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**UNITED STATES RETURNS 11 OIL PAINTINGS TAKEN DURING
WORLD WORLD II TO PIRMASSENS, GERMANY**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and JAMES T. HAYES, JR., the Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Office of the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"), announced today that 11 oil paintings that were taken by a U.S. serviceman from a Pirmasens air raid shelter after the allied invasion of Germany in 1945, was returned at repatriation ceremony at the Goethe-Institut in Manhattan, New York. The paintings, several by a hometown artist, are on their way home to Pirmasens Museum in Germany.

The grand-niece of the U.S. serviceman, BETH ANN McFADDEN, who on inheriting the collection sought to find out how her great-uncle had acquired them. She and a friend discovered that the paintings were among 40 in the Pirmasens municipal museum's collection that were missing from a storage area under the local school building after World War II.

McFADDEN, the grand-niece of former Army sergeant HARRY GURSKY, conducted extensive research on the paintings' provenance and discovered the connection to Pirmasens. GURSKY, who died in 1988, was stationed in Pirmasens after the invasion. McFADDEN contacted German authorities who informed her that ICE had an open investigation.

On February 2, 2010, McFADDEN surrendered the paintings to ICE Agent BONNIE GOLDBLATT who, with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, formally seized them.

Agent GOLDBLATT conducted extensive interviews of McFADDEN and others who knew GURSKY. The stories were consistent with McFADDEN's belief that most of the paintings were hidden in her great-uncle's basement since he brought them back from Germany. She had also insisted that a neighbor of the GURSKY's might have received some paintings. The ensuing ICE investigation confirmed that GURSKY's wife, Florence, had given a family friend several paintings. It was discovered that the friend had attempted to sell her paintings at Sotheby's Auction House in New York and sold three through a Pennsylvania auction house. Investigation into the sale of those paintings is ongoing.

Three of the paintings are works by HEINRICH BUERKEL, a German painter who was born in Pirmasens. "Herd of Cattle," "From the Countryside" and an untitled third painting are estimated to each be worth \$50,000. In addition, seven oil portraits by lesser-known artists depicting the children of LUDWIG IX are valued at \$4,000 each. An ALOIS BROCH is estimated to be worth approximately \$10,000.

Three other paintings were seized through a stipulation order filed in the Southern District of New York on March 2, 2010, including the unsigned BUERKEL painting, an additional portrait of a LUDWIG IX family member, and an oil painting depicting a young girl and an angel signed by ALOIS BROCH.

In 2006 three paintings by BUERKEL were brought to the attention of the Federal Bureau of Investigation by German authorities and returned to the Pirmasens Museum.

Although the city of Pirmasens was heavily damaged in air attacks by allied forces on military manufacturing in the city, the schoolhouse, which doubled as an air raid shelter, was left standing. Unfortunately, according to museum officials, extensive looting had resulted in the loss of approximately 40 works, 18 by BUERKEL.

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U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA stated: "Without the integrity and good will of Beth Ann McFadden, the repatriation of these paintings to the Pirmasens Museum could not have taken place. Each work of art returned symbolizes an act of justice, bringing us one step closer to the goal of repatriating all of the surviving pieces taken from museums during World War II."

ICE Special Agent-in-Charge JAMES T. HAYES stated: "We want to thank Beth McFadden for having the integrity to ask where these beautiful artworks she inherited came from and returning them to the museum that lost them in the chaos of war. There are still dozens of these paintings missing from Pirmasens. We hope that this example will prompt others who might have 'mystery' paintings in the family to bring them to ICE. If they are stolen art, let the United States return them to their rightful owners."

Mr. BHARARA praised the investigative work of ICE in this matter, and its ongoing efforts to find and repatriate stolen works of art and artifacts.

Assistant United States Attorneys SHARON COHEN LEVIN and SEETHA RAMACHANDRAN are in charge of the investigation and repatriation.

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