

News

Hunt engages Wiesenthal Centre about Nazi claims

■ Museum ‘enters dialogue’ with Jewish organisation after call for fresh investigation

Anne Sheridan

THE Hunt Museum in Limerick has now “begun a dialogue” with the Paris-based 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 search for heirs through notices to the principal



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

Jewish and restitution websites”.

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 Teehan, Yvonne O’Connor, Irish Jewish Museum, a senior civil servant in the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, and the Irish

Ambassador to the Czech Republic.

A number of reports in recent years have cleared the late John and Gertrude Hunt, founders of the museum, of involvement in trafficking in looted art.

One such report was by Dr Lynn Nicholas, a world authority on Nazi-looted art, who said there was “no proof whatsoever” that they were Nazis, or that they were involved in any kind of espionage or traf-

ficking in looted art.

“Dr Nicholas was at the conference in Prague and she 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,” said Ms Teehan.

She added: “Dr Nicholas had full and complete access to the Hunt Museum archives. She also

had access to the private papers of the Hunt family, which are held in private hands.”

The Simon Wiesenthal Centre first raised questions about the provenance of some of the museum’s collection in a letter to President Mary McAleese in 2004.

At that time, they urged President McAleese to withdraw the “Irish Museum of the Year Award” that she had just

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- Virginia Teehan

bestowed upon the Hunt Museum, pending an independent investigation.

“This resulted in an admirable provenance enquiry by the museum’s director, but the founders’ activities were totally ignored by a three-year government appointed enquiry,” said Dr Samuels, this Monday.

The Centre’s director has now entered into talks with Ms Teehan on the matter.

Hunt’s ‘Da Vinci’ horse probably from the 19th, not 15th, century

Anne Sheridan

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 Rearing Horse has been displayed at the Limerick museum for the past 15 years and was purchased in the late 1960s by John and Gertrude Hunt at 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 conservators at the National Gallery

of Art in Washington the bronze horse differs in alloy and fracture from the other horses which are 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.

“Recent advances in technology have made it

possible to examine objects in much greater forensic detail. The focus of museum work is to research the objects contained in the collection and this can yield unexpected results,” she added.

Ms Teehan said the Hunt Museum was “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 interest and engage our visitors,” she said.

Evening Programmes September



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	COURSE	EVENING	WKS	€	COURSE	
COMPUTERS	AutoCAD - 2D - Introduction	Tu, W	14	220	CRAFT / LEISURE	Bridge Classes
	Computer Applications - Beginners	M, Tu, Th	10	150		Card Making
	Computer Applications - Continuation	M, W	10	150		Contemporary Quilting Design E
	Computer Programming - Beginners	M	12	220		Creative Writing
	European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL)	W	28	500		Crochet Skills
	European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL)	M & Th	14	500		Curtain and Cushion-making
	Internet & E-Mail - Introduction	Tu	10	150		Decorate Your Home For Less
	Internet & E-Mail for the Senior Citizen	Th	10	150		Enabling Parents
	JEB Teachers Diploma in Education Practice	Tu & Th	28	700		Emotional Freedom Techniques
	Keyboard Skills for Computers	W	10	150		Fashion Design - Dressmaking
	Network Essentials	Tu	12	220		Fashion Design Dressmaking Co
	Photoshop - Introduction	M	10	200		Fashion Design - Fashion Wear
	Website Design - HTML/Dreamweaver	Th	12	220		Flamenco Dance
						Floral Design Basic
						Floral Design Advanced
	Accounting - Accountancy CPA (per subject)	M & W	27	250	Fusing Fabric	
	Accounting Technician IATI	M & W	27	650	Gardening - Landscape Design	
	Accounting - Manual and Computerised	Th	12	220	Hair Up-Styles	
	Bookkeeping - Manual and Computerised	Tu	12	220	Interior Design	
	Dip in Economic Science with Info Systems	M & W	28	650	Introduction to Golf	
	BSc Business Degree, University of London	M & W	28	750	Life Writing	
	Business Communication & Presentation Skills	W	10	150	Make Up Techniques	
	Community Development	M	10	150	Mosaic Design	
	Customer Service	Tu	12	220	Photography - Beginners	
	Door Security Procedures	Tu	10	220	Photography Techniques	
	Diploma in Disability Studies UCC	M	24	1050	Photography - Digital (Hobby)	
	Diploma in Youth & Community Work UCC	M	28	1050	Photography - Digital (FETAC)	
	Frontline Management IMI Cert. (IMI Reg. Fee 350)	M	12	350	Photography - Black & White	
	Graphic Design in Business	Th	8	150		

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