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**U.S. Immigration  
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## **U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement**

### **News Releases**

**December 1, 2009** SHARE

### **ICE returns painting stolen during Holocaust *Rare painting belonged to a Jewish family in Belgium forced to flee during World War II***

BRUSSELS - An early 20th century painting of a young girl with her pet rabbit by famous Belgian artist Antoine (Anto) Carte is back in the hands of its subject 69 years after it was stolen by the Nazis. On Dec. 1, at the Jewish Museum of Belgium, the Kingdom of Belgium and the United States government returned the painting to the owner, who does not wish to be named. Her family commissioned her portrait by a family friend. The painting was located by the Art Loss Register, an international database of lost and stolen art, antiques and collectibles, and recovered by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) New York Office of Investigations.

"Jeune Fille à la Robe Bleue" was created in 1932 and displayed at the family's winter home in Ohain, Belgium, before being stolen by the Nazis during World War II. The child depicted in the portrait fled Brussels with her family during the Nazi Occupation and survived the war in the Belgian countryside.

The family's abandoned apartment in Brussels was looted in 1944 and five oil paintings, including the Anto Carte portrait, disappeared. In 1946, the family filed a claim for their missing paintings at the Belgian office for looted art and the portrait was published in the "Repertoire des biens spoliés," a listing of Belgian war losses.

The painting did not re-surface until 1990, where it was sold by Christie's auction house in London to a buyer in the United States. In November 2008, ICE received information from the Art Loss Register that led ICE investigators and the U.S. Attorney's Office to a Long Island art gallery owned by Andre Sakhai. Sakhai was informed that the painting had been stolen by the Nazis and

that it was registered in several stolen art databases. Sakhai cooperated in forfeiting the painting, valued at about \$15,000.

"ICE is committed to recovering all pieces of art and other culturally significant artifacts stolen during World War II and returning them to their rightful owners," said Raymond R. Parmer, Jr., director of the ICE Office of International Affairs. "We work with our law enforcement partners around the world to bring these cases home."

"The United States is extremely pleased to return this looted art six decades after it was stolen from its rightful owner in Belgium during World War II. The painting traveled the world before ICE located it earlier this year at a gallery in New York. The United States is committed to working with our foreign counterparts in joint efforts to ensure that all looted works of art are repatriated to their rightful owner. This repatriation would not have been possible if not for the outstanding collaboration between United States and Belgian authorities," said Howard Gutman, U.S. Ambassador to Belgium.

"Over 70 years ago, the Nazis began their reign of terror which included the theft of precious artwork and cultural property throughout Europe," said Benton J. Campbell, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York. "It is a privilege to play a role in returning this painting to the same family that was victimized so long ago at the hands of a brutal regime."

ICE, the largest investigative agency of the Department of Homeland Security, has a special unit known as the Cultural Property, Art and Antiquities program, which coordinates such investigations from the National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center in Virginia. The unit is part of the Department of State's Holocaust Art Recovery Working Group.

For more about ICE's cultural heritage investigations, please go to: <http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/factsheets/index.htm> (<http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/factsheets/>).

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

ICE comprises four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities. For more information, visit [www.ICE.gov](http://www.ICE.gov). To report suspicious activity, call

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