
MEDIA RELEASE

Statement by former members and employees of the Independent Commission of Experts: Switzerland – Second World War (ICE), so-called "Bergier Commission", on the Bührle Collection in the Zurich Kunsthaus

During the work of the ICE (19 December 1996 to 19 December 2001), employees were **denied access to the files of the Bührle Collection**. This was contrary to the Federal Decree of 13 December 1996 (cf. in particular "Art. 5 Duty to grant access to files"). This decision by Parliament has given us access to archives of banks, insurance companies, industry and pharmaceutical companies and other institutions.

In the course of our investigations, the Bührle family and those responsible for the Bührle Foundation claimed that there were no more files that could be made available to the ICE. As comprehensive archives gradually emerged, this led to the impression that the **Foundation and the Bührle family had told the untruth to the ICE at the time**. The substantive report by the Leimgruber Chair now offers an overview of the development of the arms company, arms exports and the Emil Bührle art collection in a historical context and thus provides a basis for further research.

Looking at the current situation, the questions arise again for us: What happened to cultural property that was seized, confiscated and looted from persecuted people between 1933 and 1945 as a direct result of persecution, but also had to be disposed of in the post-war years and possibly beyond? Is it finally ensured that all works of art that have been transferred to the Bührle Collection have been **clearly identified, researched and evaluated**? Why does Switzerland not have an independent entity, as many other countries do, that works to find a just and fair solution for all parties in disputed property issues? **The current situation in Zurich is an affront to potential victims of looted goods.**

Our three demands:

- 1.) **We demand from the City and Canton of Zurich a continuation of the historical research in connection with the Bührle Collection and an evaluation of the provenance research carried out by the Foundation by an independent and neutral expert commission.**
- 2.) **We demand from the Zurich Kunsthaus that the documentation room on the Bührle Collection be revised by independent experts on the basis of the current state of research and the history of its former owners be contextualized in detail.**
- 3.) **We demand that the Federal Government establish an independent body that mediates between claimants as well as collectors, museums or other preserving institutions a just and fair solution for all parties involved in the sense of the Washington Agreement of 03 December 1998 as well as the Terezín Declaration of 30 June 2009.**

As historians, we are obliged to take responsibility. The current presentation of the Bührle Collection in the new Zurich Kunsthaus raises fundamental questions.

Zurich, 07 November 2021

Signed by former members and staff of the Independent Commission of Experts:
Switzerland – Second World War (ICE):

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