### News

# Hunt engages Wiesenthal Centre about Nazi claims

Museum 'enters dialogue' with Jewish organisation after call for fresh investigation

THE Hunt Museum in Limerick has now "begun a dialogue" with the Parisbased Simon Wiesenthal Centre, which has repeatedly alleged the founders of the museum had Nazi connections.

Virginia Teehan, director of the museum, said it is hoped these discussions "will lead to a more constructive approach to dealing with this matter"

This Monday in Prague, the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, an international Jewish advocacy organisation, called for a fresh investigation into alleged links between the founders of the Hunt Museum in Limerick and Nazi sympathisers and looters.

At a conference on "Holocaust era assets", the centre said it wanted access to official archives and other materials as part of an independent investigation into the provenance of the 2,000 objects on display in the Limerick museum.

### **Proactive search**

Dr Shimon Samuels, the centre's director for international relations, said he was "happy to report" talks with the Irish delegation discussed an invitation to a Wiesenthal Centre researcher "to access relevant archives, and a proposal for a proactive notices to the principal and Tourism, and the Irish kind of espionage or traf- Museum archives. She also



Virginia Teehan, director of the Hunt Museum, reported from Prague that Dr Lynn Nicholas has stood over her report that rejected suggestions part of the Limerick museum's collection was looted by Nazis

However, Ms Teehan said she wished to clarify that the Hunt Museum archives are fully listed and their archives have been open to the public since 2005.

Among the Irish delegation in Prague were Ms authority on Nazi-looted Teehan, Yvonne O'Connor, Irish Jewish Museum, a senior civil servant in the search for heirs through Department of Arts, Sport they were involved in any

Jewish and restitution Ambassador to the Czech ficking in looted art.

recent years have cleared she confirmed that she the late John and Gertrude Hunt, founders of the the report, which conmuseum, of involvement in cluded that the archives trafficking in looted art.

One such report was by Dr Lynn Nicholas, a world art, who said there was "no proof whatsoever" that they were Nazis, or that

epublic. "Dr Nicholas was at the A number of reports in conference in Prague and stands over the findings of did not contain any information which supports the allegations of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre," said Ms Teehan.

She added: "Dr Nicholas had full and complete access to the

papers of the Hunt family, which are held in private

The Simon Wiesenthal Centre first raised questions about the provenance of some of the museum's collection in a letter to President Mary McAleese

At that time, they urged this Monday. President McAleese to withdraw the "Irish Museum of the Year Award" that she had just matter.

**Nicholas** confirmed that she stands over the findings of the report, which concluded that the archives did not contain any information which supports the allegations of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre,"

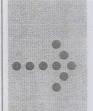
"Dr Lynn

- Virginia Teehan

had access to the private bestowed upon the Hunt Museum, pending an inde-

pendent investigation. "This resulted in an provenance admirable enquiry by the museum's director, but the founders' activities were totally ignored by a three-year government appointed enquiry," said Dr Samuels,

The Centre's director has now entered into talks with Ms Teehan on the



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# Hunt's 'Da Vinci' horse probably from the 19th, not 15th, century

A BRONZE horse at the Hunt Museum which was thought to have come from the workshop of Leonardo da Vinci is likely to have been cast in the late 19th century, and not the 15th century, according to the findings of an international research project.

The bronze Horse has been displayed at the Limerick museum for the past 15 years and was purchased in the late 1960s by John and Hunt Gertrude Sotheby's in London for £400.

Sotheby's description in the 1966 auction catalogue described it as a "bronze figure of a rearing horse, cast from a model by Leonardo da Vinci".



The bronze rearing horse

However, forensic tests carried out as part of an international research project examining Renaissance bronzes have found the Hunt horse was "unquestionably more recent", and possibly late 19th century.

According to conserva-

held in New York, Budapest and London.

Virginia Teehan, director of the Hunt Museum, said very little was known about the piece apart from the fact that it was purchased in good faith by the Hunts at Sotheby's and the catalogue for that sale attributed it to Leonardo da Vinci.

"The description in the catalogue stated that it was believed to have been cast from a model by Leonardo da Vinci. John Hunt bought this piece in good faith and believed it to be as described by Sotheby's," said Ms Teehan.

tors at the National Gallery technology have made it visitors," she said.

of Art in Washington the possible to examine objects bronze horse differs in in much greater forensic alloy and fracture from the detail. The focus of other horses which are museum work is to research the objects contained in the collection and this can yield unexpected results," she added.

Ms Teehan said the Museum "pleased and privileged" to participate in the National Gallery of Art study, which was also part of background research for the forthcoming exhibition -The Budapest Horse: A Leonardo da Vinci Puzzle due to open in Washington on July 3.

"The Rearing Horse is a very beautiful object and will remain a very important item in the collection which will continue to "Recent advances in interest and engage our

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