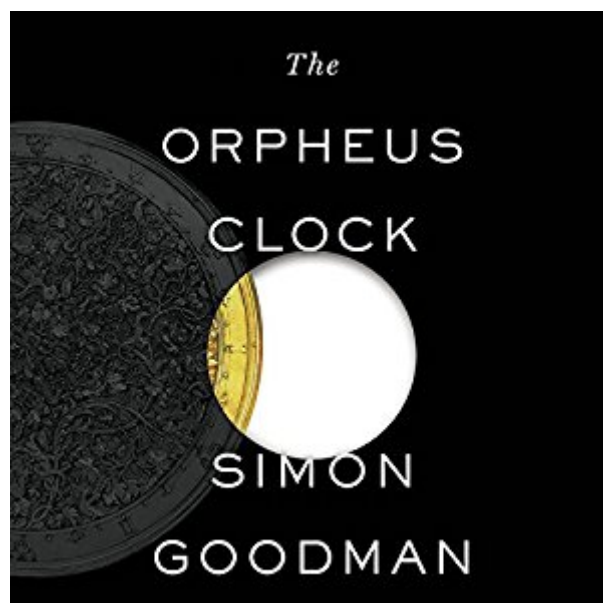


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The Orpheus Clock: The Search For My Family's Art Treasures Stolen By The Nazis



Synopsis

Simon Goodman's grandparents came from German-Jewish banking dynasties and perished in concentration camps. His father rarely spoke of their family history or heritage. But, when he passed away and Simon received his father's old papers, a story began to emerge. The Gutmanns, as they were known then, rose from a small Bohemian hamlet to become one of Germany's most powerful banking families. They also amassed a magnificent, world-class art collection that included works by Degas, Renoir, Botticelli, Guardi, and many, many others. But the Nazi regime snatched from them everything they had worked to build: their remarkable art, their immense wealth, their prominent social standing, and their very lives. With the help of his family, Simon initiated the first Nazi looting case to be settled in the United States.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 11 hours and 4 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Dreamscape Media, LLC

Audible.com Release Date: August 25, 2015

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B0147L6XGW

Best Sellers Rank: #117 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Arts & Entertainment > Art #1025 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Military #1289 in Books > History > World > Jewish > Holocaust

Customer Reviews

Simon Goodman grew up with a family mystery. His father was always traveling on mysterious missions that took him across Europe and involved many visits to museums and art dealers, but Simon and his older brother Nick never knew the reason for the journeys. There seemed to be some cousins on their father's side, but they were rarely in contact with any of them. As for their grandparents and other forebears, all they were told is that they had died during World War II. It was not until after their father died in 1994 that Simon and Nick learned that he had been trying to trace and recover what had been an amazing family art collection, stolen by the Nazis and now scattered far and wide. Simon took on his father's quest, and the results of his nearly two decade long search

are detailed in this fascinating book. The family fortune began in the nineteenth century with a bank in Dresden. Hard work, smart investing, and an expanding German industrial economy led to great wealth for the Gutmann dynasty, which intermarried with and became part of an expansive, predominantly Jewish, association of banking families. The Gutmanns were secular rather than observant Jews, and eventually many of them converted to Lutheranism and for all intents and purposes completely assimilated into German society. Their great wealth allowed them to establish wonderful art collections, including a magnificent set of silver statues and objets d'art. Although the Gutmanns had apparently left their Jewish heritage behind them, rising anti-Semitism in post-World War I Germany began to cause them problems. Simon's grandparents moved to Holland and established a comfortable existence for themselves, continuing to add to their art collections until their home became a veritable palace.

I realise I'm a bit late reading and reviewing Simon Goodman's book, "The Orpheus Clock: The Search for My Family's Art Treasures Stolen by the Nazis". There's not much I can add to the other favorable reviews but I'll give it a try! Seventy or so years ago, Simon's grandparents - both converted Jews to Lutheranism - had their privately-held art treasures stolen "legally" from their house in the Netherlands by the Nazis. Fritz and Louise Gutmann - their son changed the name to Goodman - had been collecting art for years and building on the collection inherited from Fritz's father, Eugen. Eugen Gutmann had founded a bank in Dresden that later merged with others to form the Dresdner Bank. The huge bank was "Aryanised" during the Nazi era, but by then Eugen had died. His son Fritz was the family keeper and continued his father's art collecting. Their collection was fairly varied - everything from Rembrandt to a Franz Stuck portrait of a woman and a snake in a VERY compromising position! Fritz and Louise had fled from Germany to Holland with their paintings, sculptures, and silver collection. That silver collection - the Eugen Gutmann Silversammlung - and their refusal to give it up after having lost so much else to the Nazis - was the cause of Fritz and Louise's deaths in Nazi concentration camps. Their son - Bernard - had been able to emigrate to England before the war began. He had been born in England during his parents' stay during the First World war. His sister - Lili - had found relative safety in Italy through her marriages to Italian men. After the war, Bernard began the agonising search for his parents' stolen art pieces.

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