

Interview with Roger Strauch,
representative of the coheirs of Rudolf Mosse

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Kulturstiftung der Länder (KSL): With the project on Rudolf Mosse's patronage and his lost art collection, Germany will launch its first joint research project into Nazi-looted art with the owner's heirs. The Mosse heirs – whom you represent – will support the project not only in principle but also as a financial partner. Why do you support the German efforts to reconstruct the Mosse art collection and what do you expect in terms of results?

Roger Strauch (RS): We are partners in a serious and conscientious effort to locate Mosse artifacts wherever they are in the world. The Mosse heirs would like to recover stolen assets and to renew academic and popular interest in the achievements of a proud, prominent and successful German family. We are combining our investigative resources, human and financial, to engage in an intensive and comprehensive effort to achieve these objectives.

KSL: What is your experience with German reactions to art restitution so far, especially where German museums are concerned?

RS: Over the last several years, we have been fortunate to successfully work with many impressive cultural and institutional leaders in Germany. Of course, we appreciate that our ownership claims can be uncomfortable and awkward for the custodians of Mosse artifacts. Not everyone has responded constructively. But I can honestly say that all of the German public institutions have been responsive and diligent in their efforts to review our claims.

We are impressed and grateful for the understanding and sensitivity we have encountered and are especially appreciative for the leadership from Ms. Isabel Pfeiffer-Poensgen and Dr. Hermann Parzinger.

We look forward to this major new and innovative next step in our project.

KSL: What is your relationship with your ancestors' art collection? Which role did it play in your family's recollections of Germany?

RS: The current Mosse heirs have not had a close relationship with the Mosse art collection. However, we have had a close family relationship with our aunt (Hilde Mosse), uncle (George Mosse), and fathers (Karl Strauch and Rudolph Mosse). They grew up in the home and the communities that

were enriched by the presence of these artifacts. The heirs enjoyed the dramatic and sometimes amusing stories of the childhood experiences of our uncle, aunt and fathers as they recounted their opulent lives during their adolescent and teenage years.

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When we first encountered the recovered artifacts, we experienced several concurrent emotions: an admiration of Rudolf Mosse's accomplishments and generosity and an appreciation for the character of our aunt, uncle, and fathers who were raised by parents who valued their German heritage, intellectual curiosity, cultural enrichment, professional accomplishment, community leadership and artistic endeavor. Our aunt, uncle and fathers were much more interested in contributing to their professions and society than in the art objects themselves.

KSL: Please give our readers a brief outline of the Mosse family history – what happened to the various members of the family [after 1933] and how did the family history continue in the United States?

RS: Elisabeth Kraus' book, Die Familie Mosse, chronicles the Mosse family history, which spans nearly 200 years. Amazing. I am in the process of having Dr. Kraus' text translated into English to encourage and promote academic research interest in the Mosse story and legacy. I am most proud of how the Mosse family reestablished themselves after they were exiled from Germany.

Following the death of Rudolf Mosse, Hans Lachmann-Mosse assumed management of the Rudolf Mosse Company and continued the family's philanthropy and patronage to the arts. From his first marriage, Hans Lachmann-Mosse had 3 children: Rudolf, Hilde and George (formerly Gerhard). Hans later married Carola Boch, my grandmother, (daughter of German writer, Alfred Boch), who had a child, Karl Strauch (my father) from a former marriage. Hans' oldest son, Rudolf (who passed in 1958) married Jutta and they had a daughter, Joy. Joy and Jutta reside in the United States. Hilde, George and Karl became prominent representatives of the Mosse Family with extraordinary achievements in their respective fields: child psychiatry, history and particle physics.

My aunt , Dr. Hilde L. Mosse, was a physician who specialized in child and adolescent psychiatry. She studied medicine at the University of Basel. Hilde immigrated to New York in 1938 where she lived and worked until her death in 1982. In 1964, she returned to Germany as a Fulbright Professor in Child Psychiatry at the University of Marburg. She was a fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, the American Orthopsychiatric Association and the New York Academy of Medicine.

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Hilde devoted her career to serving children with learning disabilities and psychiatric illnesses. She was one of the first Caucasian child psychiatrists to work in Harlem, New York. Hilde co-founded the La Farge Clinic in Harlem, the first children's mental health clinic on the East Coast of the United States. Dr. Mosse published numerous articles on childhood behavioral disorders that appeared in American and German journals. Dr. Mosse's most notable publication, *The Complete Handbook of Children's Reading Disorders*, describes an interdisciplinary approach to diagnosis, treatment and prevention of reading disorders. In 1980, Dr. Mosse received the Watson Washburn Memorial Award for excellence in education by The Reading Reform Foundation in Houston, Texas for this publication. Dr. Mosse's commitment to serving the economically disadvantaged and the emotionally troubled without regard to race, color or creed continues through the work of the Northside Center for Child Development in New York City. [Roger Strauch, a Mosse family member by marriage, is a board member of Northside.]

My uncle Dr. George Mosse became one of the most prominent historians of National Socialism. Following his studies at the University of Cambridge, England, George emigrated to the United States and earned his PhD from Harvard University in 1946. He went on to become the Bascom Professor of European History and Jewish Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin. He specialized in European fascism. Beginning in 1969, he also held the Koebner Professorship of History at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

George frequently returned to Berlin after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. George oversaw the restituted property of the Mosse family and the preservation of the family's legacy in the reunited Germany. During his visits to Berlin, George provided interviews where he discussed past and present Mosse undertakings, which were then published under the title *I Remain Emigrant*. Upon his death in 1999, George bequeathed his portion of the Mosse estate to the University of Wisconsin.

My father, Dr. Karl Strauch, who was born in Giessen, Germany. His father, George Strauch, was a Lutheran minister and his mother, Carola, was a divinity school graduate. George died a few weeks after Karl was born. Carola later married Hans Lachmann-Mosse and the family were exiled from Germany in the mid-1930s and took residence in Paris, where Karl earned a baccalaureate. In 1939, the family immigrated to Lafayette, California. Karl served in the US Navy from 1944 to 1946. He earned a degree in Chemistry and a PhD in Physics from the University of California at Berkeley in 1950. My father spent 50 years in academics. After receiving his PhD, he was elected to Harvard's Society of Fellows and was appointed to the Harvard faculty as Assistant Professor and served as Chairman of the Harvard Physics Department from 1978-1982.

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Hilde, George and my father, Karl, immigrated to the United States with only sufficient resources to live modestly. For their undergraduate and graduate degrees, they all earned full scholarships and financial support. They were outstanding examples of intellectuals who nurtured and honored family bonds, established long lasting friendships, and they were passionate about their work and collaborations with colleagues.

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When my parents immigrated to the United States, they worked very hard to establish themselves in their new country. They were appreciative of the opportunities that America had to offer. My mother and father were outstanding parents. It was not until my brother, Hans, and I reached our 20's when we learned about my parents' past and some of their family's terrifying experiences. My parents worked hard so that Hans and I would have exceptional opportunities to pursue our passions. As Hans and I learned about the Mosse family, we were amazed at how they were raised in extraordinary wealth and how that wealth was directed towards enriching the human experience rather than expanding material and personal wealth.

KSL: You are involved in the research project in your capacity as [the heirs' representative] and president of the Mosse Foundation. Could you give us an outline of the foundation's other goals and activities?

RS: The Mosse Foundation has been primarily inspired and guided by Aunt Hilde's spirit. Most of our philanthropy is in support of organizations with which we are deeply involved, usually as members of the Board of Directors or Trustees. The Foundation supports education, arts, research, and humanitarian initiatives for economically disadvantaged people. The Foundation currently provides support for: 1) a mental health clinic for children, located in Harlem, NY; 2) an award winning regional theater that creates and produces productions that offer fresh perspectives on life experiences; 3) a local university that enables thousands of students to access undergraduate education for professional opportunities in the arts and teaching; 4) a world-renowned collaborative math research institute in its efforts to encourage women and minorities to join and contribute their talents to the field of mathematics; 5) a project management foundation in Armenia that builds and renovates schools, medical clinics, and centers for at-risk youth throughout the country.

Hans and I share the responsibility for leading these philanthropic endeavors. We are guided by Mosse family values and supported by the resources created by our step-great-grandfather Rudolf Mosse, over 100 years ago.

KSL: Question: Could you tell us about your project team?

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RS: We are fortunate to be served by two excellent law firms and many talented investigators and provenance researchers. We initially engaged the international law firm, BZBM of San Francisco, to search for the looted Mosse family art collection. Their resourceful and tenacious efforts led to the identification and locations of several dozen Mosse artifacts. We then hired the Berlin law firm, Raue LLP, to assist with our restitution efforts in Europe.

We have been building constructive and positive relationships with the German public institutions that are either custodians of Mosse artifacts or are in a position to help us locate these objects. The objective of the Mosse Art Restitution Project (MARP) is to develop deeper relationships with public and private institutions to facilitate our restitution efforts. The Mosse Art Research Initiative (MARI), that we are announcing today, is a formal collaboration with the German public institution community. MARI represents a commitment to reconciliation and forward progress on the part of all parties to our restitution efforts. We believe MARI will set a new standard for German-American and German-Jewish relations.

BZBM and Raue have distinguished themselves in this project by leveraging their impressive network of professional resources and outstanding reputations to help MARP achieve its objectives.

Weblinks:

1) Humboldt University: Mosse Lectures

<https://www.mosse-lectures.de/web/index.php/en/content/family.html>

2) Northside: Hilde Talk

<http://www.rodagroup.com/hilde.html>

3) The Roda Group: R. Strauch bio

<http://www.rodagroup.com/principals.html#ras>

4) Mosse Art Restitution Project (MARP)

NOTE: This site will be significantly updated by the end of the week)

<http://www.mosseartproject.com>

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