

ACTUAL FILMS

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present



WRITTEN, PRODUCED & DIRECTED BY

RICHARD BERGE, BONNI COHEN AND NICOLE NEWNHAM

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CREDITS

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NICOLE NEWNHAM
AND
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EDITOR JOSH PETERSON

MUSIC COMPOSED BY MARCO D'AMBROSIO

NARRATOR JOAN ALLEN

CO-PRODUCER ROBERT EDSEL

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER BONNI COHEN

BASED ON *THE RAPE OF EUROPA* BY LYNN H. NICHOLAS

The film was made possible in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts, federal agencies.

SYNOPSIS

The Rape of Europa tells the epic story of the systematic theft, deliberate destruction and miraculous survival of Europe's art treasures during the Third Reich and World War II.

In a journey through seven countries, the film takes the audience into the violent whirlwind of fanaticism, greed, and warfare that threatened to wipe out the artistic heritage of Europe. For twelve long years, the Nazis looted and destroyed art on a scale unprecedented in history. But heroic young art historians and curators from America and across Europe fought back with a miraculous campaign to rescue and return the millions of lost, hidden and stolen treasures.

The Rape of Europa begins and ends with the story of artist Gustav Klimt's famed *Gold Portrait*, stolen from Viennese Jews in 1938 and now the most expensive painting ever sold.

Today, more than sixty years later, the legacy of this tragic history continues to play out as families of looted collectors recover major works of art, conservators repair battle damage, and nations fight over the fate of ill-gotten spoils of war.

Joan Allen narrates this breathtaking chronicle about the battle over the very survival of centuries of western culture.

BACKGROUND

According to U.S. estimates, the Nazis stole one-fifth of all the known artworks in Europe. While the Allies returned most of the displaced art in the decade following the war, much of the loot is still missing. Tragically, unique masterpieces were destroyed and lost to posterity forever. Other works of art—the last, forgotten victims of the war—survived but remain unidentified, traceable only with costly and difficult investigation.

By the mid-fifties the initial, massive restitution effort by the Allies had lost its priority and momentum to the pressures of the Cold War. Hundreds of works of art, their owners unidentified, still lay in government storerooms across Europe, or remained in the hands of unscrupulous dealers who waited for years before disguising their origins and feeding them slowly into the market.

But this long quiet period is over. The end of the Cold War and the opening of the archives of Eastern Europe revealed that many works believed lost had survived. The commemorations marking the end of World War II and the development of Holocaust scholarship also led to the re-examination and declassification of forgotten records, inspiring those who had long since despaired of finding their lost possessions to search again. Instrumental in bringing worldwide attention to this long-neglected story was the 1995 publication of *The Rape of Europa*, Lynn H. Nicholas's landmark book on which the film is based.

The documentary film by Actual Films builds on her scholarship by incorporating the latest historical research, examining the legal and political problems presented by contemporary restitution claims, and assessing the lingering effects of this massive cultural displacement, an aspect of the war that still haunts us today.

The revival of interest in the subject of looting and restitution has had dramatic results. American museums from Seattle, Washington to Raleigh, North Carolina have had to explain how stolen paintings ended up in their collections after the war. In France, a catalogue of unclaimed art held by the national museums and ignored for years is now available online. Other nations, feeling the pressure, have also revisited the often unjust decisions made by their governments after the war concerning ownership of looted art. Perhaps most notable is the case of the five paintings by Gustav Klimt, long held by the Belvedere Gallery in Vienna, that were awarded in 2006 by a panel of Austrian judges to Maria Altmann, the 90-year-old Los Angeles niece of a Viennese Jew from whom the paintings were stolen in 1938. She subsequently sold the pictures, one of them—the famed *Gold Portrait* of her aunt Adele Bloch-Bauer—to Ronald Lauder for a record \$135 million.

Pillage and looting during warfare are not, of course, activities that originated with World War II. Even before the epics of Homer, human history recorded the time-honored tradition of victors seizing plunder from the vanquished. But the massive scale, the unprecedented bureaucratic organization and the legalistic rationalizations

offered by the Nazis set their accomplishments apart. Not hundreds or thousands, but millions of visual objects were bought and sold, confiscated and transported around the continent of Europe.

Just as the Nazis sought to impose their race-based morality onto the diverse population of Europe, they also sought to redraw the cultural face of Europe by rearranging or destroying its great artworks. Even in the upheavals of war the Nazi leaders devoted precious time and energy to the gathering of works of art. They carried out multiple operations with cross purposes. While Alfred Rosenberg's propaganda unit (ERR) appropriated artworks that would buttress the Party's racist ideology and pilfered the great Jewish collections of Europe, Hitler employed distinguished art historians and corrupt dealers to steal masterpieces that would confer prestige and symbolic legitimacy on the German nation.

However diverse, these operations were all linked by an underlying, racist effort by the Nazis to use the expropriation and destruction of cultural property as a means to dehumanize their victims. The Holocaust has become a symbol of the dark side of humanity, and we have spent decades trying to understand what it means to live knowing that average people are capable of complicity in such a horror. The history of what happened to Europe's great art during and after the Second World War provides an important new lens through which to examine these seemingly imponderable themes.

In contrast to the wholesale looting of Hitler and the Nazis, the western Allies worked to mitigate the tragic, inevitable toll exacted on art and historic cities during their invasion of Italy, France and Germany. Central to this history is the unprecedented mission of the Monuments Men, mostly American art historians and museum curators who, drafted into military service, mounted a miraculous effort to protect monuments and recover millions of pieces of displaced art.

Moving back and forth in time, the film links investigations into looted art back to their wartime origins, tracing the remarkable journeys of individual masterpieces from wartime confiscation to present-day recovery by the families of the original owners. *The Rape of Europa* offers a privileged entry into the exclusive circles of the contemporary art trade and explores the little-known legacy of World War II that lured many post-war collectors and dealers into a Faustian bargain that continues to present day.

We live at a time when the common cultural heritage of humanity continues to be vulnerable to the threats of ideologues and the assaults of armed conflict, from the wanton destruction by Serbs of centuries-old mosques in Bosnia and Kosovo to the televised demolition by the Taliban of the ancient Bamian Buddhas of Afghanistan and the rampant looting that accompanied the American invasion of Iraq. *The Rape of Europa* is an emotional witness to the destruction wrought on culture and art by fanaticism, greed, and warfare. But it is also a hopeful film that demonstrates how it is possible for humanity to protect the integrity of cultural property in armed conflicts.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Short Biographies of the Producer-Directors

Richard Berge is a San Francisco-based filmmaker who has produced documentaries for PBS, Showtime, A&E, and others, including *Yesterday's Tomorrows* with director Barry Levinson and *Sing Faster: The Stagehands' Ring Cycle* with director Jon Else. He has a Masters degree in Documentary Film from Stanford University.

Selected Filmography:

2000 *Sing Faster* (line producer) **1999** *Yesterday's Tomorrows* (producer)

Bonni Cohen is a founder of Actual Films in San Francisco and filmmaker for PBS, BBC, and Arte. She is currently producing *Wonders are Many*, a documentary about the making of the Peter Sellars and John Adams opera, *Doctor Atomic*. She has a Masters degree in Documentary Film from Stanford University.

Selected Filmography:

2004 *Democracy Afghan Style* (co-director) **2001** *The Nobel: Visions of Our Century* (director) **2000** *Open Outcry* (producer) **1998** *Eye of the Storm* (director) **1998** *They Drew Fire* (co-producer)

Nicole Newnham is a documentary filmmaker for PBS, National Geographic, Discovery, and BBC. She directed *Sentenced Home*, the award-winning film about three Cambodian refugees deported back to Cambodia after 9/11, which will have its television premiere on PBS's Independent Lens. She has a Masters degree in Documentary Film from Stanford University.

Selected Filmography:

2006 *Sentenced Home* (co-director) **2004** *Skin* (producer) **1998** *They Drew Fire* (co-producer) **1994** *Unforgettable Face* (director)

Extended Biographies

RICHARD BERGE (PRODUCER / DIRECTOR / WRITER)

Richard Berge is a documentary filmmaker who has made films for PBS, Showtime, A&E Biography, Omnimedia and the California Arts Council. Before producing *The Rape of Europa*, he was a writer and producer for *SPARK!*, a weekly television series for KQED about the arts in the San Francisco Bay Area. With director Barry Levinson, he produced *Yesterday's Tomorrows* (2000, 100 minutes), a feature-length documentary that examines the human obsession with predicting the future. The film is featured in a Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition (SITES) that continues to tour the United States. He line produced *Sing Faster: The Stagehands' Ring Cycle* (1999, 90 minutes), in association with producer/director Jon Else and Oregon Public Broadcasting. The film was awarded the Filmmakers Trophy at the Sundance Film Festival and an Emmy for best cultural documentary. He was production manager of *In Search Of Law And Order* (1998, 3 x 60 minutes), a documentary series about the American juvenile justice system produced by Roger Graef and Michael Schwarz for PBS and Channel 4, and production coordinator for *Cadillac Desert* (1997, 3 x 60 minutes), the landmark documentary series produced for PBS by Jon Else about history of the quest and struggle for water in the American West. Before completing the Master's program in Documentary Film at Stanford University in 1994, Berge received a BA in History from Stanford University and worked at the Santa Fe Opera in New Mexico and the Metropolitan Opera in New York. He lives in San Francisco with his wife Eri Berge and daughter Allie.

BONNI COHEN (PRODUCER / DIRECTOR / WRITER)

Bonni Cohen founded Actual Films, an independent documentary film company based in San Francisco in 1998. She is currently producing Jon Else's new film, *Wonders Are Many*, a documentary about the making of the Peter Sellars and John Adams new opera, *Doctor Atomic*. Before *The Rape of Europa*, Cohen co-produced *Democracy Afghan Style* (2004, 80 minutes) about Afghanistan's constitutional process for PBS in the United States and for Arté in France and Germany. In 2003, she produced and directed *The New Heroes*, a series for PBS, hosted by Robert Redford, about social entrepreneurs around the world. In 2001, Cohen produced and directed *The Nobel: Visions of Our Century* (2001, 56 minutes), a chronicle of 100 years of the Nobel Prize told from the perspectives of 11 Nobel laureates that was broadcast on PBS. For the BBC, she directed and produced *Eye of the Storm* (1999, 55 minutes), an intimate, verité portrait of United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan that follows his diplomatic efforts from Baghdad to Nigeria to New York. *Eye of the Storm* has been shown around the world in over 125 countries. For PBS, she co-produced *They Drew Fire* (1998, 56 minutes), a portrait of the combat artists of World War II. Her other works include *The Human Sexes with Desmond Morris*, a six-part, Emmy-nominated series about gender differences around the world and two

episodes of the Emmy award-winning *Eyewitness* series for PBS. She was the producer of Jon Else's film, *Open Outcry* (2000, 56 minutes), a documentary about the open trading pits at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. Before coming to documentary film, Bonni worked as a journalist for Reuters Television and NBC, based in London and Jerusalem. Ms. Cohen earned a Masters degree in Documentary Film from Stanford University in 1994 and a Bachelor's degree in International Relations from Tufts University in 1987. She lives in San Francisco with her husband Jon Shenk and their children Abe and Anabel.

NICOLE NEWNHAM (PRODUCER / DIRECTOR / WRITER)

Nicole Newnham is a documentary filmmaker and writer. She recently co-produced and directed *Sentenced Home* (72 min., 2006), an award-winning documentary that follows three Cambodian refugees in Seattle who are deported back to Cambodia after 9/11. The film will air in May, 2007 on the PBS series *Independent Lens*. She field-produced the Emmy-nominated *Skin* (53 min., 2004), a documentary for PBS and National Geographic about the science and culture of human skin. She co-produced *They Drew Fire* (1998, 56 minutes), a widely-acclaimed special for PBS about the combat artists of World War II, and authored the companion book distributed by Harper Collins. Newnham was associate producer of *Eye of the Storm* (1999, 55 minutes), a *verité* profile of United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan that has been broadcast worldwide by the BBC. She has been field producer and associate producer on several US/UK co-productions for Discovery and The Learning Channel, including *Survivor* (1996), a four-part series on the art of survival science and the Emmy-nominated *The Human Sexes with Desmond Morris* (1996). Her film, *Unforgettable Face* (1994) screened at the Sundance Film Festival. Ms. Newnham earned a Masters degree in Documentary Film from Stanford University in 1994. She lives in Oakland with her husband Thomas Malarkey and son Finn.

JON SHENK (DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY)

Jon Shenk is a documentary filmmaker, cinematographer, and founder of *Actual Films* in San Francisco. He co-directed and photographed the Emmy-nominated *Lost Boys of Sudan*, winner of an Independent Spirit Award in 2004. He co-directed and photographed *Democracy Afghan Style*, a PBS/Arte film about the post-war constitutional process in Afghanistan. In 2005, he produced and photographed segments for *The New Heroes*, a PBS series about social entrepreneurs. He directed and photographed *The Beginning* about the making of *Star Wars: Episode I*. He recently wrote, produced and photographed "Blame Somebody Else," a film for the new PBS series, *AIR*. Shenk has produced and photographed many documentaries for PBS, A&E, Bravo, CBS, NBC, the BBC, and National Geographic, and he has been nominated twice for Emmys for his cinematography.

JOSH PETERSON (EDITOR)

Josh Peterson is a freelance editor based in San Francisco, where he has been cutting documentaries and independent features since 1993. For PBS, he recently edited *Bloodlines: Technology Hits Home* and *The Nobel: Visions of Our Century*. *The Beginning: Making Episode I*, which he edited for Lucasfilm's DVD release of *The Phantom Menace*, has been called "the best DVD behind-the-scenes documentary ever made" by several reviewers. *Girl Trouble*, which won the Best Bay Area Documentary at the San Francisco International Film Festival, was praised for "outstanding editing by Josh Peterson" in *Variety*. He has edited episodes of the PBS programs *Wide Angle* and *FRONTLINE/ World*, and segments for *The News Hour with Jim Lehrer*. Mr. Peterson graduated from Harvard in 1991 with an honors degree in History.

MARCO D'AMBROSIO (COMPOSER)

Marco d'Ambrosio is a composer, producer, trumpet player and all-around noise wrangler. He has scored numerous award winning films, documentaries and live theatre projects including the anime hit *Vampire Hunter D Bloodlust*, *Haiku Tunnel* (Sundance 2001), the Emmy winning documentary *Blink*, and recently Emmy nominated *Runners High* for PBS and *Red Diaper Baby* for the Sundance Channel. *The Rape Of Europa* is the fifth project Marco has scored for Actual Films. In 2005, Marco was one of six accomplished composers awarded a fellowship from the Sundance Institute.

JOAN ALLEN (NARRATOR)

Three-time Oscar nominee Joan Allen is one of the film world's busiest actresses. In 2000, she was nominated for a Golden Globe, a SAG Award, an Independent Spirit Award and an Academy Award for Best Actress for her starring role in *The Contender*. For her role in 1996 as Pat Nixon in Oliver Stone's *Nixon*, she received an Academy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress and won 7 critics association awards, including the L.A. Film Critics Association and the National Society of Film Critics Awards. Allen received her second consecutive Best Supporting Actress Oscar nomination in 1997 for her role in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. She has appeared in numerous other feature films including *Yes*, *The Upside of Anger*, *Off the Map*, *The Bourne Supremacy*, *Bonneville*, *Pleasantville*, *Face-Off*, *The Ice Storm*, *Compromising Positions*, *Peggy Sue Got Married*, *Manhunter*, *Tucker: The Man And His Dream*, *Ethan Frome*, *Josh and S.A.M.*, *In Country*, *Searching for Bobby Fisher*, *Mad Love*, *It's the Rage*, and *When the Sky Falls*. Allen is also one of the New York theater world's most honored actresses and winner of every major prize for her work on and off-Broadway.

ROBERT EDSSEL (CO-PRODUCER)

Robert M. Edsel began his career in the oil and gas exploration business. In 1996 he moved to Europe to pursue his interests in the arts. After settling in Florence, where he developed an even greater passion for art and architecture, he spent three renovating a villa and its gardens while living amidst the works of the Great Masters. While standing on the Ponte Vecchio one day, he looked towards the Ponte Santa Trinita and asked himself, "How did all these monuments and great works of art survive the devastation of World War II?" He wrote *Rescuing Da Vinci* and served as co-producer of *The Rape of Europa*, to answer that question. Mr. Edsel is a collector of Old Master paintings. He now lives in Dallas, Texas.

LYNN H. NICHOLAS (AUTHOR, *THE RAPE OF EUROPA*)

Lynn H. Nicholas was educated in the United States, England, and Spain, received her B.A. from Oxford University and, upon her return to the United States, worked for several years in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. While living in Belgium in the early 1980's, she initiated what would become 10 years of research for her first highly acclaimed book. *The Rape of Europa* was a winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award. She was elected to the Légion d'Honneur by the government of France, and in 2005 released her second book, *Cruel World: The Children of Europe in the Nazi Web*. Ms. Nicholas and her husband live in Washington, D.C.