



# Witnessing the Robbing of the Jews: A Photographic Album, Paris, 1940-1944

*Sarah Gensburger*

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The center of the art world before the war, Paris fired the Nazis' greed. The discovery of more than 1,500 prized paintings and drawings in a private Munich residence, as well as a recent movie about Allied attempts to recover European works of art, have brought Nazi plundering back into the headlines, but the thievery was far from being limited to works of art. From 1942 onwards, ordinary Parisian Jews—mostly poor families and recent immigrants from Eastern Europe—were robbed, not of sculptures or paintings, but of toys, saucepans, furniture, and sheets. *Witnessing the Robbing of the Jews* tells how this vast enterprise of plunder was implemented in the streets of Paris by analyzing images from an album of photographs found in the Federal Archives of Koblenz. Brought from Paris in 1945, the photographs were cataloged by the staff of the Munich Central Collecting Point. Beyond bearing witness to the petty acts of larceny, these images provide crucial information on how the Germans saw their work. They enable us to grasp the "Nazi gaze" and to confront the issue of the relation between greed and mass destruction.

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