the Church. Imperial Rome has been the center of the ancient civilized world, and the Roman Church inherited that position. Throughout the Middle Ages it was the great patron of the arts--architecture, painting, sculpture, music, literature. It was also their protector. Classical science and literature have survived because they were preserved in monastic libraries, while church treasures were the great storehouses of ancient and medieval craftsmanship. The Vatican collections were the first museums as we know it in Europe.

While the Popes were making Rome a city of monuments, great ruling families such as the Medici in Florence, the Sforza in Milan, the d'Este in Ferrara were the patrons of the artists of their day and collectors of the art of the past. City-councils too employed architects and artists to build and adorn municipal palaces and other public buildings. All these influences of public as well as private patronage have gone to make Italy the home of many of the noblest achievements of the human spirit.

4. How Have the Germans Behaved?

The Nazis have systematically stripped large parts of Europe of their movable works of art. It is easy to see why:

- a. In their opinion, Germany has to be supreme in Art collections as in everything else.
- b. To destroy a nation utterly, as Germany has tried for example to destroy the Poles, you must also destroy its cultural heritage of science, literature, and art.
- c. Works of art, like jewelry, are a good form of investment against the day of reckoning.

This organized looting is supervised by the Special Cultural Branch of the German Foreign Office under von Ribbentrop; some is done by open appropriation, some by fictitious sale, some by "exchange" for third-rate German works of art.

Much of the booty has passed into the hands of the Party leaders. When Greece fell, Ribbentrop sent a special convoy of lorries to rob the museums of Athens. Goering was a fine collection of modern French art, while Goebbels is said to prefer the Flemish painters. The great central collection of all was to be at Linz, as a memorial to Hitler's mother. Here it was planned to bring together the greatest works of art in the world, the pick of the museums and galleries of Europe and America.

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Italy, until recently an ally, has so far fared better at German hands. But since the Italian Armistice, there have been at least two cases of wanton and deliberate savagery. The library of the Royal Society of Naples they burned, together with its irreplaceable collection of manuscripts; and at Nola they deliberately destroyed the contents of the Filangieri museum and the six-hundred-year-old state archives of the Kingdom of Naples.

5. Is Art National or International?

This tale of organized robbery and senseless destruction makes it all the more important that we, by comparison, should ensure by our behavior in occupied territory that we cannot be accused of such crimes. It is inevitable that, in the actual fighting and in the bombing of military targets, historic buildings and works of art will suffer. But is only one of the many tragedies of war. But we can, and must, see that what is left is preserved from all further harm.

Art and science are not things that belong to any one nation. The Nazis do not agree. They tolerate an artist or a scientist only insofar as he works for Nazi ends--and as a result, the standard of both has deteriorated in Germany. We believe, on the other hand, that science and art are international, and that only if men are absolutely free to follow their own spirit can they produce and enjoy great work. Even the Nazis were silent when it came to excluding Shakespeare from Germany; they had to call him "an essentially Germanic poet". And in turn, generations of Englishmen (Shelley, Byron, Browning, Ruskin, Sir Christopher Wren, the Adams brothers, Burke-Jones, Rossetti, to name only a few) have been inspired by the art of Italy and have passed that inspiration on to us. In the words of the notice in the park--"This is yours; look after it".

6. What You Can Do.

Most of the damage that is done to works of art in wartime is done by sheer thoughtlessness. Here are a few suggestions:

Don't carve your name, chip off "souvenirs", or cut out bits of pictures.

If you are billeted in a historic building, treat it as you would expect a stranger to treat your own home.

Books and libraries are going to be badly needed for the reeducation of the Italian people. Help to preserve them from damage.

The man who gave you your torch-battery was an Italian scientist, Volta. The research of Italian doctors has helped to save Allied lives. Treat the collections and laboratories, on which such work depends, with respect.

Have you thought who, in the long run, pays for the damage you do?

AFHQ

Preservation of Works of Art In Italy

8 May 1944

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ALLIED CONTROL COMMISSION
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2675 REGIMENT ALLIED CONTROL COMMISSION
(U. S. Contingent) (Provisional)
APO 394

Cross Reference Sheet

File: 619.3

Subject: Preservation of Property of Historical or Educational
Importance in Italy

Date: 30 March 1944

To: _____

From: Hq. A.A. I. Adm. Echelon

Documents Filed: A.A. I. Administrative Instructions (Publication)

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ALLIED FORCE HEADQUARTERS
Military Government Section

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14 March 1944

MG3-619.3

SUBJECT: Monuments and Fine Arts Report

TO : Headquarters Allied Control Commission
(Attention - Adjutant's office)



1. Reference your letter of 7 March forwarding copy letter 20560/WFAA of 3 March from Monuments and Fine Arts Sub Commission attention is called to

- (a) this Section's cable 29942 of January 17 to Fargo
- (b) Fargo cable PRS 5647 of 18 January cite Fargo 378
- (c) this Section's letter to AMG HQ (attention Colonel Spofford) of 23 January under reference 619.3

The above show the circumstances on which the December report was not forwarded.

2. This Section has received a letter from Sir Leonard Woolley bearing date the 4 March which amongst other points raises the question of reports and a reply has been sent referring him to the monthly reports of AMG/ACC see Fargo cable at (b) above and to the fact that a set of the large collection of documents forwarded with ACC (Administrative Section) letter of 26 February (ref ACC/Q40-6/AS) was sent to him on 2 March from this Headquarters.

T. B. Jackman

T. B. JACKMAN,
Major.

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