
Articles You May have Missed

Susanne Friend, column editor

“Many Iraq Artifacts Recovered, Many Archaeological Sites Plundered,” *University of Chicago Chronicle*, April 19, 2004.

A year after the Iraq National Museum was looted, many of its artifacts have been recovered. But in terms of archaeological losses, the looting of the museum may well be dwarfed by the continual destruction of archaeological sites all over Iraq by looters.

This looting has touched upon well-known sites such as Nippur, home of an archaeological expedition of the Oriental Institute, Umma, Lagash, and Isin, but many more unexcavated sites are destroyed by the unsystematic onslaught of pick axes used by the looters throughout the country.

The loss in archaeological data is impossible to quantify but clearly has reached disastrous dimensions. Although coalition forces have taken measures to protect some of the key sites in Iraq, archaeologists contend those measures have been inadequate.

“John Kerry’s Share In A Dutch Master,” *Boston Globe*, April 20, 2004.

Senator John Kerry’s biggest source of income after his Senate salary last year was the sale of a Dutch master painting.

Kerry’s wife Teresa Heinz Kerry and her first husband, the late Senator John Heinz, were famous art collectors, specializing in 17th-century Dutch works, primarily still lifes. Kerry, too, has become quite knowledgeable about art during his second marriage.

“He’s fairly intellectual,” one dealer noted, admiringly.

“The French Police Picasso,” *BBC*, April 19, 2004.

French police are releasing their files on Pablo Picasso. Documents show that Picasso was spied on initially as a suspected anarchist, and later over his communist sympathies - before he became a prominent member of France’s Communist Party.

“Science - Unraveling Giorgione’s Mind,” *The Economist*, February 26, 2004.

A group of nine Giorgione paintings have been examined with new scientific techniques reveal much about

how the artist worked. What has become clear with the infra-red discoveries is that Giorgione was a radical modernist when he drew.

Giorgione doodled as he worked out compositions, just like 20th-century artists. But why did Giorgione, “the modernist,” paint such free and fanciful images only to delete them or adapt them into more restrained ones?

“Plan To Double Size Of Uffizi,” *The Guardian (UK)*, February 26, 2004.

Florence plans to double the size of the Uffizi Gallery, and Italy’s culture minister boasts the new gallery will rival the size of the Louvre.

By the time work is completed, visitors to the extensively remodelled Uffizi will be able to see 800 new works, including many now confined to the gallery’s storerooms for lack of space.

“Keep Focused - Tracking Down Looted Iraq Art,” *Christian Science Monitor* February 20, 2004.

Last year Col. Matthew Bogdanos led the US team trying to recover art looted from the Iraq National Museum.

Now, after recovering more than 4,000 stolen artifacts, Bogdanos’s team is in shambles, its members recalled to other projects, or done with their tours of duty. The Marine colonel himself will be returning to civilian life at the end of March.

So this winter he’s touring the world, pleading with government officials, military experts, and antiquities specialists to continue his effort to recover more than 9,000 missing treasures dating back to the birth of city life, the invention of written language, the world’s first laws.

“Iraqi Museum Workers Come To US,” *Washington Post*, February 23, 2004.

A group of Iraqi museum professionals will be coming to the US to study conservation and restoration techniques.

Scholars at the Smithsonian have been discussing for months how to assist their colleagues, especially those at the Iraq National Museum of Antiquities in Baghdad, which was ransacked after the fall of Saddam Hussein’s dictatorship last April.

“The best way is through a practicum, where we can help establish practical methods of conservation, registration, and preservation,” said the museum conservators.

“Debating The Tunnel Through Stonehenge,” *The Guardian (UK)*, February 19, 2004.

The approach to Stonehenge is a miserable affair. So there’s a proposal to dig a tunnel to remove cars from the immediate area. But there’s controversy about the tunnel, so an inquiry’s being held.

Although the proposed tunnel will take the road out of sight of the stones, its entrance portals will still be within the Stonehenge world heritage site, which many archaeologists regard as one vast, man-made, sacred landscape.

The inquiry will pitch the partners in the Stonehenge Project against one another.

“Canadian Art-For-Taxes Scheme Disallowed,” *The Globe & Mail (Canada)*, February 19, 2004.

A Canadian court has disallowed a scheme whereby investors could buy art at a low price, then claim an inflated value by donating it to museums and universities.

It’s been estimated that the scheme, called Art for Education, resulted in tax-credit claims of more than \$65-million.

In December last year, Canada Customs and Revenue announced it was eliminating the tax shelter, saying that henceforth, purchase price would be considered for donations being made for tax purposes.

“Italians Struggle To Return Ancient Obelisk,” *The Observer (UK)*, February 15, 2004.

After years of pressure from the Ethiopians, Italy agreed in 2002 to return a 1,700-year-old obelisk that was stolen by Mussolini and placed near the Coliseum.

So late last year a team of experts carefully dismantled the obelisk, dividing it into three pieces each weighing between 40 and 70 tons. The pieces were wrapped up and stored in a hangar near Rome. But now the Italian authorities have run into a hitch. They say they

cannot find a plane big enough to transport the pieces safely.

“National Gallery Wins Raphael,” *Financial Times*, February 13, 2004.

London’s National Gallery has managed to buy Raphael’s *Madonna of the Pinks* and prevent it from being shipped to America.

A price of £22m has been agreed between the gallery and the Duke of Northumberland.

The Duke agreed to sell the painting to the J. Paul Getty Museum in California for £35m in September 2002.

“A Raphael Forgery, A Caravaggio Copy,” *The Guardian (UK)* February 22, 2004.

On Friday the National Gallery in London learnt that Raphael’s gooey *Madonna of the Pinks* was probably a forgery; meanwhile the National Gallery of Ireland spent the week rebutting accusations that its precious Caravaggio, a moody nocturne representing Christ’s arrest, was a second-hand Flemish copy, inferior to an original unearthed by a dealer in Rome.

The reattribution wounded Irish national pride and the religious conviction that underpins it.

“Baltic Sea - An Archaeological Paradise,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 2004.

Searchers are finding hundreds of beautifully preserved ships in the Baltic Sea, making it an “archeological paradise.”

Politics and nature have conspired to preserve the secrets of the Baltic. The Cold War seriously hindered exploration, and the low salt content of the Baltic waters kept away the shipworms that feast on wooden wrecks.

“The Crumbling Wall Of China,” *The Guardian (UK)*, January 27, 2004.

Thanks to centuries of erosion, decades of tourism, and countless incidents of vandalism, the Great Wall of China is barely a third of its original impressive self.

It is the clearest indication yet that booming China is failing to use its

new wealth to conserve what ought to be a source of national pride.

Renovations that have been carried out have ended with clumsy exploitation, such as at Badaling, where tourists can ride toboggans and cable cars, eat at a KFC outlet and have their picture taken with camels and life-size cutouts of Mao Zedong.

The Badaling section of the wall alone attracts more than 10 million visitors per year.

“Nobody Knows Art Like Customs Inspectors,” *The Telegraph (UK)*, January 24, 2004.

The definition of art is not something that anyone would lightly undertake. Nor would it normally be left to a US customs official to decide. But that is exactly what happened in October 1926, when an extraordinary legal battle erupted over a Constantin Brancusi statue being brought into the U.S.

The point was that ordinary merchandise was subject to duty at 40 per cent, while art was not. And the customs official on duty at the time happened to be an amateur sculptor – just the sort of person to have bumptiously confident views about matters aesthetic.

He took one look at the Brancusi, concluded that it wasn’t art, and levied \$4,000 duty.

“Guilty Or Not, It’s A Damned Creepy Way To Make A Living,” *BBC*, March 10, 2004.

A German scientist who created an exhibition of human corpses has been cleared of allegations that he illegally obtained some of the bodies.

Gunther von Hagens was accused in several press reports last year of using bodies from China and Kyrgyzstan. But prosecutors in Heidelberg, Germany, said the corpses had been sold legally by institutions such as hospitals. Dr von Hagens was allowed to buy the corpses from such institutions because they were legal custodians of the bodies if the relatives of the dead had not claimed them.

“Restorer Rescues Saint John after Koons’ Sculpture is Damaged,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, April 19, 2004.

Saint John the Baptist probably cracked his arm during a short ride

through Seattle from Artech storage to the Wright Exhibition Space. Produced in an edition of three with an artist’s proof, *Saint John* is one of the most prominent pieces from Koons’ celebrated 1988 *Banality* series of large-scale, ceramic sculptures.

Once the sculpture was unwrapped at the Wright Exhibition Space on Feb. 17 and the crack discovered, Artech, the region’s top art handling and storage company, called Patricia Leavengood of Art Conservation Services. Given of the nature of the break – from the palm of the pointing finger down the wrist to just below the elbow where it rings the arm – the crack is never going to disappear, she said.

“It’s a complex piece inherently under a lot of tension. When it cracked, part of it slid forward and can’t be moved back into place. I’m trying to create an illusion of seamlessness, so that the misalignment doesn’t jump out at you.

Porcelain wasn’t meant to exist at this size. My primary task is to stabilize the piece, and that I can do.”

“Craftsmen Shortlisted for Award after Losing their Jobs,” *The Guardian*, April 10, 2004.

The rescue of a stupendous piece of Victorian bombast has been shortlisted for a top conservation award – a week after the English Heritage craftsmen responsible were made redundant.

To add irony to insult, days after their laboratory closed, English Heritage trundled out head conservator Adrian Buckley to celebrate another of his projects, the return of rare Georgian wall paintings to Danson House in south London. He courteously posed beside them without mentioning he had lost his job after 30 years.

In his workshop for the last time on Wednesday, Mr Buckley politely described the news of his nomination for the Pilgrim Trust award, the Oscars of the conservation world, as “not without its ironic aspect.”

Sharon Manitta, a committee member of the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation, said: “There is no substitute for in-house conservation, for the pool of expertise accumulated and the capacity to involve conservators at all stages of a project.”