Representations of the Potentiated Void
Contemporary Artistic Examinations of Forced Absences and Disrupted Presences

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Abstract   This paper analyses contemporary artistic practices dealing with specific forms of void caused by National Socialist 'Aryanizations'. By employing the methodological approaches of Rudolf Arnheim's 'visual gaps' and Ulrike Lehmann's 'aesthetics of absence' and combining them with the concept of 'potentiated void' – introduced here to grasp the absence of 'Aryanized' objects, their owners and contexts – the two artistic projects *REKONSTRUKTION DER ROTHSCHILD'SCHEN GEMÄLDESAMMLUNG* (2013) by Anna Artaker and *Invent arisiert* (2000) by Arno Gisinger can be investigated as strategies of dealing with forced void and of making the lost visible (again).

Keywords   National socialism. 'Aryanizations'. Restitution. Absence and void. (Post-)conceptual art and institutional critique.

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1 Introduction

This paper will analyze two projects conceived by contemporary artists dealing with specific forms of forced absence, disrupted presence, and lasting void: both *REKONSTRUKTION DER ROTHSCHILD'SCHEN GEMÄLDESAMMLUNG* (2013) by Anna Artaker (b. 1976 in Vienna, lives and works in Vienna), and *Invent arisiert* (Inventoried, 2000) by Arno Gisinger (b. 1964 in Dornbirn, lives and works in Paris) address the historical evidences of so-called 'Aryanizations' – meaning the expropriation of the population defined and persecuted as 'Jewish' by the National Socialists – as well as their ongoing consequences (cf. Bajohr 1997, 9 fn. 2).[1]

In order to develop an apposite research perspective for this analysis, different methodological approaches to investigate categories of absence and void will be discussed: Rudolf Arnheim's concept of 'visual gaps' will allow to define the dialectical relations between the perception of a present absence and the simultaneous knowledge of the absent object's former presence. Subsequently, Ulrike Lehmann's 'aesthetics of absence' will offer an art-immanent and genealogically structured approach to absence and void intentionally generated or applied by artists. Following that, the National Socialist term 'Aryanization' as a specific form of expropriation resulting in coerced absence and continuing void will be defined. To understand and differentiate these complex states of absent objects, their owners, and their contexts, the concept of 'potentiated void' will be introduced to describe the interconnected levels of absence and void operating here.

Ultimately, and following a socio-historical approach as conceived by Clark (1973) and Nochlin (1989), two case studies will first investigate the historical events that Artaker and Gisinger address in their works and will then examine their artistic strategies dealing with 'potentiated void' caused by processes of 'Aryanization'. Both artistic positions will be contextualised in genealogies of (Post-) Conceptual Art and Institutional Critique, and will be analysed as artistic examples of trying to make the lost visible (again) as well as of questioning a specific potentiality of absence and resulting void exceeding perceptual or art-immanent approaches.

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1 Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the Author. Since the terms 'Jewish' and 'Aryan' were used by the National Socialist both as a discriminatory assignment to others as well as an antisemitic instrument to persecute and to deprive parts of the population of their rights, the terms are put in single quotation marks in this context.

2 'Visual Gaps' and 'Aesthetics of Absence'

Given the inherently transdisciplinary character of an analysis of *REKONSTRUKTION DER ROTHSCHILD'SCHEN GEMÄLDESAMMLUNG* and *Invent arisiert*, combining a socio-historical investigation of the specific cases of 'Aryanizations' addressed in both projects with art-historical and art-theoretical perspectives on absence and void will prove to be a methodologically productive approach. Thus, first Arnheim's (1969) concept of 'visual gaps' – grounded in his dual foundation in both art history and perceptual psychology – will be linked with Lehmann's (1994) notion of an art-immanent 'aesthetics of absence'.

In his book *Visual Thinking*, Arnheim (1969, 13) states that visual perception and knowledge (or rather cognition) are inextricably linked – 'visual knowledge' is therefore formed by previous acts of visual perception and stored in turn in the perceiver's memory for future acts of perception. In the book's chapter *The Past in the Present*, he details the specific relations between this understanding of 'visual knowledge' and the perception of 'visual gaps': Arnheim (1969, 88) creates a temporally structured dialectic between the past and the present – the perceiver is able to visually perceive a former presence and a present absence simultaneously. Arnheim (1969, 89) explains respectively:

> To see emptiness means to place into a percept something that belongs there but is absent and to notice its absence as a property of the present. A setting in which lively action took place or is expected to take place looks strangely motionless; the emptiness may appear pregnant with events to burst forth.

This implies that only the 'visual knowledge' of an object which used to be there but is no longer, and stored in the memory of the perceiver makes the perception of 'visual gaps' possible. In this way, dialectic perceptual relations between past and present, presence and absence are set in motion and eventually, the past is able to penetrate and irritate the present through such 'visual gaps' (cf. Arnheim 1969, 88-9). In investigating contemporary artistic practices dealing with both the past presence and present absence as a consequence of the former, it is relevant to ask, if and how artists can consciously create such 'visual gaps' in their works and thereby activate the perceiver's 'visual knowledge' – stored in their individual, collective, and/or cultural memories.[2]

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2 In the context of National Socialism, the question of collective/cultural memory becomes especially relevant due to the need to reflect on current forms of cultures of remembrance, presupposed by the continuous disappearance of the contemporary witnesses of the Shoah, as well as ongoing restitution processes of 'Aryanized' property. For the concept of collective and cultural memory, see Assmann 1988, 9-19; 2006.

In her analysis of absence, the art historian Ulrike Lehmann offers a methodologically connected approach to Arnheim's: in her essay *Ästhetik der Absenz*, Lehmann creates an art-historical genealogy of art-immanent absence, grounded in discourses of (Post-)Conceptual Art and Institutional Critique.[3] Similar to Arnheim, Lehmann (1994, 58) also emphasizes the dialectical relations between presence and absence and defines her concept of 'aesthetics of absence' as following:

> Von einer Ästhetik der Absenz kann also nur gesprochen werden, wenn bewußte werkimmanente, gleichsam rituelle Handlungen der Verweigerung, der Zerstörung oder des Verbergens vorliegen, die ein Künstler selbst ausführt oder nach seinen Anweisungen ausführen läßt.

Eventually, Lehmann states eight categories of 'aesthetics of absence', of which *Das imaginäre Museum: Re-produzierte Bilder, Das von der Wand verschwundene Bild*, as well as *Das archivierte Bild* will prove to be productive categories to analyze and contextualize Artaker's and Gisinger's artistic strategies. Among her examples for the first are works such as Endre Tót's *Die abwesenden Bilder* (1971/1992): Tót plays with visual voids, evoking the presence of an absent image through the means of semiotic operations – as grounded in traditions of Conceptual Art (cf. Lehmann 1994, 62). The second category is illustrated through works such as Hans Hollein's *Imaginäres Museum* (1987), ironically performing the absence of an exhibited object – its presence is only evoked through a label stating the object information, thereby allegorising institutional conventions (cf. Lehmann 1994, 63; Buchloh 1982). For the third category, Lehmann (1994, 64) introduces Alex Hartley's *Stored* (1991) as an example, in which the artist uses the aesthetics of museum storages and archives to deliberately conceal the object's visual presence. All three of Lehmann's examples show strong influences of Conceptual Art in employing semiological operations by substituting the signified by a signifier, and of Institutional Critique by allegorizing forms and conventions of exhibiting, storing or archiving objects in museums or similar institutional contexts. Thus, the categories and examples offered by Lehmann can be used as an art-theoretical and art-historical framework for the investigation of both Artaker's and Gisinger's strategies.

In summary, the combination of both Arnheim's concept of dialectical 'visual gaps' and Lehmann's art-immanent genealogy as

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3 A critical genealogy of the transition from Conceptual Art to Institutional Critique was initially conceived by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, see Buchloh 1982, 43-56.

well as the corresponding categories of an 'aesthetics of absence' with the specific forms of absence and void caused by 'Aryanizations' will allow to examine the dialectics of past and present, presence and absence, as well as the art-theoretical references and contexts of *REKONSTRUKTION DER ROTHSCHILD'SCHEN GEMÄLDESAMMLUNG* and *Invent arisiert* in the respective case studies.

3 'Potentiated Void': National Socialist 'Aryanizations' and Specific Forms of Absence and Void

The analysis of Artaker's and Gisinger's projects will additionally require a profound understanding of the specific forms of forced expropriation and resulting absence and void that both artists address – and that exceed both Arnheim's perceptual and Lehmann's art-immanent concepts. The term 'Aryanization' was coined by the National Socialists in the 1930s and means the initially unregulated, and from 1938 on systematised, juridically justified and thus legalised confiscation of property from members of the population defined and persecuted as 'Jewish' – according to the Nuremberg Laws in Germany, Austria, and the Nazi-occupied territories – as well as its subsequent reappropriation by owners defined by the same laws as 'Aryan' (cf. Bajohr 2001, 15). These processes of 'Aryanization' of both material and immaterial goods were intended to enrich the National Socialists as well as to displace and to initially eliminate the economic power of the population defined as 'Jewish'.[4] The National Socialists 'Aryanized' every form of 'Jewish' property – ranging from everyday objects such as cutlery or clothes, to unique objects of high financial value such as artworks or entire art collections, to economic entities such as companies, corporations or patents.[5] To grasp the specific and lasting forms of absence and resulting void caused by these 'Aryanizations', the concept of 'potentiated void' is introduced here.[6] These forced and forcibly acts of expropriation potentiate absence on three levels and thus create 'potentiated void': First, the confiscated objects themselves have stayed absent,

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[4] Some historians claimed a continuity from 'Aryanizations' to the physical elimination of the people persecuted as 'Jewish', see Hilberg 1961; Barkai 1988.

[5] Gisinger's *Invent arisiert* demonstrates that even items of low financial value were 'Aryanized' with the goal to expropriate the 'Jewish' owners fully, see Barta-Fliedl 2000, 44.

[6] This concept was initially introduced in the Author's doctoral thesis titled *Die Leere sehen. Darstellungsformen von 'Arisierungen' in zeitgenössischen künstlerischen Positionen* (Seeing the void. Forms of visual representation of so-called 'Aryanizations' in contemporary artistic positions, not yet published).

leaving permanent voids where objects used to be. To this day their location and/or present possessors have remained unknown, or they were destroyed after being 'Aryanized' during or after World War II. Given the decades lag between 'Aryanizations' and systematically dealing with these Nazi crimes, provenance research can only trace a fraction of all goods 'Aryanized' at this stage – and even then, the identification and localization of an object does not necessarily lead to its restitution to its rightful owners or their heirs. This factual absence of 'Aryanized' goods is then potentiated by the absence of their former owners, who were forced to emigrate or killed, or died before they could reclaim their property or receive compensation for the expropriation. Ultimately, the contexts and interrelations that had been created by the object's former owners – such as an art collection or an apartment's furnishing – were permanently destroyed by these acts of 'Aryanizations' and have resulted in a continuing void as well. For the analysis of artistic projects such as Artaker's or Gisinger's which are dealing with specific cases of 'Aryanizations' and their lasting consequences, 'potentiated void' will prove to be a productive concept to investigate what the artists can make visible and/or present again and what has to stay absent in their works in the form of voids.

4 Case Study: *REKONSTRUKTION DER ROTHSCHILD'SCHEN GEMÄLDESAMMLUNG* (2013) by Anna Artaker

In her project *REKONSTRUKTION DER ROTHSCHILD'SCHEN GEMÄLDESAMMLUNG*, Artaker deals with a specific case of 'Aryanization' – that of the systematical expropriation of the two collections of paintings of the Viennese branch of the Rothschild family in Austria. These comprehensive collections were brought together by three generations of the Rothschild family – initiated by Anselm Salomon Rothschild (1803-1874), continued by his sons Nathaniel Mayer Rothschild (1836-1905) and Albert Salomon Anselm Rothschild (1844-1911), and completed by the sons of the latter, Alphonse Mayer Rothschild (1878-1942) and Louis Nathaniel Rothschild (1888-1955).[7] In total, both collections included over four hundred paintings, programmatically focusing on seventeenth and eighteenth century artists from Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Austria, Flanders, and the Netherlands (cf. Kunth

[7] The Rothschild family collected a multitude of objects, such as art, applied arts, scientific instruments, and weapons. Anselm Rothschild's eldest son Ferdinand James Rothschild also built a comprehensive art collection in his palace in Waddesdon, UK.

2006). The art historian Birgit Schwarz (2011, 239) described the significance of the two collections combined as "die bedeutendste private Kunstsammlung Österreichs" (the most important private art collection in Austria; Author's transl.). The collections were housed in two of Rothschild family's palaces in Vienna – the Palais Albert Rothschild, and the Palais Nathaniel Rothschild (cf. Nierhaus 2008).

Immediately after the so-called *Anschluss* of Austria by Nazi-Germany in March 1938, the process of 'Aryanizing' the entire property of the Rothschild family in Austria was set in motion by Nazi officials and executed by their administration – including the collections of paintings and the palaces (cf. Sandgruber 2018, 460). After the confiscation, the paintings were brought to the so-called *Zentraldepot* at the *Neue Burg* in Vienna, where they were photographed and catalogued by employees of the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* (cf. Juncker 2021, 141). The art-historically most relevant paintings were intended for Hitler's *Führermuseum* in Linz, the rest should be divided between Austrian museums (cf. Kirchmayr 2005, 32-4). The 'Aryanized' Palais Albert Rothschild was used as the *Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung* (Central Office for Jewish Emigration) from 1938 to 1943 under the direction of Adolf Eichmann, in the 'Aryanized' Palais Nathaniel Rothschild, offices of the *Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers-SS* were housed (cf. Anderl, Rupnow, Wenk 2004, 332-6). After the end of World War II, most of the 'Aryanized' paintings from the Rothschild collections were lost, destroyed or looted, or deliberately kept in Austrian Federal Museums: As Trenkler (1999) stated, Alphonse Rothschild's widow Clarice Rothschild (1894-1967) and her brother-in-law Louis Rothschild were forced to 'donate' the art-historically most relevant paintings to museums such as the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* in exchange for export permits for their other artworks. After being damaged and repeatedly looted during and immediately after World War II, both palaces were eventually restituted to Clarice Rothschild and Louis Rothschild, who, in the early 1950s, ended up selling the buildings to the Republic of Austria. Then the *Arbeiterkammer Wien* bought them and had them demolished in 1951 and 1955 to make room for new buildings: Today, the headquarters of the *Arbeiterkammer Wien* is located where the Palais Albert Rothschild used to be, their education centre stands on the site of the former Palais Nathaniel Rothschild (cf. Nierhaus 2008, 80-2).

Artaker designed *REKONSTRUKTION DER ROTHSCHILD'SCHEN GEMÄLDESAMMLUNG* as an installation under the auspices of the institution's art funding program *AK Kunstprojekte*. It is important to note that Artaker was not commissioned to investigate the history of both sites but chose the Rothschild's collections of paintings and the palaces as the theme for her project independently. From 13 November 2013 to 30 September 2014, *REKONSTRUKTION DER*

ROTHSCHILD'SCHEN GEMÄLDESAMMLUNG was exhibited in the foyer of the headquarters, the same site where many of the paintings had been housed until 1938. The installation consisted of a six-part felt wallpaper, structured topographically by the artists' place of origin or activity. The wallpaper showed photographs of eighty paintings from the Rothschild's collections, reproduced at their original size – and depending on the availability of the images – in colour or black-and-white **[fig. 1]**.

Figure 1   Anna Artaker, *REKONSTRUKTION DER ROTHSCHILD'SCHEN GEMÄLDESAMMLUNG* (detail). 2013. Six-part wallpaper, 289 × 560 cm. Arbeiterkammer Wien, Vienna. Courtesy of the artist, © Anna Artaker

Through extensive artistic research, Artaker gathered not only the available images, but also detailed provenance information about each of the eighty paintings – on this basis, she compiled captions for each image which she included in the wallpaper. The captions comprised the following data: artist, title of the painting, date of 'Aryanization', (intended) use by the National Socialists, place of discovery after the end of the war, and, if carried out, date of restitution. The exhibition was accompanied by an invitation card, including a short curatorial text by Kerstin Engholm about the project and its historical evidence and two photographs of the initial presentation of the artworks at the Palais Albert Rothschild and Nathaniel Rothschild before their 'Aryanization'. Since the titular 'reconstruction' of the collections only included paintings Artaker was able to find images of, the artist made the decision not to visually represent the absent artworks in the installation. Artaker reflected this consideration when speaking of only a "teilweise Rekonstruktion" (fragmentary reconstruction;

Author's transl.).[8] Thus, Artaker is not employing Arnheim's concept of 'visual gaps' to make the extent of absence and void visually perceptible, but her work either presupposes an extensive 'visual knowledge' of the former collections, or the text and photographs on the invitation card hint at the 'potentiated void' caused by the absence of most of the paintings, their owners, and the contexts of the collections – including both the collections in their entirety as well as the two palaces. Additionally, the captions in *REKONSTRUKTION DER ROTHSCHILD'SCHEN GEMÄLDESAMMLUNG* indicate even the absence of most of the reproduced paintings on a textual level, stating that most of their locations have remained unknown after 1945.

Comparing Artaker's strategy with select examples for Lehmann's categories of an 'aesthetics of absence', it becomes clear that Artaker's work does not intend to address the levels of absence and void caused by the 'Aryanization' of the collections and the palaces visually but textually – the reproductions work as visual placeholders for eighty of the paintings and thereby try to keep them present. By contrast, Stephen Prina's series *Exquisite Corpse: The Complete Paintings of Manet* (since 1988), which Lehmann states as an example for her category 'The Imaginary Museum: Reproduced Images', and in which the artist uses scaled gray planes as placeholders for Manet's paintings to invoke a different form of *catalog raisonné* based on the visual absence of images, the paintings researched by Artaker remain visually present meditated by their reproductions (cf. Lehmann 1994, 62). Both Prina and Artaker use allegorized conventions of art books and collection catalogues, such as the specific layout and the relations of images and captions. One of Lehmann's (1994, 62) examples for the category 'The Image that Disappeared from the Wall' is Alex Hartley's *Untitled* (1991), which evokes a former presence of an exhibit via a label. While Hartley visually integrates absence in the conception of his work, Artaker deals with absence on a textual level, indicating absence in the provenance information of the paintings.

5 Case Study: *Invent arisiert* (2000) by Arno Gisinger

In his project *Invent arisiert*, Gisinger deals with the 'Aryanization' of the property of eight Austrian families from Greater Vienna defined by the National Socialists as 'Jewish' – namely of Hugo Breitner (1873-1946), Viktor Ephrussi (1860-1945), Wilhelm Goldenberg (1887-1943), Moritz König (1891-1944), Oskar Pöller (1883-1942), Hedwig Schwarz (1893-1966), Emil Stiaßny (1881-1956), and Paul

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8 In the course of the research for the Author's doctoral thesis, the Author interviewed Anna Artaker in Vienna on 17 October 2021. Information from this interview was used here.

Weiß (1901-1977) (cf. Posch 2000, 24). In contrast to Artaker, Gisinger was explicitly commissioned with an artistic work addressing the 'Aryanized' objects in the collection holdings of the *Hofmobiliendepot* in Vienna by the curators Ilsebill Barta-Fliedl and Herbert Posch for the exhibition *InventARISIERT*. The exhibition was on display at the *Hofmobiliendepot* from 7 September to 19 November 2000, and included – in addition to *Invent arisiert* – the results of the comprehensive provenance research, which had been initiated by Barta-Fliedl in 1993, and which was systematically carried out by her and the historian Posch from 1997 to 1999 (cf. Posch 2000, 12-13). Barta-Fliedl and Posch (2000, 9) stated that both the exhibition and the extensive exhibition catalogue were efforts to make these research results public. During their research process, it became clear to Barta-Fliedl and Posch that the institution's inventory still listed items such as everyday objects, furniture and artworks that had been 'Aryanized' in the first months after the 'Annexation' of Austria in 1938 and which had then been added to the institution's inventory in 1939 (cf. Posch 2000, 24). In the 1990s and only thanks to Barta-Fliedl's and Posch's continued efforts, the institution finally came to terms with its past, after having showed no interest in looking proactively for the former owners or in restituting these objects for decades (cf. Posch 2000, 29-30). Additionally, Barta-Fliedl's and Posch's research showed that some of these 'Aryanized' and inventoried objects could still be identified and actually found in the storage of the *Hofmobiliendepot*, while other items were still listed in the inventory but were no longer physically present in the depot – their locations have remained unknown until today.[9] It is also important to note that Barta-Fliedl and Posch commissioned Gisinger only after their provenance research had been completed, therefore provenance research was not part of Gisinger's artistic commission. The objects that could be located at the *Hofmobiliendepot* were restituted to their former owners or their heirs as recommended by the *Österreichischer Kunstrückgabebeirat* mostly in 1999 and 2000 – meaning before the opening of the exhibition.

For *Invent arisiert*, Gisinger used the results of Barta-Fliedl's and Posch's provenance research as his point of departure and subsequently conceived visual strategies to represent both the inventoried objects that were still present and those that were absent in the institution's depot (cf. Gisinger 2000, 64). Right from the start, both the curators as well as the artist agreed that they did not intend to include the original objects in the exhibition to avoid further

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9   In the course of the research for the Author's doctoral thesis, the Author interviewed Ilsebill Barta-Fliedl and Herbert Posch in Vienna on 4 February 2020 and Arno Gisinger in Paris on 11 March 2020. Information from these interviews was used here.

perpetuating their institutional appropriation – therefore, they were only partly visually present in the exhibition through Gisinger's *Invent arisiert* (cf. Barta-Fliedl; Posch 2000, 9). For the first category, Gisinger created a setting in one of the museum's storage rooms and photographed the items positioned on the floor and against the wall of the room. In a next step, he digitally included the inventory number, the designated use of the object by the National Socialists as well as an information about its current status **[fig. 2]**.

MD 38.530 (=W 402)
Im Mobiliendepot gelagert
Seit 1998 im Mobiliendepot zur Rückgabe bereitgestellt

Figure 2
Arno Gisinger, *Ohne Titel* from the series *Invent arisiert*. 2000. Lambda print, 25 × 20 cm. Hofmobiliendepot, Vienna. Courtesy of the artist, © Arno Gisinger

For the second category, Gisinger took a photograph of the same setting without the object and added to the textual information the designation under which it had been inventoried in 1939 **[fig. 3]**. For objects that had been 'Aryanized' but had not been inventoried in 1939 due to their low financial value, and that had been subsequently sold or auctioned off, Gisinger designed lists including the item's institutional designation and quantity. At the *Hofmobiliendepot*, the installation *Invent arisiert* consisted of a total of 648 C-prints, each in the format of 25 × 20 cm. Gisinger structured the prints laminated on aluminium plates according to the eight families of the former owners, then to the order in which the objects had been inventoried, and finally, to the inventory numbers – always starting with *MD* (short for *Möbeldepot*) (cf. Gisinger 2000, 64). Since Gisinger conceived forms of visual representation of both the absent and the present objects, Arnheim's concept of 'visual gaps' can be applied here: in using the same photographic setting for both categories of objects, the different medialisations of presence and absence collide in *Invent arisiert*, creating 'visual gaps' in the installation through which the past penetrates the disrupted present. At the same time, Gisinger managed to keep the quantitatively predominant absence of the objects present in his installation – both on a visual level in the photographs of the absent objects and on a textual level in the lists of the objects that had not been inventoried.

In her examples for the category 'The Imaginary Museum: Reproduced Images', Lehmann (1994, 62) mentioned works such as Endre Tót's *Die abwesenden Bilder*, which share the conceptual representation of an absent object or image with Gisinger's form of representation of the inventoried but absent everyday objects in the *Hofmobiliendepot*. Both Tót and Gisinger employed the conventions of institutional information such as title, date, measurements, technique of an object instead of its visual reproduction. In addition, both artists address the void as a medialisation of absence, which Gisinger uses photographically for the inventoried but absent objects at the *Hofmobiliendepot*. As an example for her category 'The Archived Image' Lehmann (1994, 64) alludes to Hartley's *Stored*, in which a storage rack and crates evoke the depot of an (art) institution. Gisinger also applies this aesthetic of institutional custody, administration, and power of disposal, when he refers to the conventions of historical inventory photography in his photographic setting and includes the labels and markings attached to the objects from the *Hofmobiliendepot* in *Invent arisiert* (cf. Schwärzler 2000, 54-6). In comparison of those in Lehmann's examples with Gisinger's strategies, it becomes apparent that these different artistic explorations of absence and void demonstrate overlaps in the representation of an object through a concept of the past presence of an object, and the adoption of aesthetic conventions of institutional storage and presentation.

6 Conclusion

Both Artaker's *REKONSTRUKTION DER ROTHSCHILD'SCHEN GEMÄLDESAMMLUNG* and Gisinger's *Invent arisiert* were analyzed here as representations of specific forms of 'potentiated void' caused by National Socialist 'Aryanizations'. Through the methodological lens of Arnheim's 'visual gaps' and Lehmann's examples of 'aesthetics of absence', the strategies of both artists proved to exceed these perceptual and art-immanent concepts in addressing 'potentiated void' and therefore also forced absences and disrupted presences caused by 'Aryanizations'. While Artaker decided not to demonstrate this 'potentiated void' visually but textually through the captions and the invitation card, Gisinger applied 'visual gaps' by taking photographs of both the present and the absent objects at the *Hofmobiliendepot*. The importance of both artistic examinations of 'Aryanizations' and their consequences as new forms of reading recent history in times of the disappearance of the contemporary witnesses of the Shoah becomes apparent by keeping the absent objects, their owners and their contexts present meditated by the void by using artistic research, photographic media and installation to deal with the tension of former presence and present absence.

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