

ABSTRACTS SELECTED

HERITAGE, ETHICS AND CRIME

Christos TSIROGIANNIS

Looted, smuggled and stolen antiquities identified in auction houses: what have we learned in the last eight years?

Between 2005 and 2007, some of the most prestigious museums and private collections around the world announced the return of hundreds of antiquities to Italy. Many of these antiquities have previously appeared through the most well-known auction houses in London and New York. Since 2007 dozens of antiquities lacking full and/or legal collecting histories, and appearing in the confiscated archives of the convicted dealers Medici, Becchina and Symes-Michaelides, have been identified in the leading auction houses Christie's, Sotheby's and Bonhams. Not all of the identified antiquities have been claimed. Only a few of those identified were withdrawn from sale. Very few have been repatriated. Focusing on London and New York, the two centres of the trade, this paper will analyse selected cases with different outcomes between 2007 and 2014, offering a comparative perspective on the roles played by state authorities and the steps still to be made towards effective research into the market, reconstruction of collecting histories, and repatriation of numerous illicit antiquities.

Christos TSIROGIANNIS, University of Cambridge

Christos Tsirogiannis is a Greek forensic archaeologist. He studied archaeology and history of art in the University of Athens, and worked for the Greek Ministry of Culture from 1994 to 2008, excavating throughout Greece and recording antiquities in private hands. He voluntarily cooperated with the Greek police Art Squad on a daily basis (173 cases, August 2004 - December 2008) and was a member of the Greek Task Force Team that repatriated looted, smuggled and stolen antiquities from the Getty Museum, Shelby White/Leon Levy collection, Jean-David Cahn gallery etc. Since 2007, Tsirogiannis has been identifying antiquities in museums, galleries, auction houses and private collections, depicted in confiscated archives, notifying state authorities who repatriate their plundered cultural heritage based on Tsirogiannis' research. In 2013 he received his Ph.D. at the University of Cambridge, on the international illicit antiquities network and the annual award for Art Protection and Security by the Association for Research into Crimes against Art (ARCA).