

Nazi hunt finds nothing as museum is cleared

BY DAVID HURLEY

THE Hunt Museum has welcomed the conclusions of an independent inquiry that states there is no evidence to suggest certain artefacts at the museum were acquired from individuals implicated in wartime looting.

The allegations were initially made in February 2004 when the Simon Wiesenthal Centre wrote to President Mary McAleese calling for the suspension of the "Irish Museum of the Year Award," which had been conferred upon the Hunt Museum.

In his letter, the centre's director for international liaison, Dr Shimon Samuels, called for an inquiry to investigate the possibility that part of the Hunt collection had "Nazi" connections. He said: "To do

otherwise would impugn the good name of this prestigious award and deny justice, after 60 years, to eventual Holocaust survivor heirs, before it is too late."

In May 2005, an evaluation group was established to investigate the claims. The independent group was funded by the Government and administered by the Royal Irish Academy.

In its final report, the group states: "the report establishes that the Simon Wiesenthal Centre have based their allegation on a single army intelligence file held at the military archives in Dublin. The report establishes that this file does not provide any evidence for claiming that John and Gertrude Hunt were Nazis or were dealing in objects looted by the Nazis."

However, the detailed report points out that there is "no provenance" for many of the objects in the Hunt Museum collection and

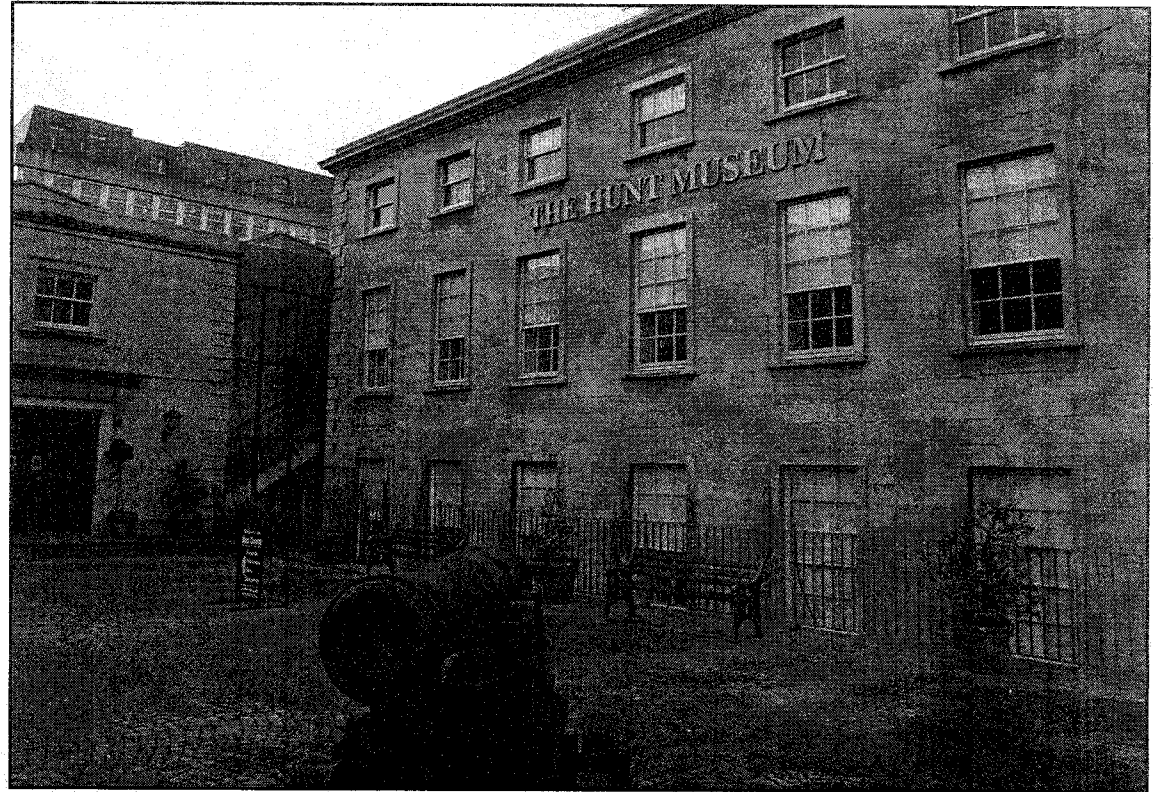
it says "the highest priority" should be given to continued provenance research.

In a statement, the Hunt Museum has welcomed the final findings of the evaluation group:

"The allegations made by the Simon Wiesenthal Centre caused inexplicable pain to the Hunt family and severely damaged the reputation of John and Gertrude Hunt.

Given the serious nature of the allegations made, the sensational manner in which they were publicised, it is alarming to learn that the only basis for these unfounded allegations is this single file.

Furthermore, it is very difficult to understand why the Simon Wiesenthal Centre did not reveal this file immediately. If the documentation were revealed, the file could have been independently examined, as is now the case," said a spokesperson for the museum.



All-clear: An independent inquiry has found no evidence linking artefacts in the Hunt Museum to Nazi looted art. The allegations by the Wiesenthal Centre caused 'inexplicable pain' to the Hunt family