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**Skirball Cultural Center reveals details of  
*RECLAIMED: A Family Painting***

*An immersive story of one family, one painting, and their intertwined  
journey from 1920s Europe through the Holocaust to  
present-day Los Angeles*

*October 19, 2023–March 3, 2024*

*Tickets on sale now!*

**LOS ANGELES, CA**—The Skirball Cultural Center is pleased to announce details about *RECLAIMED: A Family Painting*, an exhibition that charts the journey of one family—and one painting—from 1920s Czechoslovakia to contemporary Los Angeles. The Bloch family of Brno, Czechoslovakia, were among countless Jews whose art collections and personal possessions were systematically stolen by the Nazi Party during the Holocaust. Nearly a century later, after more than 80 years of effort, Bloch heirs living in Los Angeles reacquired a painting by German painter Johann Carl Loth that once hung in the family’s dining room. Through the history of this one family, the exhibition explores the ravages of the Holocaust, as well as the potential for healing through the work of cultural reclamation. Organized by the Skirball, *RECLAIMED: A Family Painting* will be on view from October 19, 2023–March 3, 2024.

“We are honored to share the story of the Bloch family through *RECLAIMED: A Family Painting*, the most recent chapter of which takes place in Los Angeles. It’s a story of loss and reclamation experienced by three generations of determined women that serves as a reminder of all the families of Holocaust victims and survivors still fighting for restitution decades after World War II. These stories of migration, struggle, survival, and resilience resonate deeply with the Skirball’s mission,” said Skirball Vice President and Museum Director Sheri Bernstein.

In early twentieth century Czechoslovakia, Jewish couple Johann and Lisbeth Bloch led a vibrant cultural life, amassing a significant collection of art and antiques. German artist Johann Carl Loth's seventeenth-century painting *Isaac Blessing Jacob* was at the heart of that collection, prominently displayed in the dining room of the Blochs' opulent home. The painting depicts a scene from the biblical book of Genesis: the moment that Isaac, one of the patriarchs of Judaism, mistakenly bestows a blessing on his son Jacob. Taking advantage of his elderly father's poor eyesight, Jacob had pretended to be his older brother, Esau, in order to claim Esau's birthright. Using a warm palette of reds, golds, and blues, and juxtaposing shadow and light to heighten the emotional stakes of the story (all hallmarks of the Baroque style of art), Loth emphasizes the dramatic tension in this narrative of familial betrayal.

The German Nazi Party's occupation of Czechoslovakia during World War II (1939-1945) brought chaos and tragedy to the Bloch family, which had already suffered Lisbeth's early death. In 1938, amid mounting antisemitic violence, the Blochs attempted to flee the country. Johann and Lisbeth's daughter Hedy and her child, Liz, found refuge in the United States, settling in Los Angeles. But Johann died shortly after the Nazis evicted him from his home and stole the family's art collection, including *Isaac Blessing Jacob*.

Over the next fifty years, Hedy hired lawyers, traveled back to Europe, and lobbied government officials in an attempt to reclaim her family's art collection. Though nothing was recovered before Hedy's death in 1997, Liz, together with her own daughter, Cheryl, never gave up searching. In 2020, with the help of the New York State Department of Financial Services Holocaust Claims Processing Office, the Bloch heirs finally located and recovered *Isaac Blessing Jacob*, now on long-term loan to the Skirball and on view in this exhibition.

"Working closely with the heirs of the Bloch family to create this exhibition, I am inspired by the strength and determination it took to rebuild their lives as Jewish refugees in this country while simultaneously fighting to reclaim objects from the past to honor their lost loved ones. It is this message of perseverance and family devotion, in addition to the vital importance of Holocaust remembrance, that I hope visitors take away from this exhibition," remarked exhibition curator Alissa Schapiro, the Skirball's Associate Curator and Collections Specialist.

In a space that evokes the original dining room, the reclaimed painting will once again hang among beloved family furnishings and belongings, bringing to life the home stolen from the Bloch family by the Nazis decades ago. Among the artifacts on view are family photographs, letters, clothing, and suitcases, as well as a home movie and a new family testimony video.

The exhibition will also showcase heirless Jewish ritual objects recovered by the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction in the aftermath of the Holocaust and subsequently donated to the Skirball, highlighting the responsibility of Jewish cultural institutions as stewards of these artifacts to tell their stories and those of the individuals and communities that once treasured them. By shedding light on personal and institutional efforts, this original exhibition will introduce visitors to the important work of heritage reclamation.

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*RECLAIMED: A Family Painting* and its related educational programs at the Skirball Cultural Center are made possible with support from Hillside Memorial Park and Mortuary, Matthew Pritzker, and Steve Tisch Family Foundation. Media support provided by the *Jewish Journal*.

### **About the Skirball**

The Skirball Cultural Center is a place of meeting guided by the Jewish tradition of welcoming the stranger and inspired by the American democratic ideals of freedom and equality. We welcome people of all communities and generations to participate in cultural experiences that celebrate discovery and hope, foster human connections, and call upon us to help build a more just society.

### **Visiting the Skirball**

The Skirball is located at 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90049. Museum hours: Tuesday–Friday, 12:00–5:00 pm; Saturday–Sunday, 10:00 am–5:00 pm; closed Mondays and holidays. General Admission to the Skirball will include *RECLAIMED: A Family Painting* and *The American Library* by artist Yinka Shonibare CBE RA. Other exhibitions, including *This Light of Ours: Activist Photographers of the Civil Rights Movement* and *Noah’s Ark* at the Skirball, are ticketed separately. Special Pricing: \$18 General; \$15 Seniors, Full-Time Students, and Children over 12; \$13 Children 2–12.