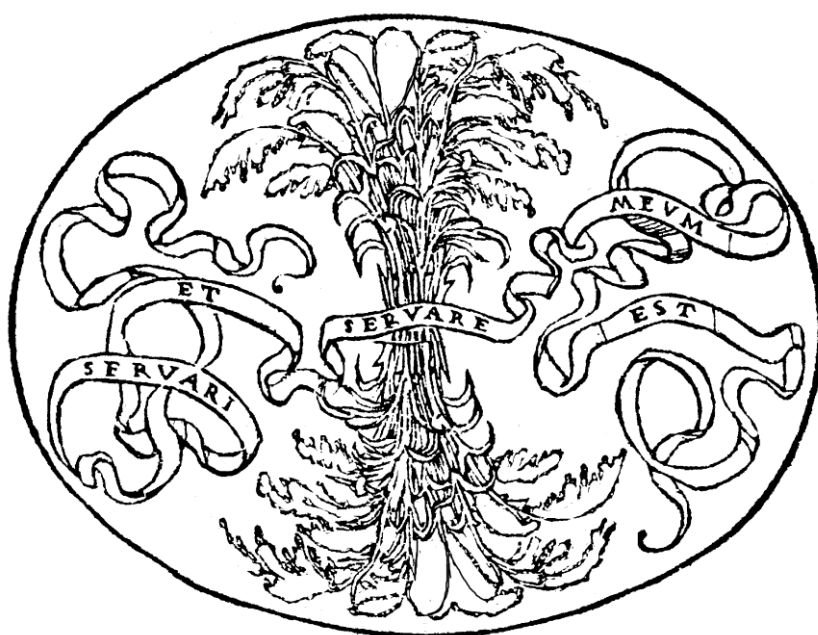


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THE *AFFAIRE VENTURA*. ANTIQUARIANS AND COLLABORATORS DURING AND AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The Affaire Ventura

The Göring-Ventura exchange is an intricate case that is little known today, although at the time it was largely discussed in the press. It is therefore interesting to reconstruct the case through the archival documentation¹ and through the many articles that were published in the main Italian newspapers, such as «Il Corriere della Sera» and «La Nazione del Popolo», between the summer of 1945 and the winter of 1946².

On the 10th of August 1945, the Florentine antiquarian Eugenio Ventura was arrested by the Carabinieri (an Italian special police corps), upon request of the Italian Office for the recovery of works of art and of the military Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (MFAA) of the Allied Commission³. Ventura was requested to reveal where he had hidden some works of art. After long interrogations, Ventura confessed that they were in the Convent of St. Mark in Florence and the result of an exchange with Göring (Figs. 1-3).

Ventura admitted to have been visited for the first time by Walter Hofer⁴, one of Göring's agents, in the autumn of 1941. Hofer offered Ventura to exchange some of the most precious Italian pieces of Ventura's private collection for some works by French Impressionists, owned by Göring. Ventura declared that «in September or October 1942 Göring suddenly arrived at his villa in Marignolle, along with professor Hofer, asking to visit the art collection»⁵. Ventura asked Göring to obtain permission to export works outside of Italy. The *Reichsmarschall* replied that he had already agreed with the Italian Government and with Mussolini himself about the export. Göring left, taking with him the Italian precious works he had chosen from the Ventura's collection, without giving him a receipt. Ventura «did

¹ This article is based on archival documents, in particular of the Siviero Archive (Archivio Siviero, from now AS) in Rome. Information gathered in this archive has been confirmed by further documents in the archive of the Fondazione Centro Studi sull'Arte Licia e Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti in Lucca and in the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome, as well as in the Archives de la Récupération artistique/ZFO Allemagne-Autriche 1945-1955, Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, La Courneuve, Paris.

² *Un tesoro di 100 milioni scoperto a Firenze*, «La Nazione del Popolo», August 12th-13th, 1945, p. 2; *I particolari della scoperta dei celebri quadri francesi*, «La Nazione del Popolo», August 13th, 1945, p. 2; *L'elenco delle opere d'arte scambiate fra il comm. Ventura e Goering*, «La Nazione del Popolo», August 14th, 1945, p. 2; *La vicenda del sequestro delle pitture francesi dell'800*, «Il Nuovo Corriere», August 15th, 1945, p. 4; *La vicenda dei quadri francesi*, «La Nazione del Popolo», August 15th, 1945, p. 2; *Gli "impressionisti" francesi scoperti a Firenze*, «La Nazione del Popolo», August 17th, 1945, p. 2; *Lo scandalo Goering-Ventura*, «L'Epoca», August 21st, 1945, p. 9; *La vicenda dei quadri francesi*, «Il Nuovo Corriere», August 30th, 1945, p. 4; *Le vicende dei quadri francesi*, «Il Nuovo Corriere», September 4th, 1945, p. 6; *Antiquari all'assalto delle opere d'arte*, «Risorgimento Liberale», December 6th, 1945, pp. 1-2; *Lo scandalo Ventura e compagni*, «La Nazione del Popolo», January 16th, 1946, p. 1; *Il Ventura fermato dalla polizia alleata*, «La Nazione del Popolo», February 24th, 1946, p. 2; *L'antiquario Ventura tornato in libertà*, «La Nazione del Popolo», February 27th, 1946; *Antiquariato e collaborazionismo. Eugenio Ventura arrestato dalle autorità militari francesi*, «La Nazione del Popolo», March 5th, 1946, p. 2.

³ Eugenio Ventura (1887-1949) was a Florentine antiquarian and art dealer. For further information about Ventura and his relationships with Nazis, see PELLEGRINI 2014 and CARLETTI-GIOMETTI 2016, p. 69.

⁴ «Walter Andreas Hofer (1893-1971) was the director of the Göring Collection and Göring's chief purchasing agent», Post-War Reports: Art Looting Intelligence Unit (ALIU) Reports 1945-1946 and ALIU Red Flag Names List and Index, www.lootedart.com, <May, 2019>.

⁵ AS, box no. 35, folder no. 3/427, doc. no. 181/1, September 12th, 1945, *Rapporto giudiziario della Legione Territoriale dei Carabinieri Reali di Firenze* (copy of), from now: Carabinieri Report; all quotations from this document have been translated from Italian into English by the author.

not consider it useful, or necessary, to inform the Superintendence of Florence»⁶. Then «in the middle of January 1943 Ventura received a telegram from Hofer, who invited him to go to the German capital»⁷. Here Ventura visited the *Reichsmarschall's* galleries and chose some French Impressionist paintings as compensation for the works he had previously given to Göring. First, photographic reproductions of the works were sent in order to have them evaluated by experts, and then the paintings were delivered personally by Hofer to Ventura. By December 8th, 1942, Ventura had actually already received the photographs of the works⁸, and by the end of that year he could then proceed to have them evaluated. The negotiations between Göring and Ventura continued until March 8th, 1943 when the deal ended with the exchange agreement⁹.

Ventura confessed he was aware that some of the works he received «belonged to the Rosenberg collection, this clarification having been provided by Hofer at the time he delivered the paintings»¹⁰. As proof of the regular exchange, Ventura showed the letter signed by Hofer and dated «Berlin, March 8th, 1943». Ventura «also admitted he had some other artworks destined for Germany, and among these was a painting attributed to Rubens, purchased by the Prince of Hesse on behalf of Hitler»¹¹.

On August 12th, 1945, the Superintendent of Florence, Giovanni Poggi, was called by the Carabinieri «to clarify Ventura's conduct, in relation to the Superintendence, on the occasion of the art exchange carried out with Göring». He declared that he had become aware that the works were in Florence only at the time of their recovery in the Convent of St. Mark. In fact, the «declaration of temporary importation was received by Ciaranfi [officer at the Export Office of the Superintendence], who for reasons not yet ascertained, had not communicated such important information to the Superintendent, although she acknowledged the importance of the French works arrived in Italy». Poggi added that at the time of the French Art Exhibition organized in Palazzo Pitti in the first half of 1945, the Superintendence had encouraged the French authorities to send to Florence as many works as possible. On that occasion Ventura exhibited some of his paintings, but not the ones exchanged with Göring, «although the Superintendent expressed his regret at not having been able to collect a greater number of works by Impressionist artists which were in Ventura's possession». When he realised the contradiction with what he had stated shortly before that, Poggi concluded by declaring that he was partly aware of the Italian works sold by Ventura to Göring, but that «no export request had been submitted to the Superintendence of Florence»¹².

Similar statements were made by Ugo Procacci, Inspector of the Superintendence¹³. But it turned out that even Roberto Longhi had played a role in the story. During his investigation, Longhi admitted that, «at the end of 1942, Ventura had asked him to examine some photographs of French Impressionist artworks [...] and if it would be a good deal to exchange them with Italian Old Masters; Longhi confirmed that the works were of considerable artistic importance and very rare in our country. After a few months, Ventura invited him to his villa in Marignolle where he showed Longhi the French paintings of which, months before, he had examined the photographic reproductions».

⁶ *Ivi*.

⁷ *Ivi*.

⁸ National Archives (NA) Washington D.C., *Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (Ardelia Hall Collection): Munich, Central Collecting Point, 1945-1951*, www.fold3.com/image/270006005, <August 2018>. Hofer sent the letter to Ventura on December 8th, 1942, along with the photographs of the French Impressionists' paintings.

⁹ *Ivi*, www.fold3.com/image/270006036, <August, 2018>.

¹⁰ AS, Carabinieri Report, see footnote no. 5.

¹¹ *Ivi*.

¹² *Ivi*.

¹³ Ugo Procacci (1905-1991) was an art historian, expert in medieval painting and restoration. For further information, see *UGO PROCACCI A CENTO ANNI DALLA NASCITA* 2006.

In clear contradiction with what was declared by Ventura, Longhi maintained, that «at the end of 1942 the photographs of the French works were already in Ventura's possession and that the Italian works selected for the exchange were still in the villa in Marignolle»¹⁴. When asked about where the Italian works of art came from, Longhi replied that:

They largely came from the Gentner collection purchased by Ventura; on the occasion of this purchase, Longhi – corresponding with Ventura himself and the antique dealer Bruscoli Riccardo, with the collaboration of prof. Rossi, Director of the *Gallerie di Firenze* – had the collection divided into three lots¹⁵.

Various suspicions emerged regarding the purchase by Ventura of the collection of the late American citizen Philip J. Gentner¹⁶, in particular it appeared «that the sale was carried out in totally fraudulent conditions». The heir of his property, Gentner's wife, was treated in the mental hospital of San Salvi in Florence, and her property was administered by an accountant, Porzio by name. After the Italian declaration of war with the United States on January 24th, 1942, the Gentner property was seized as enemy property and the accountant was appointed as sequestrator by Prefectural Decree on March 20th, 1942. Given the debts owed by the property, on December 1st, 1942, following an estimate, the Florentine Revenue Office authorized Porzio to proceed with the sale of such assets. The sale price could not have been less than One Million Lire (value attributed by the Superintendence).

On December 15th, 1942, Gentner's movable assets were sold to Ventura for the total sum of 1,450,000 Lire. [...] Ventura subsequently divided them into three lots, selling two of them to the antiquarian Bruscoli Riccardo [and] retaining for himself a single lot composed mainly of paintings¹⁷.

It seemed, therefore, that the sale was carried out regularly, but further investigations revealed that it was not:

Having been questioned, Porzio acknowledged that offers far higher than Ventura's had been regularly presented by other competitors. [...] Requested to justify his inadmissible behaviour, he stated that he had been induced to proceed as above by Ventura himself, who continually referred to his relations with Senator Morelli and Mussolini, stating that, anyway and with any means, he would have succeeded in the sale through them under the conditions he wanted and when he wanted¹⁸.

Ventura was interrogated again and confirmed that the works found in the convent of St. Mark were the only ones from the Gentner collection still in his possession. However, the most serious admissions made by Ventura during his second interrogation regarded the continuity of his relationship with Göring's agents. First among them was the well-known Hofer, who for several years had been attending Ventura's home.

After the exchange of paintings, which took place in 1942, the relations between Ventura and Göring's agents went on without interruptions until a few months before the state of emergency of the city and it is not excluded that these relationships lasted until May or June

¹⁴ AS, Carabinieri Report, see footnote no. 5.

¹⁵ *Ivi*.

¹⁶ Philip J. Gentner was the first director of the Worcester Art Museum (1908-1917). He had his art collection in Florence, where he had spent several years of his life. For further information see *ACADEMIC NOTES* 1909.

¹⁷ AS, Carabinieri Report, see footnote no. 5.

¹⁸ *Ivi*.

1944. Ventura excluded that he sold, or otherwise negotiated the sale of, works of art, on the occasion of such contacts. But he declared that the visits from Göring's agents tended to induce him to sell the works that were part of his collection, without distinction between paintings and sculptures, orienting their requests to pieces of considerable value¹⁹.

Ventura's situation got worse when he was accused of having negotiated not only with Göring, but with the Reich itself: «the painting by Van Gogh, now in Ventura's possession, [...] was taken from the German art gallery of Dresden by Göring himself, as General Superintendent of museums and art galleries of the Reich»²⁰.

Moreover, the declaration of the United Nations, signed on January 5th, 1943, and radio-notified to all countries, including those occupied by German troops, left no doubt about the Allied attitude towards those who, for whatever reason, whether in good or bad faith, had come into possession of seized goods that Nazis looted in France. In short, whoever found himself in this situation should have immediately reported the matter to the authorities. Ventura, on the other hand, on his own lawyer's advice, decided to wait to report the possession of the French works. Once these details emerged, Ventura was finally arrested on August 13th, 1945. The news spread quickly with great resonance through the daily press²¹ (Fig. 4).

Meanwhile, the French works were taken by the authorities and brought to Rome. They were kept at Villa Borghese to be shown in a public exhibition at Palazzo Venezia, despite the opposition of those who wanted them exhibited in Florence²² and that of the French authorities, in agreement with the rightful owners of the works. They would have preferred the works not to be publicly displayed at all²³. In fact, French authorities requested the works to be brought to Rome, under Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli's custody²⁴. And upon Bandinelli's request²⁵, French authorities presented the documentation that proved the provenance from France.

Although not all the owners were French citizens (in particular the Kanns and the Lindons), the French authorities undertook to return the works to these families, according to the United Nations Convention about the recovery of looted works of art, whose dispositions

¹⁹ *Inv.* Information about Ventura's collection as the provenance of the artworks owned by Göring can be found in DREYFUS 2015, pp. 482, 516-518, 526, 546, 550, 554-556, 570-571; *L'OPERA RITROVATA* 1984, pp. 74-75, 80-81, 83-85, 175, and the Hermann Göring's collection database (https://www.dhm.de/datenbank/goering/dhm_goering.php?seite=9, <May, 2019>). «State of emergency» translates the Italian word «emergenza», which in Florence commonly defines the last period (August 1944) of the Nazi occupation of the city.

²⁰ AS, Carabinieri Report, see footnote no. 5.

²¹ See footnote no. 2.

²² *Gli Impressionisti vanno a Roma. Non ne vedo la necessità dice il professor Giovanni Poggi*, «La Nazione del Popolo», September 5th, 1945, p. 2; *Giustizia in pantofole (Ancora sull'affare Goering-Ventura)*, «L'Epoca», September 11th, 1945, p. 4.

²³ The correspondance between the Jewish families who were the rightful owners of the Impressionist artworks, the Commission de Récupération Artistique and the Italian General Direction of Fine Arts is in the Archives de la Récupération artistique, Base Spoliations (from now: ARA-BS), box no. 377.98, folder *Italie, recherche d'oeuvres d'art d'origine française, 1940-1950: Italie – Affaire Ventura. Correspondance 1945-1948*. The Commission de Récupération Artistique was established by the French Ministry of National Education on November 24th, 1944. It was in charge of searching and recovering artworks stolen by Nazis from French collections (*FranceArchives, Portail National des Archives*, www.francearchives.fr, <May, 2019>).

²⁴ Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli (1900 – 1975) was an archeologist and General Director of Italian Fine Arts Administration (1945-1948). For further information see BARBANERA 2003.

²⁵ ARA-BS, box no. 377.98, folder *Italie, recherche d'oeuvres d'art d'origine française, 1940-1950: Italie. Exposition à Rome 9 tableaux impressionnistes Ventura. 1946-1947*, letter to M. Jacques Heurgon from Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, September 19th, 1945.

can be found in note no. 20909/25/A/MFAA of December 15th, 1945²⁶. Like France, Italy had also joined the Convention on November 14th, 1945. Moreover, once the works were discovered in Italy, their legitimate owners, their heirs or their representatives presented claim for restitution to the French Commission de Récupération Artistique. At that point, the request for their restitution to France could only be accepted by the Italian authorities.

After the long restitution procedures were completed and the exhibition at Palazzo Venezia had ended, the paintings had to be brought to the French Embassy before leaving for France. Meanwhile, on August 5th, 1946, a pastel of Degas was badly damaged. Later on, the work's owner, Paul Rosenberg, demanded compensation for damages from Italian authorities, but the request was rejected²⁷.

After the accident, the official authorization for restitution to France arrived²⁸, but there were still technical difficulties, due to the fragility of the paintings. After discarding the first option of transporting the works by courier, it was decided to make them travel by airplane²⁹. On the 28th of November they finally arrived in France and, while waiting to be returned to their legitimate owners, they were kept by the Commission de récupération artistique³⁰.

On the other hand, the Italian works sold by Ventura to Göring were identified at the Collecting Point in Munich by the Italian Delegation for the recovery of works of art³¹. Among others, Giorgio Castelfranco, former General Director for Fine Arts, was a member of the Delegation³². He drew up precise lists and detailed reports for all the assets found, as

²⁶ Rome, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, Direzione Generale dell'Antichità e Belle Arti, Div. III, 1929-60, box no. 147, 1938/55, folder *Firenze, mostre e recuperi: Firenze, quadri francesi recuperati presso l'antiquario Eugenio Ventura*, letter of January 18th, 1946, to MFAA from Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli: «If works of art were dispersed or removed from an occupied country, it is up to the Government of this country to make claims, not to the Government of the country where the owners have citizenship. Therefore, regarding the paintings owned by Kann and Linden, found in the group of French Impressionists, even if the owners are British, the right and responsibility of the claim lies with the French Government» (translated from Italian into English by the author).

²⁷ ARA-BS, box no. 377.98, folder *Rapport Ambassade de France à Rome sur accident du pastel de Degas à M. Paul Rosenberg. 1946-1948*, letter from Jacques Fouques-Duparc, French Ambassador in Italy, to the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, August 6th, 1946.

²⁸ Ivi, folder *Italie, recherche d'oeuvres d'art d'origine française, 1940-1950: Italie. Exposition à Rome 9 tableaux impressionnistes Ventura. 1946-1947*, letter to the French National Education Minister from the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, September 2nd, 1946.

²⁹ Ivi, folder *Italie – Exposition à Rome – 9 tableaux impressionnistes cachés par Ventura. 1946-1947*, letter from Henraux to the French Embassy in Rome, November 16th, 1946.

³⁰ Ivi, letter from Henraux to the French Embassy in Italy, December 3rd, 1946.

³¹ *La prima missione italiana partirà oggi per la Germania*, «La Nazione del Popolo», September 27th, 1945.

³² Giorgio Castelfranco, art historian and critic, was born in Venice in 1896. In 1914 he moved to Florence, where he lived with his wife, Matilde Forti, and their family in the house on Lungarno Serristori during the period between the two World Wars. In 1921 he took his degree at the University of Florence. Between 1921 and 1924 Giorgio de Chirico spent considerable periods of time in Castelfranco's house, where he created famous works of art and Castelfranco bought some of his paintings. In 1926 he was employed by the Italian Fine Arts Administration in Taranto; in 1927 he moved to Perugia and in 1929, as an inspector, he moved back to Florence. In 1936 he became Director of the Palazzo Pitti Gallery and, in 1938, succeeded in giving the gallery a new display. In that same year, in anticipation of Adolph Hitler's visit to Florence, Castelfranco, as a Jew, was forced out of his position and assigned to the Galleria Estense in Modena. He was fired in February 1939. To survive and to protect his family – by sending them to the United States – he was forced to sell his art collection, including artworks such as *Le Muse Inquietanti* and *Ettore e Andromaca* by De Chirico. After September 8th, 1943, he succeeded in crossing the frontline and reached Puglia, where he worked as Fine Arts General Director of the Ministry of Education throughout the governments of Badoglio and Bonomi. In 1944, when he moved to Rome, he was commissioned by the Minister of Education Guido De Ruggiero to support, together with Emilio Lavagnino, the Allied officers in a survey tour to the warehouses in the Tuscan countryside, where the Florentine museums' artworks had been sheltered. In the autumn of 1946, he was called, as a representative of the Ministry of Education, to take part in the Italian mission for the recovery of works of art in Germany, headed by Rodolfo Siviero. The mission resulted in the exhibition of works of art recovered in Germany held in Rome, at Villa

well as for those included in the Göring-Ventura exchange³³. Comparing these lists with what had remained in Italian warehouses and museums, the members of the Delegation were able to identify the works from Italy. Once solved the French Impressionists *affaire*, considering the good will shown by the Italian Government, the restitution of Italian artworks still in Munich could be more strongly demanded and obtained by the Italian authorities³⁴. But it was only following the 1953 De Gasperi-Adenauer Agreement that another important restitution took place: in June 1954 50 among paintings and sculptures and 35 textiles could return to Italy (Fig. 5).

Meanwhile, Ventura's heirs sued the Italian State. The lawsuit lasted for a long time, until February 27th, 1959. Ventura's heirs started a lawsuit against the Ministry of Education for illegitimate possession of the paintings which were once owned by Ventura, who exchanged them with Göring, and were returned to Italy by the German government. The request was rejected because the heirs were unable to prove the inheritance or ownership of the paintings whose restitution was asked for. In any case the claim would not have been accepted, according to the articles 1 and 2 of the law n. 77 of January 14th, 1950, which states that «for works of artistic interest whose property FOR ANY REASON had been transferred, in the period from January 1st, 1936, to May 8th, 1945, to the German State, or to political figures of the Nazi regime, or to Germans, NO LEGAL ACTION FOR RESTITUTION OR FOR COMPENSATION IS PERMITTED to [...] private individuals who, FOR ANY REASON, had ceded the artworks»³⁵. This law assigned to the Italian State the recovered works, whatever was their origin.

Finally, the Italian works which had once belonged to Ventura were brought back to Florence. From 1953 to 1988 they were kept in storage in the so-called *Recupero Siviero*, which was located in Palazzo Vecchio. Only between 1989 and 1990 they were transferred to their current locations: the Uffizi Gallery and the Museum of Palazzo Davanzati³⁶.

The Ventura case raised important issues about the claims of artworks illegally exported from Italy with the collaboration of Italian antiquarians and art dealers. Since the beginning of the century in Italy there had been laws for the protection of cultural heritage and, in particular, in the period at issue, the so called Bottai Laws were in force³⁷. However, the Fascist government and its corrupt bureaucratic machine allowed these laws to be circumvented. A case in point is the *Discobolo Lancellotti*, whose export was obtained only due to political pressure and which was recovered by Siviero in 1948³⁸. An exodus of artworks out

Farnesina, from November 10th, 1947, to January 10th, 1948, personally supervised by Giorgio Castelfranco as a senior official of the Ministry. The collaboration with Siviero began in 1944, when Castelfranco opened his apartment on Lungarno Serristori to agents and friends, and made it available for the storage of confidential documents. During the fifties Castelfranco was very active as a critic in the organization of contemporary art exhibitions for the Quadriennale d'arte in Rome. Between 1958 and 1964 he directed the Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale, promoting the work of cataloguing and the photographic documentation of Italian works of art. In 1964 he became Superintendent of Galleries in Lazio. He retired in 1966 and died in Rome on November 15th, 1978. The author is presently conducting a PhD on Giorgio Castelfranco at the Department of Cultural Heritage Studies in Ravenna, University of Bologna.

³³ GIORGIO CASTELFRANCO 2015, pp. 15-21.

³⁴ Rome, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, Direzione Generale dell'Antichità e Belle Arti, Div. III, 1929-60, folder no. 147, 1938/55, *Mostre e Recupero: Firenze, Quadri Francesi recuperati presso l'antiquario Eugenio Ventura*, letter to the Italian Mission at the Collecting Point in Munich from the General Director of Italian Fine Arts Administration, April 10th, 1948.

³⁵ AS, box no. 35, folder no. 3/427 *Avvocatura Generale dello Stato, Tribunale di Roma*. Ventura lawsuit final document (copy of), February 27th, 1959. The document has been translated from Italian into English by the author.

³⁶ L'OPERA RITROVATA 1984, pp. 74-75, 80-81, 83-85, 175.

³⁷ For further information see LA NAZIONE ALLO SPECCHIO 2012.

³⁸ BOTTARI 2013, pp. 182-184.

of Italy was thus allowed. Luckily, many of these works were recovered, but many others had a different fate.

Conclusion

As a conclusion of this paper, we pay some attention to *Treasures Untraced*, the catalogue of works which are yet to be recovered, and that we can call «the last of the prisoners of war»³⁹. If we compare the information in this catalogue with the list Siviero drew up in 1954, after the restitution of the Ventura's Italian works⁴⁰ and the inventory of the Göring's collection⁴¹, we could presumably point out the following unrecovered works as of Ventura's provenance:

PAOLO VENEZIANO (d. before 1362) *

28. *Madonna and Child*

Tempera on board

Florence, Private collection

The painting is part of a stylistically homogeneous group united around the *Crowning of the Virgin* of Washington, which today tends to be withdrawn from the catalogue of Paolo and which is assumed to be the work of his brother Marco or of his father, Martino. Muraro, in 1969, remembers the painting in the National Museum of Belgrade. It was exhibited in Zagreb in 1967.

Illegally exported in 1943 from Florence.

Bibl.: ZLAMALIK 1967, p. 20; MURARO 1969, pp. 29, 105, pl. 4; LUCCO 1992, II, p. 541⁴².

SPINELLO ARETINO (1346-1410?) *

31. *Madonna with Child*

Tempera on board

Florence, Private Collection

The painting, on a gold background, develops an unusual theme for the iconography of the enthroned Madonna and Child.

Illegally exported from Florence in 1943.

Bibl.: BOSKOVITS 1975, p. 436⁴³.

PAOLO DI GIOVANNI FEI (c. 1340-1411) *

40. *Madonna and Child, Saints, Annunciation, Crucifixion*

Triptych

Tempera on board

Florence, Private Collection

On the side doors St. Francis, St. John the Baptist, St. Ansano and St. Christopher can be recognised.

Illegally exported in 1943⁴⁴.

PIETRO D'AGNOLO (1391-1422)

³⁹ VICENTINI 1995, p. 15. *TREASURES UNTRACED* 1995 is the English version of the catalogue entitled *L'opera da ritrovare. Repertorio del patrimonio artistico italiano disperso all'epoca della seconda guerra mondiale*, published in the same year.

⁴⁰ AS, box no. 35, folder no. 3/427 *Elenco delle opere d'arte sequestrate all'antiquario Eugenio Ventura fu Luigi e depositate provvisoriamente nel magazzino della Squadra investigativa dei Carabinieri di Firenze*, not dated.

⁴¹ DREYFUS 2015, pp. 554-556, pp. 570-571.

⁴² *TREASURES UNTRACED* 1995, p. 38.

⁴³ *Ivi*, p. 40.

⁴⁴ *Ivi*, p. 46.

71. *Annunciating Angel*

Statue

Polychromatic wood; height 164 cm

Florence, Private Collection

The type of subject matter is precisely comparable to an analogous of the *Annunciation* at S. Maria di Benabbio in Val di Lima (Lucca). The hands show obvious signs of having been restored.

Illegally exported from Florence in 1943⁴⁵.

GIOVANNI DELLA ROBBIA (1469-1529)

179. *Female Bust in a Garland of Fruit*

Relief

Glazed terracotta

Florence, Private Collection

Illegally exported 1943⁴⁶.

GIOVANNI DELLA ROBBIA (1469-1529)

180. *Male Bust in a Garland of Fruit*

Relief

Glazed terracotta

Florence, Private Collection

Illegally exported 1943⁴⁷.

GIOVANNI DELLA ROBBIA (1469-1529)

181. *Garland of Fruit*

Relief

Glazed terracotta

Florence, Private Collection

Illegally exported 1943⁴⁸.

TYROLEAN, 17th century

339. *Small Angel Kneeling*

Statue

Carved wood

Florence, Private Collection

Illegally exported 1943⁴⁹.

The three artworks marked with * were returned to Yugoslavia by Allied authorities responsible for the Central Collecting Point in Munich; the present whereabouts of the others is unknown⁵⁰. In light of what has been reported about the unrecovered items from Ventura's collection and considering the fact that these are only a very small part of all the unrecovered works listed in the catalogue *Treasures untraced*, we can conclude that there is much research still to do to recover Italian cultural heritage illegally exported during wartime by Italian art dealers, such as Eugenio Ventura.

⁴⁵ *Ivi*, pp. 58-59.

⁴⁶ *Ivi*, p. 97.

⁴⁷ *Ivi*, p. 97.

⁴⁸ *Ivi*, p. 97.

⁴⁹ *Ivi*, pp. 146-147.

⁵⁰ Hermann Göring's collection database, https://www.dhm.de/datenbank/goering/dhm_goering.php?seite=9 <May, 2019>

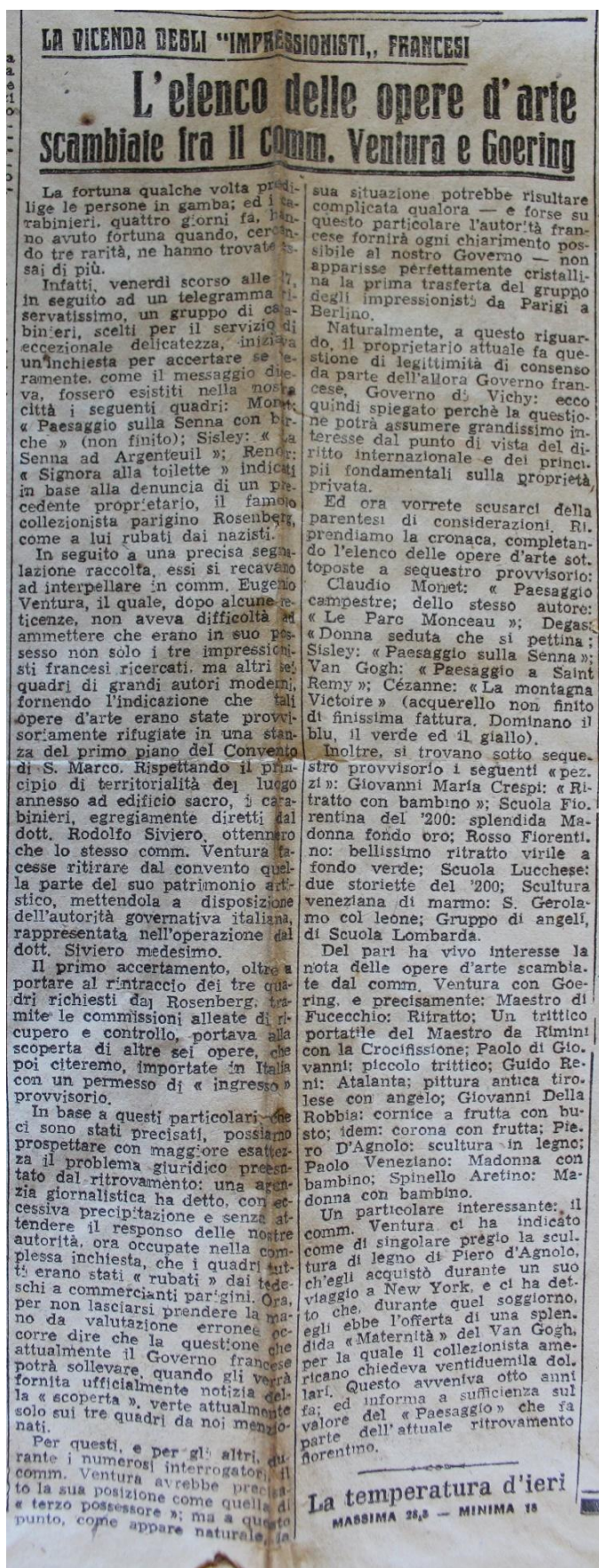


Fig. 2. L'elenco delle opere d'arte scambiate fra il comm. Ventura e Goering, «La Nazione del Popolo», August 14th, 1945, digitized copy from the newspaper kept in the Museo di Casa Siviero, Florence



Fig. 3: *La vicenda dei quadri francesi*, «La Nazione del Popolo», August 15th, 1945, digitized copy from the newspaper kept in the Museo di Casa Siviero, Florence

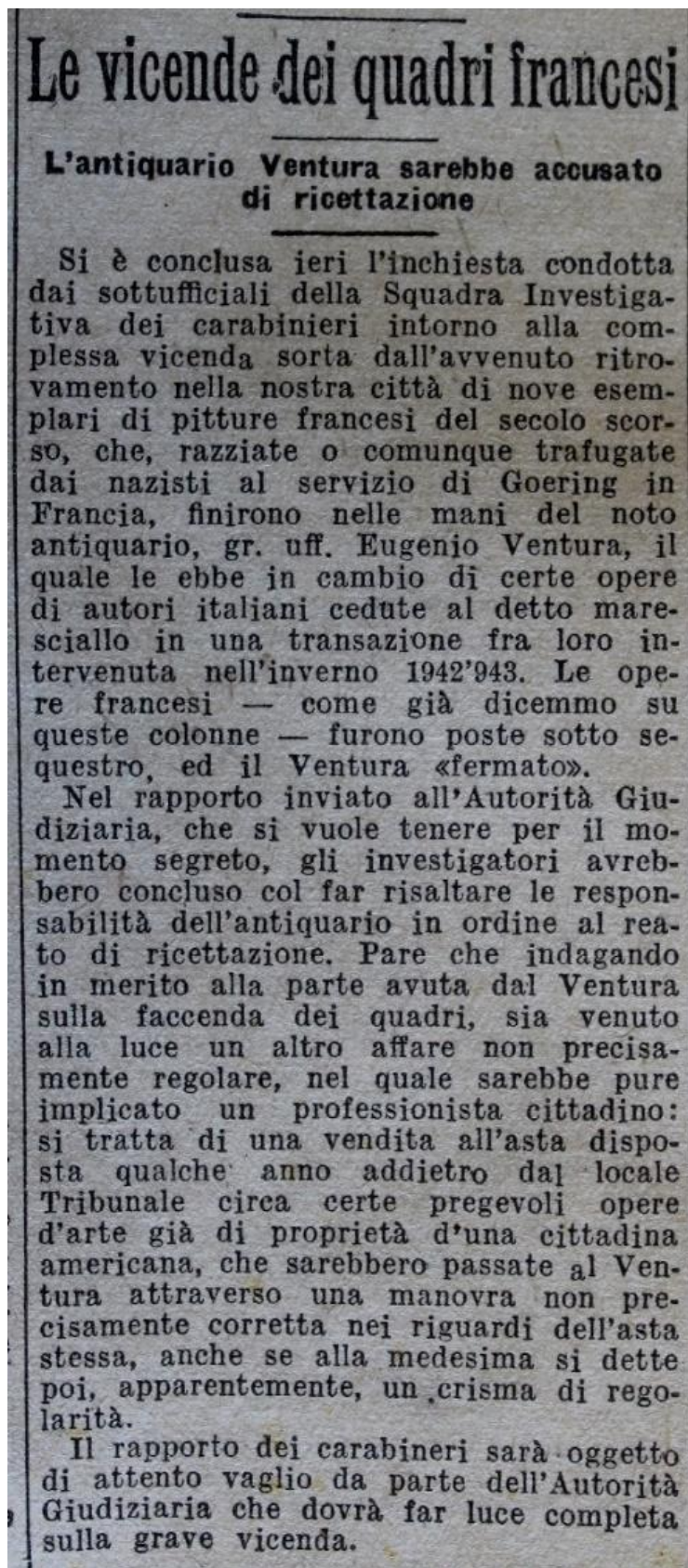


Fig. 4. *Le vicende dei quadri francesi*, «Il Nuovo Corriere», September 4th, 1945, digitized copy from the newspaper kept in the Museo di Casa Siviero, Florence

IL GIORNALE D'ITALIA

Mercoledì 7 Aprile 1954 — Pag. 3

MOSTRATE NELLA GALLERIA BORGHESA AD ALTE PERSONALITÀ DEL GOVERNO DELLA DIPLOMAZIA E DELLA CRITICA

Ritorno in Italia delle opere esportate abusivamente da Goering

Si tratta di cinquanta tra dipinti e sculture e trentacinque tessuti restituiti in seguito agli accordi raggiunti in una prima fase di negoziati diretti con il Governo di Bonn - Un curioso dono? - I futuri compiti della nostra Delegazione

ra che se ne creasse e conservasse per sempre, e questa era l'idea che si era formata in Goering, come si è visto, e che si era conservata fino a oggi. Ma non si trattava di un'opera d'arte, ma di un'opera di propaganda. E Goering, che era un uomo di potere, non poteva permettersi di essere sconfitto. E così, quando si era trattato di restituire le opere, si era trattato di un'opera di propaganda. E Goering, che era un uomo di potere, non poteva permettersi di essere sconfitto. E così, quando si era trattato di restituire le opere, si era trattato di un'opera di propaganda.

In tre tempi

Non appena intrate le trattative dirette i tedeschi proposero di dividere queste in tre tempi, con il compito di risolvere tutte le questioni inerenti al gruppo Goering, esposto ora alla Biennale, e al gruppo Hitler, comprendente opere di modernismo, futurismo e avanguardia, e al gruppo Hitler, comprendente opere di modernismo, futurismo e avanguardia, e al gruppo Hitler, comprendente opere di modernismo, futurismo e avanguardia.

Le opere esposte

A Villa Borghese, ora, si è aperto il gruppo Goering, che si compone di cinquanta tra dipinti e sculture e trentacinque tessuti. Le opere esposte sono di varia natura, ma tutte di grande valore artistico. Tra le opere più importanti si possono citare: "La donna con il bambino" di Masolino da Panicale, "La donna con il bambino" di Masolino da Panicale, "La donna con il bambino" di Masolino da Panicale.

La destinazione

Le opere d'arte, secondo il regolamento generale delle restituzioni, devono ritornare nei luoghi di provenienza, o, se costoro sono stati esportati illegalmente, essere conservati nei musei della città da cui sono provenute. Tuttavia, quando si tratta di opere d'arte di grande valore, si può decidere di conservarle nei musei della città da cui sono provenute, o, se costoro sono stati esportati illegalmente, essere conservati nei musei della città da cui sono provenute.

Lavoro non facile

Le trattative per il gruppo Goering furono lunghe e difficili. Si trattava di restituire opere d'arte di grande valore, e di farlo in un tempo breve. Le trattative furono lunghe e difficili, ma alla fine si raggiunse un accordo. Le opere d'arte, secondo il regolamento generale delle restituzioni, devono ritornare nei luoghi di provenienza, o, se costoro sono stati esportati illegalmente, essere conservati nei musei della città da cui sono provenute.

GIORNALE DELLE LETTERE

POESIA DI BERTO BARBARANI

La poesia di Berto Barbarani è una poesia di grande valore. Si tratta di una poesia di grande valore, e di farlo in un tempo breve. Le trattative furono lunghe e difficili, ma alla fine si raggiunse un accordo. Le opere d'arte, secondo il regolamento generale delle restituzioni, devono ritornare nei luoghi di provenienza, o, se costoro sono stati esportati illegalmente, essere conservati nei musei della città da cui sono provenute.

Fig. 5: *Ritorno in Italia delle opere esportate abusivamente da Goering*, «Il Giornale d'Italia», June 7th, 1954, digitized copy from the newspaper kept in the Museo di Casa Siviero, Florence

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ABSTRACT

The exchange of artworks between Hermann Göring and Eugenio Ventura is one example of illegal art trade carried out by Italian antiquarians with the agents of Hitler and Göring before and during the Second World War. The French paintings Göring gave to Eugenio Ventura were looted by ERR from Jews' collections in Nazi-occupied France, including the collections of the Rosenberg, Rotschild, Kann and Lindon (Lindenbaum) families. Thus, works by Monet, Renoir, Degas, Cézanne, Sisley and Van Gogh came to enrich the Göring's collection between 1941 and 1942; they were then used by Göring as 'exchange currency'. On March 8th, 1943, Göring's art agent Walter Hofer signed a deal with Ventura involving the exchange of about sixteen Italian works of art with Impressionist masterpieces.

On August 10th, 1945, the Impressionist paintings were discovered – in the Convent of San Marco in Florence where Ventura had them hidden – by Rodolfo Siviero, head of the Italian Office for the recovery of works of art. Once proven that the works of art had been stolen in France and after appearing at the French art exhibition held in 1946 at Palazzo Venezia in Rome, they were handed over to the Commission de Récupération Artistique and from there to their legitimate owners. However, the Italian works collected at the Collecting Point in Munich were identified by the Italian Diplomatic Mission for the Restitution of Works of Art in Germany between 1946 and 1947. It was only in 1954 that some of them returned to Italy and were relocated to various Florentine museums. Others were delivered to Yugoslavia. Those remaining were kept by the Allies and traces of them have been lost.

Lo scambio Göring-Ventura è un esempio di quel commercio illecito di opere d'arte che gli antiquari italiani misero in pratica insieme con gli agenti in Italia di Adolf Hitler e di Hermann Göring negli anni precedenti e durante la Seconda guerra mondiale. In particolare si tratta di uno scambio fra capolavori di Impressionisti francesi (Monet, Renoir, Degas, Cézanne, Sisley e Van Gogh), che erano stati confiscati dall'ERR nella Francia occupata a famiglie ebraiche come quelle dei Rosenberg, i Rothschild, Kann e Lindon (Lindenbaum). Tra il 1941 e il 1942 le opere andarono così ad arricchire la collezione Göring e vennero poi da lui come 'merce di scambio' con una serie di opere di antica arte italiana possedute dall'antiquario fiorentino Eugenio Ventura.

Dopo la guerra, su richiesta della Francia, lo scambio fu oggetto di indagine da parte dell'Ufficio Recupero Opere d'Arte, al cui comando era Rodolfo Siviero. Ventura fu condannato e le opere vennero riconsegnate alla Commission de Récupération Artistique del Governo francese e da questa ai legittimi proprietari. Le opere già di Ventura, invece, raccolte presso il Collecting Point di Monaco, vennero individuate dalla Missione italiana per il Recupero delle Opere d'Arte in Germania tra il 1946 e il 1947. Solo nel 1954 alcune opere riportate in Italia e successivamente assegnate a due musei fiorentini; altre consegnate alla ex Yugoslavia; delle restanti, rimaste in custodia agli Alleati, si sono perse le tracce.