

GALLERY

Photography by

**LISA OPPENHEIM**

In 2020, Lisa Oppenheim began going through the archives of museums in the Netherlands, Germany and France, looking for photographs of lost artworks that had been looted in the second world war. The American multimedia artist soon discovered that the Nazis were great documentarians of their own crimes. “There is a lot of information on many lost or destroyed artworks, due in part to their meticulous record-keeping,” she says. But where national institutions might have focused on restitution, Oppenheim treated her discovery as a point of reimagining, asking: “What is the afterlife of something that no longer exists?”

The result of her investigation is a series of ghostly negatives entitled *Spolia*, the Latin word for “spoils”, which refers to materials taken from old buildings to create new structures. To make the photographs, Oppenheim re-exposed the prints using various techniques, including firelight, to generate “unpredictable shifts in the positive and negative values of the image”, she explains. This heightened the contrast between the dark shadows and fluorescent light, obscuring the photographic subjects while preserving the remaining essence of the paintings. In an exhibition at Huis Marseille in Amsterdam, the photographs are grouped according to the families who originally owned the artwork, inviting us to reckon with what was lost to history and grapple with the legacy of violence. **FT**

Words by Sinead Campbell.  
 “Spolia” by Lisa Oppenheim is at Huis Marseille, Amsterdam, until June 16



LISA OPPENHEIM, COURTESY OF THE EKARD COLLECTION

‘Pendant, 1943/2021’, 2021

