

IADAA NEWSLETTER – April 2016

First, the good news:

- IADAA are increasingly becoming part of the debate, as the past few weeks have shown. On March 30 Chairman Vincent Geerling addressed the UNESCO Conference in Paris on Cultural Property, putting facts and figures on the record concerning the state of the trade and the lack of evidence for the illicit trade in looted Syrian and Iraqi artefacts in Europe.
- UNESCO also uploaded key information relating to real and false facts and figures used by parties to the debate on looting and illicit trade. Even those previously touting false figures now largely accept them for what they are. One breakthrough was a report quoting Antiquities Coalition chair Deborah Lehr admitting that no one has any idea about the scope and value of looting.
- Vincent Geerling has now been asked to address a Europol meeting later in May. We will report back on this.
- Antiques Trade Gazette have praised IADAA for its campaigning role, with Editor Noelle McElhatton writing a special commentary, in which she declares: “Antiquities dealers should appreciate, too, the increasingly robust and articulate defence being provided by the International Association of Dealers in Ancient Art (IADAA). For if ever there was a time when the antiquities trade needed a unified, powerful voice, it is now.”
- The accompanying ATG news report, attacking the highly misleading and inaccurate Channel Four Dispatches documentary broadcast in the UK on April 18, includes extensive quotes from the Metropolitan Police regarding the honesty, probity and helpfulness of the trade in fighting crime (see below). This is not just extremely reassuring and gratifying, but essential evidence for use in our ongoing campaign.
- Despite the damaging nature of the C4 Dispatches programme, it has received almost no media or public attention or follow-up. This appears to be because of the lack of evidence it provided to sustain claims of an active trade in London in looted material.
- While some news aggregation sites followed up the story, leading media outlets ignored the ridiculous claims by Russia’s Ambassador to the UN regarding the value of looted antiquities coming out of Syria. As was soon noted, this appeared to be a ruse to embarrass the Turkish government, which reacted accordingly. The fact that leading international media are now making discerning judgments like this is to be welcomed.
- IADAA adviser Ivan Macquisten has established contact with former Homeland Security antiquities chief James McAndrew and is lending his support in helping to kickstart a US campaign to counter all the damaging propaganda. The campaign aims to raise the profile of the US trade in The Senate, improve the quality of the debate, persuade politicians and lawmakers that testimony should be supported by independently verified evidence and seek answers to key questions regarding the level activity relating to looted Syrian and Iraqi material in the US. Ultimately, the trade want to ensure that US policy and lawmaking is based on reasoned debate backed by solid evidence rather than on the propaganda that is currently shaping it.
- Work involving the UK’s Antiquities Dealers Association in the British Parliament is

proceeding well, with leading anti-trade figures accepting some measures already proposed, with other to be discussed further.

- Anti-trade archaeologists and academics are working with the trade to create a credible dealer accreditation/registration scheme that supports the legitimate trade while making life much more difficult for those who do not operate proper codes of conduct.
- Finally, despite all the propaganda, false claims and bogus headlines, two years after ISIS started overseeing looting in Syria, the authorities in the UK, Europe and the US have still not come forward with a single item that can be shown to have links to ISIS looting. The UK police, in the ATG report, state clearly that they “have had no referrals to support the claim that the London art market is experiencing an upsurge in artefacts emanating from conflict zones in Syria and Iraq”.

Whatever the ongoing threat, something is working and the watchfulness and due diligence of the international legitimate trade is playing a major hand in this fight against crime.

Samuel Andrew Hardy: archaeomafias traffic antiquities as well as drugs

March 29: Sam Hardy previews his UNESCO talk with this blog. At UNESCO, the rush of statistics and slides, along with the attempt at all-encompassing coverage, was a mess and failed to convey a clear picture of his arguments. Hardy is an archaeologist with some reasonable views and arguments, which have alienated some of his peers. However, he does not give the trade an easy time of it. The initial thrust of this paper is that under-documentation in source countries makes it far harder to track antiquities once they have been looted. This supports our argument for more emphasis to be placed on Article 5 of the UNESCO Convention, citing the responsibility of source countries. Although Hardy states that “Often little, if any, documentation is provided in the ostensibly legal trade, so it is easy for illicit antiquities to penetrate the market”, his view is a little outdated when considering the updated codes of practice and measure being undertaken now. This is why the wider trade needs to follow the example of the main associations. His dismissal of the ‘grandfather clause’ is not sustainable because of its implications for property rights under various laws. Where he comes completely unstuck is in his claim that self-regulation does not work. The fact that he has to go back as far as Tokeley-Parry to find an example to illustrate his argument is the clearest immediate indication of this.

<http://goo.gl/gxbjOU>

ISIS ‘Department of Artifacts’ document exposes antique loot trade via Turkey (RT EXCLUSIVE)

March 31: RT claim an exclusive on discovering a new trove of documents showing how ISIS make money out of oil, antiquities and other resources. As usual, however, the evidence provided does not support the dramatic claims. Referring to Palmyra, the news anchor introduces the report by stating, as fact, that: “Many of its most precious relics were plundered by ISIL and have been turning up in auction houses worldwide”.

The report does admit: "There is no official accounting that would illustrate the true scale of looting being undertaken in Syria", but immediately goes on to describe the looted antiquities trade as "lucrative". It follows this with a claim that "Artifacts, some worth thousands of dollars apiece, have been turning up in antique markets from eastern Europe to the US." Again, no evidence is supplied to support any of this. The report continues with the claim that "RT has exclusively obtained additional evidence that sheds light on the jihadists' black market of plundered treasures and its transit routes via Turkey." What this actually amounts to is a note that appears to ask border guards to provide safe passage for two looters across the border". Although no mention is made of what is being transported, nor any mention of money, RT states: "Besides providing revealing insight into ISIS money-making, the note supports the previous suppositions that ISIS is selling artifacts via the same trade route, which, according to what RT's crew was told, it used to bring across weapons and supplies, right under Ankara's nose." An interview with a captured ISIL fighter focuses simply on the oil trade.

The film does show artefacts that they later found abandoned in a tunnel, but these are all broken sherd and pieces of pots. Nothing of any value at all. The crew admit to not knowing how ancient they were. They also found an old French colonial map showing excavation grounds. RT promise a full documentary on the subject at the end of April.

<https://goo.gl/XZHLbW>

Demand still high for ISIL's stolen antiquities from Palmyra, elsewhere

April 1: USA Today. Reporter Jim Michaels reports that the recapture of Palmyra has deprived ISIS of revenue from looted antiquities and that "global demand for the stolen valuables persists despite international efforts to stop the sales".

"The Islamic State has earned millions of dollars from the sale of antiquities looted from throughout Syria and Iraq by establishing an elaborate system to smuggle and sell the goods on the open market," he says. He gives no source for any of this, nor for any of the claims he goes on to make, such as: "Countless antiquities are already on the market, which has proved difficult to curb. Criminal cases are hard to prosecute without evidence that a dealer or broker knew an item had been pilfered."

The Antiquities Coalition appears again, with executive director Tess Davis saying "It's a huge weak link." This, despite her boss, Deborah Lehr, last month admitting to the Creators Project blog (<http://goo.gl/JZxpEz>): "The biggest challenge in this field is that there's no real information or statistics on the size of this illegal trade."

<http://goo.gl/96FYKI>

Smuggler of Stolen Artifacts From Palmyra Speaks Out About ISIS' Illicit Operation

April 6. NBC News. Chief International Reporter Richard Engel interviews heavily disguised 'smuggler', Abu Mustafa, in southern Turkey, where he shows them a 20inch high relief said to depict a Sun god.

"NBC News showed pictures of Abu Mustafa's artifact to several leading experts, and while none of them could verify the object's authenticity from a photo, most of them agreed that it most likely comes from Palmyra and dates back to the first or second century A.D." The expert pictured is Amr-Al Azm, who accompanied Jennifer Janisch

on her undercover expose last year. He says the relief is a stele of a Sun god. Al-Azm is said to have shown the piece to other experts, but none can say for sure what the relief is or where it came from.

Mustafa, who says he has made up to \$60,000 a piece for artefacts like this from Palmyra, but has turned on his ISIS colleagues because they withheld his payment. NBC try to reinforce authority of claims with the following: "A similar artifact from the Palmyra museum, used as a reference by some of the scholars, is said to have been unearthed in the renowned Valley of Tombs." In other words, they actually don't know.

Further 'evidence' goes against what has previously been put forward as Sharia law on charges as Mustafa says he sends 85% of proceeds back to ISIS emir, his brother-in-law. Again, claims are not backed up with evidence: "Abu Mustafa claims that the buyers were German, French and even Americans, and that the artifacts were sold for as much as \$60,000 per piece — but there was no way of verifying either of those claims." Mustafa provides further photographic evidence of looted statues, which he says were put up for public auction Raqqa, although their actual whereabouts is not evident.

<http://goo.gl/u4Zo5Y>

Islamic State nets millions from antiquities: Russia

April 6: Reuters. Louis Charbonneau reports claims by Russia's ambassador to the UN Vitaly Churkin that ISIS make \$150m-200m from looted Syrian and Iraqi antiquities each year. No source or evidence is supplied for this, but the figures are identical to the IADAA figures supplied to UNESCO a week ago for the value of the annual global legitimate trade. Could this be misreporting of those figures? Either way, Reuters directly quote the ambassador, saying:

"The profit derived by the Islamists from the illicit trade in antiquities and archaeological treasures is estimated at U.S. \$150-200 million per year."

Needless to say, no evidence is given to support this. Meanwhile the Turkish Government dismiss the claims as anti-Turkish propaganda. "Even though the claims in the Russian media and recently brought to the UN by the Russian authorities have been made for political purposes and as propaganda, they are being seriously investigated," a Foreign Ministry official told AhluBayt news agency on April 8 (<http://goo.gl/9bRfge>). Interestingly, major UK news outlets, including The Daily Telegraph, Times and others fail to pick up on the story, an omission that would usually not happen.

<http://goo.gl/TQ4ZZD>

\$1 billion worth of archaeological artifacts smuggled out of Bulgaria annually, archaeologist claims

April 6: Archaeology in Bulgaria. The archaeological artifacts extracted and exported from Bulgaria through treasure hunting and illegal trafficking of antiques are worth about \$1 billion annually, according to Assoc. Prof. Konstantin Dochev, head of the Veliko Tarnovo Office of the Sofia-based National Institute and Museum of Archaeology, part of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Dochev, an archaeologist and numismatist with 39 years of experience, is one of the experts helping the Bulgarian police, Prosecutor's Office, and courts to prosecute

and try cases of treasure hunting and trafficking of antiques. However, no source is given for his estimate, nor any explanation as to how he came to it.

<http://goo.gl/JrmElj>

Russian claims of ISIS profits from looted antiquities 'do not add up,' dealer body says

April 8: Antiques Trade Gazette. Ivan Macquisten rebuts Russian Ambassador's claims on behalf of IADAA.

<http://goo.gl/elVW7>

Ancient Syrian treasures worth \$26m shipped to US

April 8: The New Arab: Quoting website Live Science, the article claims that \$26m worth of antiquities have been imported to the US from "the war-torn country" since 2011.

The New Arab then goes off in its own with the following: "The bulk of the antiques in the Census Bureau documents had arrived in New York, a hub for collectors and dealers. With such huge demand for Syrian historical artefacts, antiques have now overtaken oil as the country's largest export to the US. It is this demand, however, that is fuelling the looting and destruction of many of the Middle East's historical sites, which have become a fast-money option for many who are desperate to make a living."

Check the *Live Science* article, however, and there is considerably less detail or certainty. Here it is in full: "'Antiques' with a declared value of \$26 million have been imported to the United States from Syria since 2011, when the civil war there began, according to documents that the U.S. Census Bureau provided to Live Science. It's not clear what, exactly, the antiques actually are, nor whether the items were illegally brought here or where the money from any sales is going. Their age is also unclear. In most cases the documents say only that they are "antiques" that are more than "100 years old," although occasionally a shipment of coins is identified. The documents say that the bulk of them are brought to New York City where numerous antiquities dealers, art galleries and auction houses are based. Whether or not the antiques are resold after arriving in New York is unclear."

What it does not say, however, is that although all of these items may be Syrian, they have been imported from all over the world, not just Syria. So not necessarily antiquities – in fact in many cases certainly not – and much of it not from Syria.

<https://goo.gl/lqulqN>

<http://goo.gl/T5b4Jr>

Experts Urge Stop to ISIS Funding Through Stolen Artifacts

April 8: Antiquities Coalition executive director Tess Davis is among archaeologists and researchers addressing ISIS funding at the trafficking of antiquities at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington. "The U.S. State Department has warned that it believes that ISIS has made several million dollars of profits just since mid-2014," she says. This neatly sidesteps the AC's own position now, as expressed by its chairman Deborah Lehr, that no one has any idea of the size of ISIS's profits from looting. David is reduced to quoting the Abu Sayyaf raid \$1.25m, adopting the "any amount is too much" stance now promoted by those who previously promoted

figures of up to billions. “An AK-47 is going for, I think, around less than \$1,000 on the black market in that area,” she said. “That’s a lot of money to buy a lot of guns and bombs to attack the Iraqi and Syrian people.”

No further evidence is reported.

(<http://goo.gl/gD1NUC>)

Senate Votes to Ban Imports of Syrian Art and Antiquities

April 13: New York Times. Steven Lee Myers reports on the Senate vote to ban the import to the US of “virtually all ancient art and artifacts from [Syria](#) to discourage the looting and trafficking of illicit objects by the Islamic State and other armed groups”. The vote is linked to the efforts of the taskforce aimed at stricter enforcement by customs officers and further restrictions on trade and movement of antiquities. The taskforce comprises the Antiquities Coalition, the Middle East Institute and the Asia Society. In a separate report from the Asian Society, the taskforce unveils its Recommendations to Combat Antiquities Trafficking, Cultural Cleansing. The NY Times report notes that the Senate also voted on the report, urging the White House to appoint a senior director to coordinate government actions against blood antiquities.

The second link below gives a summary of the recommendations. Those for the art market include:

- **Museums, dealers, and auction houses** to recommit to greater transparency and make publicly available documentation of legal title and known ownership history for all antiquities.
 - **An art dealers’ trade organization** to establish a registry of antiquities dealers who are verified to abide by prescribed ethical codes and industry best practices.
 - **Collectors, dealers, museums, and other market players** to cease using stolen art database certificates as the sole proof of due diligence for antiquities acquisitions.
- Lawyer Kate FitzGibbon provides incisive analysis of the Task Force’s report in her monthly Committee for Cultural Policy report (<http://goo.gl/ehmo6O>), questioning, as IADAA so often do, why authorities such as Congress and The Senate accept without question claims and ‘research’ by pressure groups that provide either no evidence or previously discredited evidence to support their arguments.

<http://goo.gl/6qikQn>

<http://goo.gl/XrpcaQ>

Storm clouds gather over German art market

The Art Newspaper: April 14: Further discussion of the proposed German law underlined how little the minister is willing to listen. An indication was her refusal to accept the petition of 44,500 signatures protesting about the changes, which Ursula Kampmann and others nevertheless managed to hand over. Bound copies of the petition were made to deliver to each of the Bundestag’s 650 MPs. IADAA chairman Vincent Geerling has been at the centre of the debate and campaign to prevent what he fears would be the destruction of the trade in Germany and the creation of a template to do the same across Europe. One ray of hope is in the timing. The minister wants the matter settled before the summer, but that would mean Bundesrat members having all the information and draft legislation put before them by mid June. This is highly unlikely because of difficulties with legal definitions and

other aspects with drawing up the legislation. However, the minister may attempt to force it through regardless.

<http://goo.gl/8nmLZv>

Lucrative Loot: The Murky World of the Ancient Artifact Market

April 14: Spiegel Online. Konstantin von Hammerstein reports on Germany's proposed Cultural property protection law, acknowledging in the introduction: "A new law in Germany seeks to eliminate the trade in ancient artifacts". Yet again, no distinction is made between the crooks and the legitimate trade. Instead he focuses in enormous detail on the activities of Leonardo Patterson, a Costa Rican now living in Munich who has made a career out of the illicit trade in antiquities. Hammerstein uses Patterson as a springboard to damn the whole trade, describing it as "Janus-faced", and talking about good being brought out of the shadows into "the light of quasi-legality".

The article continues: "Should it ultimately pass, the new law would make it illegal in Germany to trade in artifacts that do not have an export license from their country of origin. Restitutions are also to be made easier." It also repeats the long discredited claim that "The illegal trade in antiquities is almost as lucrative as the illegal trade in drugs and arms, and almost as clandestine." Beyond the Patterson story, Hammerstein is short in detail and fact, but long on prejudice, making unsubstantiated allegations about collectors and complaining about countries that failed to ratify the UNESCO Convention immediately, but without showing any curiosity as to why that might have been.

<http://goo.gl/rRPDtI>

Fighting ISIS: Stopping the Flow of Blood Antiquities

April 15: House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Chairman Ed Royce reports on his recent trip to the Baghdad Museum. He starts by detailing how awe-inspiring the artefacts are. However, he then states: "Tragically, much of this history — when it is not being systematically destroyed by ISIS — is being sold today by these same terrorists to fund sickening acts of violence.

"In fact, some reports have estimated ISIS earns as much as \$100 million annually from the sale of stolen artifacts, which they sell to middlemen who can peddle these treasures in old-fashioned markets or online. This is big business that fuels ISIS's drive to inspire and carry out more attacks on the United States and Europe."

No source is given for the figures he quotes, although they are the same as those already discredited.

<http://goo.gl/36U7HK>

'Illegal' Syrian antiquity found on sale for £30,000 in London

April 17: Sunday Times. News report by Robin Henry to promote C4 Dispatches programme to be broadcast on Monday night, in which Jamie Ede is interviewed. Needless to say, this is a dissembling piece, which fails to include key facts, while promoting basic errors as fact. Scotland Yard have identified this artefact as illegally exported from Syria. However, what the report fails to mention is that the paperwork showed it came out of Syria in 2007 or before. In other words, this has nothing to do with the current crisis. The programme makers acknowledged this to

us while filming, but the ST makes no mention of it. The closest they come is towards the end of the report, when they state: "While Nawa has been the site of clashes involving Isis, there is no evidence the terrorist group took the lintel". They fail to mention that it could not possibly have done so, however.

While filming, the programme makers also acknowledged to us that there is no evidence of looted or illegally exported material on the London market from the current crisis (something confirmed by Scotland Yard and by both Lord Renfrew and Dr Neil Brodie in the current APPG consultation). Again, the ST makes no mention of this. The result is that uninformed readers will think this is a piece benefiting ISIS. It also makes various claims over standards of provenance that are simply not true and creates the impression that it is highly unusual for antiquities not to have fully provenance paperwork. Again, a fantasy.

<http://goo.gl/fyintQ>

Isis and the Missing Treasures: Channel 4 Dispatches

April 18: Channel Four: Predictably the 30-minute C4 programme fails to show any evidence whatsoever of ISIS-looted material on sale in London, despite going out of its way throughout to create the impression that there is. Close analysis of the broadcast indicates that it, along with the press release to promote it, is in breach of a number of the broadcaster's rules. It also appears to be in breach of the broadcast regulator's rules regarding misleading viewers, among other issues. The Antiquities Dealers' Association in London has now lodged a formal complaint against the programme with Channel Four. Despite confirming throughout that there was no evidence to link any of the items shown with ISIS, undercover reporter Simon Cox appeared in a BBC London News interview the following day stating categorically that a trade involving ISIS-looted material was indeed active in London. To date he has provided no evidence at all to show this.

<http://goo.gl/MEd53M>

US largest market for antiquities looted by ISIS

April 19: Talk Media News: The United States is the largest market for the Islamic State militant group's illicit trade in plundered antiquities, according to Patty Gerstenblith, a professor at DePaul University College of Law. However, she provides no evidence to support this claim as she attacks the trade. The report also then quotes the UN's Russian Ambassador's recent claim about the market in looted Syrian antiquities being worth \$150m-200m a year, despite this being known to be false.

<http://goo.gl/imDfD7>

Islamic State committing 'cultural genocide' by selling priceless antiques to westerners

April 20: Breitbart.com: Edwin Mora reports that expert witnesses testified to Congress about the unprecedented level of looting and destruction of priceless antiques by jihadist groups across the Middle East, identifying collectors from Europe and the US as top buyers of ancient artefacts illegally sold by Islamic State. The experts were Mr. Yaya Fanusie, director of analysis for the Center on Sanctions and Illicit Finance at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), and Dr. Patty

Gerstenblith, director of the Center for Art, Museum, and Cultural Heritage Law at DePaul University. They were giving evidence to the House Financial Services Committee's Task Force to Investigate Terrorism Financing during a hearing titled "Preventing Cultural Genocide: Countering the Plunder and Sale of Priceless Cultural Antiquities by ISIS."

The report states that there has been little action on the part of the US and other governments, keeping "the United States as an open market to the import of illegally acquired cultural artefacts". No acknowledgement of the new law banning the import of Syrian and Iraqi antiquities is given.

Mr Yanusie tells Congress: "The illegal traffic of ancient artifacts is increasingly becoming an essential source of revenue for ISIS as the U.S.-led coalition focuses on disrupting some of its other illegal sources of revenue, namely the sale of oil.

"Antiquities trafficking is now more important to Islamic State, particularly as some of its other revenue sources have become more difficult to manage," noted the FDD expert. "For example, U.S.-led airstrikes have significantly squeezed IS oil profits since 2014."

He provides no evidence to back this up.

Dr Gerstenblith then confirms that despite various estimates, the precise amount for how much revenue ISIS is earning from the illicit trade "is ultimately a known 'unknown,'" going on to state: "We can gain some sense of the significant extent of the looting, at least that which is being carried out at the major sites that have been documented through satellite imagery. However, at this point no scholar or researcher has systematically studied the questions of the types of artifacts that are likely coming out of the looters' pits, the numbers of such artifacts, or the price at which these artifacts are being sold."

In other words, their evidence is holes in the ground.

The report then the UN's Russian Ambassador's recent claim about the market in looted Syrian antiquities being worth \$150m-200m a year, despite this being known to be false.

The illicit trade is again described as 'lucrative' despite the previous admission that no one has any idea how much money is being made.

The accompanying 5-6 minute video shows Gerstenblith attacking the secrecy of the art market in its failure to name buyers and sellers, while Dr Al-Azm states that most of what is coming out of the ground never makes it onto the market but is just being transacted between dealers.

At no point is any actual evidence supplied to back their claims and statements.

<http://goo.gl/4Ku8Fc>

Much of the above is based on Yanusi's report (see below), whose sources Ivan Macquisten has now checked. Not one provides any hard evidence at all. A number refer to discredited articles, such as Rachel Shabi's Guardian report last year in which all those mentioned have now claimed to have been misquoted or misrepresented and which, anyway, provided no evidence whatsoever to show ISIS-looted antiquities on the London market, although Yanusi uses this as an evidence footnote to show the reverse. Every single reference to the illicit trade being lucrative or huge is supported by a footnote to reports that confirm that no one has the slightest idea of how valuable the trade is. Even Yanusi's report here admits this on the first page.

Despite this he immediately goes on to state: “The illegal antiquities trade is one income stream which gives the group significant strategic advantage against existing counter-terror efforts”. A number of similar statements appear throughout the report, although none is supported by any hard evidence at all.

As usual, there are a lot of qualifying words used, like “probably”, “allegedly”, “likely” etc. The closest any of it comes to evidence is the unsubstantiated testimony of unidentified smugglers on the ground.

Many of the footnote references refer to fairly old articles and reports quoting the billion-dollar, \$100m and \$36m figures that have long since been exposed as false.

See also: **Preventing Cultural Genocide: Countering the Plunder and Sale of Priceless Cultural Antiquities by ISIS, a report by Yaya J. Fanusie**

Director of Analysis, Center on Sanctions and Illicit Finance, FDD. Presented at the **Hearing before the Task Force to Investigate Terrorist Financing Committee on Financial Services**

<http://goo.gl/8LpZHJ>

Meet Dr Donna Yates, the expert aiming to make antiquities-collecting socially unacceptable

April 25: The Herald, Scotland. Archaeologist and academic Donna Yates, a close associate of much of the anti-trade brigade in Glasgow who Antiquities Trafficking and Art Crime at Glasgow University's Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research, is profiled saying how much she wants to bring an end to the world of collecting antiquities. At one point, the article – one assumes referring to the illicit trade, although it does not say so, states: “The trade, according to Trafficking Culture, is nothing less than a criminal industry that spans the globe. Yates herself has spoken of an “insatiable demand” for stolen antiquities.”

Yates also states of the Trafficking Culture initiative: “We're academics. We're not activists, or NGOs or anything like that. The goal is to provide the kind of research that is needed to make good policy rather than to lobby, or to get individual artefacts back. The aim is to understand the whole structure and to evaluate what laws and interventions are actually working.”

This is astounding, since Trafficking Culture is a highly active activist site that promotes anti-trade lobbying. Their stated goal of providing “the kind of research that is needed to make good policy rather than to lobby” is equally astounding considering the extensive lobbying they undertake, the absolute dearth of solid, reliable evidence to back their case and the appalling and unworkable policies they advocate.

<http://goo.gl/yIt2TH>

Dispatches was ‘hyperbole at best’

Antiques Trade Gazette: April 26: on page 4, IADAA adviser and spokesman Ivan Macquisten is reported attacking the Channel Four Dispatches programme, explaining how it failed to establish any link between London and the trade in ISIS-looted material. The report noted that the programme “cut interviews with academics, police and dealers with concealed camera footage and scenes of jihadist fighters”, but then conceded there was no connection between the items shown and

terrorism. ATG also quoted the Metropolitan Police confirming that the Quran shown in the programme had no links to the UK, yet alone London, despite the programme makers insisting it did. Importantly, The Metropolitan Police also stated that they “have had no referrals to support the claim that the London art market is experiencing an upsurge in artefacts emanating from conflict zones in Syria and Iraq”. Reassuringly, the police also stated: “It is often experts and practitioners from London museums and members of the London art market community who bring to our attention their concerns about particular artefacts.

“Members of the legitimate art market conduct due diligence as a matter of course to ensure that they do not breach laws and inadvertently sell a looted object.”

On top of this, ATG Editor Noelle McElhatton added a special comment, concluding as follows: “Antiquities dealers should appreciate, too, the increasingly robust and articulate defence being provided by the International Association of Dealers in Ancient Art (IADAA). For if ever there was a time when the antiquities trade needed a unified, powerful voice, it is now.”