

## Steven Lieberman Speaks to BBC News About Christie's Auction of Jewelry Purchased with Nazi Funded Fortune

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### Key Contact

Steven Lieberman

Partner Steven Lieberman spoke to BBC Newshour on Friday, September 1, 2023, about Christie Auction House's auctions of a jewelry collection funded by the practice of purchasing businesses owned by Jewish families at deep discounts during the Nazi era. The first auction of Heidi Horten's jewelry held in May 2023 earned more than \$200 million, but Christie's has canceled the second auction, scheduled for November 2023, due to "intense scrutiny."

It is well known that Helmut Horten, Mrs. Horten's husband, amassed his wealth from the purchase of businesses owned by Austrian and German Jews who were coerced into selling them by Nazis, many at a discounted price. The connection between the Nazis and the upcoming sale at Christie's is covered in an article in The New York Times dated April 27, 2023, titled "Nazi Cloud Hangs Over One of the Largest Jewelry Sales in History" by Zachary Small.

"The jewelry was legally purchased, but it was blood jewelry...it was purchased with money that had been stolen from Jews. Who ultimately, most of whom, were sent off to death camps and killed. Murdered by the Nazis," Steven told the BBC. "[Christie's Auction House] didn't think about the moral issues that were involved, and frankly, I don't think they thought about the legal issues. Because the jewelry is property that was purchased with money that was made from stealing businesses from Jews, many of whom were murdered. And there may well be claims on that jewelry."

Christie's announced that the money from the first sale will be put towards charities chosen by Mrs. Horten, but "that doesn't do anything to make these sales any less immoral, any less unethical, or any less illegal," Steven explained.

After the intense criticism received by Christie's following the May 2023 auction, they have since announced the cancellation of the second auction of Mrs. Horten's jewelry collection. While the decision is well-received by Jewish organizations, Christie's has more work to do.

"We ask Christie's to go a step further and to make a public commitment that in the future they will not sell any more jewelry from this collection and they will not auction off similar property," Steven noted.

Steven and Rabbi Avi Weiss, the founder of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale and YCT Rabbinical School, are hoping to find heirs of the businesses extorted by Helmut Horten and issued a press release seeking "any heirs of those looted Jewish businesses to contact us about possible claims against the estate of Heidi Horten."

You can listen to the entire discussion from the BBC News World Service - Newshour by [clicking here](#).