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Sarah Gensburger

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WITNESSING *the* ROBBING of THE JEWS

A Photographic Album, Paris, 1940-1944

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Translated by Jonathan Hensher with the collaboration of Elisabeth Fourmont

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Sarah Gensburger : Witnessing the Robbing of the Jews: A Photographic Album, Paris, 1940-1944 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Witnessing the Robbing of the Jews: A Photographic Album, Paris, 1940-1944:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Best, though Limited, Photographic Documentation of German/French Plunder of French Jews during WWII By dante benedetti the photographs are not as diverse and comprehensive as one would like but, after all, the massive and thorough theft of Jewish property was not a crime that the perpetrators wanted to fully document. of course, catalogs and inventories were prepared, at least of the property that was not siphoned off by the various officials who had access to it. in the process recording the theft for inventory control purposes, some, few, photographs were taken. but, the most impressive property, including valuable paintings, tapestries, sculpture, religious or ritual objects, including those of precious metals, jewelry, fine furniture, manuscripts, books, automobiles, etc., largely escaped photographic documentation. yes, there are some important exceptions but the rule was that the thieves acted more or less like thieves, with a thief's obsession with secrecy, even though, in the case at hand, they acted under German and French law. much of the stolen property is probably now in the hands of the families of the thieves or in the hands of others to whom they transferred the property...after the war, determined

efforts were made to block the recovery of the stolen property by the families of the victims.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Such an important collection of photos and a stellar job by GensburgerBy E. RyneckiWe know the Nazis took everything people, communities, lives, homes, land, and personal property but these photographs show the massive extent of the looting. And more than anything else, these photos speak volumes about the attempts to erase and forget the people and families whose stories are behind each and every one of these items on display. Nazis were invited to buy these goods, and they did. But as we gaze upon these photos we bring with us an understanding of what these items without their owners really means. The snapshots of personal property become incredibly surreal and deeply disturbing because although we dont know the exact fate of each of the people who once owned these goods, we have a pretty darn good idea of what happened to them.

The center of the art world before the war, Paris fired the Nazis greed. The discovery of more than 1,500 prized paintings and drawings in a private Munich residence, as well as a recent movie about Allied attempts to recover European works of art, have brought Nazi plundering back into the headlines, but the thievery was far from being limited to works of art. From 1942 onwards, ordinary Parisian Jewsmostly poor families and recent immigrants from Eastern Europewere robbed, not of sculptures or paintings, but of toys, saucepans, furniture, and sheets. Witnessing the Robbing of the Jews tells how this vast enterprise of plunder was implemented in the streets of Paris by analyzing images from an album of photographs found in the Federal Archives of Koblenz. Brought from Paris in 1945, the photographs were cataloged by the staff of the Munich Central Collecting Point. Beyond bearing witness to the petty acts of larceny, these images provide crucial information on how the Germans saw their work. They enable us to grasp the "Nazi gaze" and to confront the issue of the relation between greed and mass destruction.

The material for Sarah Gensburger's study is for the most part previously unseen: a collection of eighty-five photos taken in France during the Occupation [...] These are particularly powerful images. They are all the more so because of the meaning that is given to them through the analysis and historical commentary of the author (Anne Grynberg *Etudes Photographiques*)Sarah Gensburger's comments on each photograph are fascinating in light of the reproductions [...] The great value of this publication lies in providing original material on the history of the plundering, while cultivating prudence and distance in its gaze. Thus, it gives us access both to the traces of the past and to the work of the historian, who explores, supposes, deduces and sometimes lets a healthy doubt linger. (Claire Zalc *Vingtime Sicle. Revue d'histoire*)Thebook servesasan importantsource for anyone interestedinthe Holocaustin France, looting, forced labor, or reading images as historical source. (H-France)The album, which was kept in the German Federal Archives in Koblenz, depicts furniture and crates being loaded into trucks, as well as these images of everyday household objects, assembled in massive groups. . .Looked at this way, a photo of a room full of bedding is also an image of the erasure of Jewish homes. (Slate's "The Vault")*[Gensburger]* masterfully turns this album of photographs into a dynamic history of Nazi looting, making it essential for both scholars and teachers of Holocaust history. (German Studies) With piercing insight, Sarah Gensburger guides readers through this extraordinary collection of German photographs documenting the Nazi looting of Jewish homes in wartime Paris.At the operations height up to eighty French moving vans a day hauled plunder to secret German depots in the heart of the city where Jewish prisoners were forced to pack the shipping crates bound for Germany.Gensburgers account captures what these pictures reveal, ironically, about a project designed to eradicate all traces of its victims and their world.A singular contribution to Holocaust history and a brilliant model of photographic analysis. (Herrick Chapman editor, *French Politics, Culture, and Society*)A wonderful and telling record. Only now are historians seriously engaging with the material plunder that accompanied the Holocaust. The remarkable text that accompanies the photographs, dry-eyed, precise, yet moving, consolidates Sarah Gensburgers reputation as one of the most insightful and innovative historians of the Holocaust in France today. (Mark Roseman author *Documenting Life and Destruction: Jewish Responses to Persecution, 1933-1946*)These photographs reveal a whole new dimension of the Nazi spoliation of Jewish property in occupied France. Art theft is well known. Who knew that the Nazis also sent to Germany 674 trainloads of household goods from the apartments of deported Jews? The heaps of used toys, pans, chairs, and clocks are a pitiful final trace of destroyed families. They also show how the Nazis tried to anonymize their victims for annihilation, and to profit from their distress. Sarah Gensburger has edited them with precision and with a keen sense of multiple ways to read images. (Robert O. Paxton author of *Vichy France and The Anatomy of Fascism*)About the AuthorSarah Gensburger is researcher in social sciences at the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS). She is author of *Ctaient des enfants: Dportation et sauvetage des enfants juifs Paris* and (with Jean-Marc Dreyfus) of *Nazi Labor Camps in Paris* and editor (with Claire Andrieu and Jacques Semelin) of *Resisting Genocides*.Jonathan Hensher is a lecturer in French Studies at the University of Manchester.Elisabeth Fourmont is a freelance translator in Paris.