

ITALIANS RECOVER STOLEN MADONNA

Art Detectives Are Aided by
Two New York Dealers
in Year-Long Quest

LOOT AT A SWISS VILLA

13th-Century Tryptich Said
to Have Been Damaged,
but Not Beyond Repair

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ROME, July 28—The "Madonna of Cossito," an early 13th-century painting described as a priceless example of the Roman school, has been recovered in a Swiss villa three years after being stolen from an Italian church.

Detective work by the Italian Government's Commission for the Recovery of Art Masterpieces and by two unidentified New York art dealers led to the finding of the work, a tryptich of the madonna and child on a throne.

The central wood panel, measuring 60 inches by 20 inches, has been returned to Italy. The work, by an unknown artist, was said to have been damaged, but not beyond repair.

Works Found in Villa

The commission said numerous "important" works of art were found at a luxurious villa at Weggis, on Lake Lucerne.

The villa was said to belong to Quinto Giorgini, an Italian citizen with homes in Switzerland and the Uruguyan resort of Punta del Este. Mr. Giorgini was arrested by the Swiss police earlier this month following a confrontation with the Italian art detectives.

The Madonna was in a church in Cossito, near Rieti in central Italy, when it was stolen on June 28, 1964. Nothing was heard of it until last year. Then, according to the commission, a German art expert offered it for sale to a Park Avenue dealer in New York.

The commission identified the German as Heinrich Zimmermann, now living in Munich, and said he had served as director-general of fine arts in Nazi Germany.

The New York dealer, the commission's account went on, became suspicious of the offer, suspecting that stolen property was being placed on sale. The Italian authorities were informed and the detective work began.

No Deal by Phone

Another New York dealer—identified only by the fact that he has a German surname—was persuaded to approach Mr. Zimmerman to "negotiate" the Madonna's purchase. Zimmerman, the Italian account said, spoke to Mr. Giorgini in Punta del Este by telephone but he refused to discuss the matter over long distance.

Finally, a meeting was arranged at the Weggis villa last June 28, the third anniversary of the theft.

Posing as prospective purchasers, Rodolfo Siviero, an Italian art authority and head of the commission, and Giuliano Briganti, another expert, met with Mr. Giorgini at the villa.

The Italians had informed the Swiss authorities beforehand. When the confrontation took place, Swiss policemen arrested Mr. Giorgini, his wife and an unidentified man.