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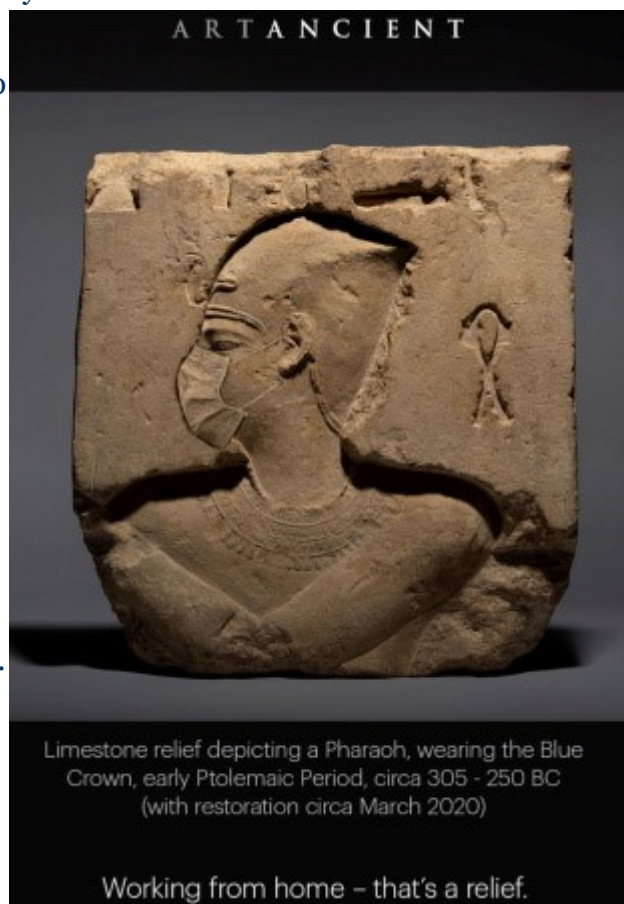
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEALERS IN ANCIENT ART

IADAA NEWSLETTER MARCH 2020

TEFAF, COVID 19 and dealers on the front line

The world has changed immeasurably since last month's newsletter, and it is still too early to assess the damage clearly.

However, IADAA members have been very helpful in giving feedback on their experiences, including at TEFAF Maastricht, which, as we know, had to close its doors early, with some dealers falling ill on their stands. Galleries have closed and the trade is even now looking at how business can continue online, but we are all on a steep learning curve. One dealer who had been ill and has closed their gallery has only now recovered enough to start thinking about what to do next. Their experiences are typical of many and follow here.



“The markets have taken such a battering that I don't know if it's left people feeling bereft of money or keen to diversify their assets and put their money where they can enjoy it. We are refreshing our website and will start a more obvious presence on Instagram, believing that there will be more people browsing the internet. Deliveries of certain pieces are on hold whilst smaller pieces can still be posted, although as the lockdown tightens this presents an additional challenge for the member of staff going to the gallery to pack.”

As for TEFAF itself, one report submitted noted that sales were down by at least

50% – a blow considering that the fair can often account for a quarter of their annual sales for some exhibitors.

“People put on a good face, but everyone was concerned about the virus and whether the fair would go ahead. It felt very dislocated, as if it was happening somewhere else, half-cocked, and when the announcement came that it was closing early I can’t believe anyone was surprised and think that most were relieved that finally we could make our escape.

“Some contemporary galleries had made the decision to close even before the fair made the announcement. Obviously our shippers still had to come out and that took several days, so we had to barricade our booth and be ultra-vigilant as to what was happening.”

Another exhibitor said: “It was a surreal experience. We were setting up the fair not knowing if it would actually go ahead and then the atmosphere was rather subdued. We ended up in a neutral position, which we saw as positive. Before the fair we had a deal cancelled due to the virus. Most people went through with their fair purchases though one is wavering.”

The crisis developed so quickly that it was almost impossible to decide firstly whether the fair should go ahead or not, and then when to close it.

The organisers enjoyed strong support at the exhibitors’ meeting for going ahead, although with hindsight the decision could well have been different. At least by the time it closed, much of the potential business would have been completed, but this has to be counted against the human cost, as one dealer concluded: “I am glad I made the sales we did, though I regret that the fair attracted so many people who may well have been infected and gone on to infect others.”

Another exhibitor said: “I think the TEFAF team did their job and kept the fair open for us exhibitors, so we were able to conduct a minimum of business.

Everybody – exhibitors as much as visitors – knew the situation and so was in a position to decide whether to stay, exhibit, visit or not. Personally, I am grateful that TEFAF opened for as long as it did because without it I and others would have had a challenging time financially. Luckily I sold, which means I can continue in business if I limit my spending.”

Our thanks to Costas Paraskevaides and Art Ancient for their inspired image above.

Please keep sending us your news, including problems that need solving as well as tips and anything else helpful for getting things back to as normal as they can be for the moment.

Lawyer for dealers in Ivory Act appeal: ‘prepare to sell your antique ivory’

Antiques Trade Gazette: February 27: FACT (Friends of Antique Cultural Treasures) have lodged their legal appeal in a bid to protect the trade in a

limited range of antique ivory. However, with a ruling expected within weeks, FACT lawyer Richard Pike has warned that if the Government wins it is likely to move to enforcement quickly, prompting this warning to sell quickly. Alternatively, collectors should move quickly to protect their collections by moving them abroad now, he advises.

None of this inspires much confidence in the success of the appeal.

<https://bit.ly/3cDfG6H>

Why is the Egyptian government moving ancient monuments around the country?

Apollo Magazine: February 29: An enlightening and informative article setting recent developments in Egypt in their political and economic context. Written by archaeologist and academic Tom Hardwick.

<https://bit.ly/2vLok2t>

Stolen ancient sculpture returned to Nigeria is ‘the kind of fake you could buy in eBay’, African expert says

The Art Newspaper: March 2: This is what happens when countries rush to join the restitution bandwagon without taking care to develop the requisite expertise, argues Belgian lawyer Yves-Bernard Debie. “This demonstrates once again the haste with which governments handle the ‘fashionable’ issue of restitution, disregarding legal, historical facts,” he said, as Julian Volper, a curator at the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Belgium declared the subject of the latest return a fake “of the worst quality”.

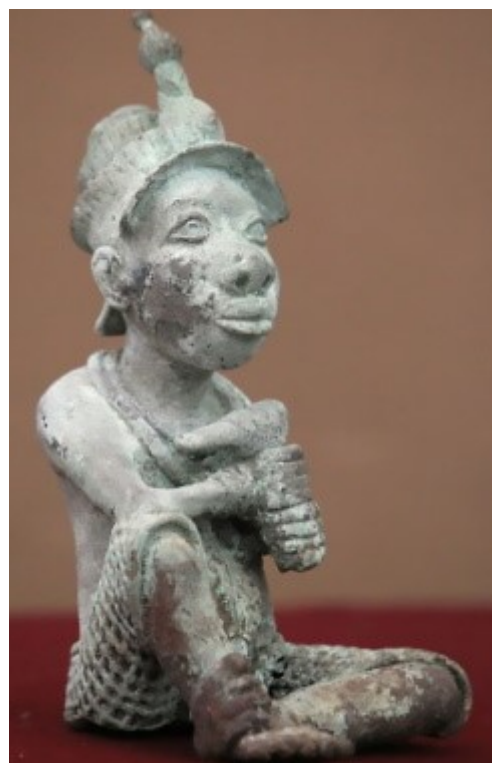
The object in question, returned to great fanfare recently, had been investigated by specialists at Mexico’s National Institute of Anthropology and History. They hailed it as

a sixth-century bronze Yoruba sculpture, a finding confirmed by the Nigerian authorities, and declared an illegal export.

However, Volper countered: “You can find a lot of the same type [of objects] on eBay. This story is ridiculous, and a shame for Mexico.”

Image courtesy of the Mexican ministries of foreign affairs and culture

<https://bit.ly/3cCZS48>



What inspiration can be taken from retrieving the Parthenon

Marbles?

CGTN: March 2: This article is a useful reminder of laws that prevent the seizure of items exported from source countries long ago, noting that international conventions and modern legislation are not retrospective, despite increasing attempts to introduce retrospective laws in order to reclaim cultural property.

Focusing on Chinese efforts to alter attitudes and reshape conventions and laws, the article quotes Huo Zhengxin, professor of law and vice dean of the Faculty of International Law at the China University of Political Science and Law, in reference to the 2014 Dunhuang Declaration: “By adopting the document, China hopes the international community will gradually reach a common concern. That is, cultural heritage is an important symbol and has great significance to a country or nation, so all countries should respect the rights of others in recovering their lost cultural property,” said Huo.

Under the subheading ‘Defects in international conventions impede the return’, the article acknowledges the legal principle *Nulla poena sine lege praevia* (No penalty without previous laws), noting that the UNESCO and Hague conventions, among others, do not apply to items exported from source countries before they came into force or signatories to them ratified the conventions.

It also notes the *bona fide* rights of the innocent purchaser and statutes of limitations, as well as the difficulty in proving that items were stolen.

Huo is an open advocate for change to circumvent all these obstacles: “Even if there are obstacles in the current law, the legal system should be gradually modified and improved to facilitate the cultural heritage, especially important items, to return to their country of origin eventually,” he said.

<https://bit.ly/39sQPkl>

Aggressive seizures by police at Brafa leave dealers feeling ‘assaulted’

Art Newspaper: March 2: The fallout from the BRAFA raids (see February newsletter) continues. Dealers are outraged at the authorities, accusing them of intimidation and embarrassing them in front of their clients. IADAA chairman Vincent Geerling told The Art Newspaper: “The authorities came in and conducted checks when the fair was open to the public, with up to four officers huddling around a stand, looking at pieces indiscriminately and handling objects without permission. It’s unheard of.”

They are also not happy with the organisers, who apparently supplied information to the financial police on pieces that had been vetted out of the fair. The organisers have expressed regret at the handling of the situation.

<https://bit.ly/2PT6rFY>

Egyptian authorities foil attempt to smuggle 16 parcels filled with artefact

Ahram Online: March 3: Egypt has thwarted an attempt to smuggle artefacts hidden in parcels in a number of the country's ports, a statement issued by the country's tourism and antiquities ministry said.

The artefacts included statue heads of the deity Amun and King Ramesses III, as well as part of a colourful head from a royal statue that was probably broken off during excavation.

The parcels also included four copper pieces ornamented with floral decorations and Arabic handwriting dating back to the Islamic age, as well as a plethora of ancient beads and faience amulets.

<https://bit.ly/2IrRGpA>

\$12.8 Million Celtic Coin Hoard Sets Guinness World Record

Coin Week: March 5: A hoard of almost 70,000 coins dating back to pre-Roman Britain has entered the Guinness Book of World Records as the largest discovery of such coins in the United Kingdom. A rough estimate places its value at £10 million – which, at the time of writing, is over \$12.8 million.

This article traces the story of the discovery.

<https://bit.ly/2IpW4FC>

UAE stealing Yemen's Socotra manuscripts and artefacts, reports

Middle East Monitor: March 5: UAE delegate Khalfan Al-Mazrouei has been accused of facilitating the theft of antiquities and ancient manuscripts from the island of Socotra in Yemen. Allegedly this involved an Emirati antiquities team visiting the oldest mosque in the capital, as well as other archaeological sites. The controversy – not the first of its type – arises out of the local view of the UAE as an occupying force.

<https://bit.ly/2Iqnaw4>

British Museum acquires internationally significant 3,000-year-old pendant, found in Shropshire

Artdaily: March 6: Discovered by a metal detectorist in May 2018, an extraordinary 4.7cm wide gold pendant dating to the Bronze Age and later valued at £250,000 has now entered the British Museum collection.

This article details the process of discovery and assessment.

<https://bit.ly/2xb5fqN>

Decision made on Thessaloniki metro antiquities

Ekathimerini.com: March 7: The controversy over the Greek government's decision to prioritise the development of a metro station over preserving the antiquities that lie there has moved to the next stage. The Culture Ministry has

approved a proposal by the Central Archaeological Council (KAS) for antiquities unearthed during excavation work for the Thessaloniki metro to be removed and repositioned there at a later date.

Local bodies and groups in Thessaloniki, like the Citizens Movement for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, which want the antiquities to remain in situ are preparing to appeal the decision at the Council of State.

<https://bit.ly/2TUyc1U>

Echoes of Isil as armed groups loot priceless artefacts across Sahel

Telegraph (UK): March 7): An alert to concerns over conflict and looting across the Sahel region of Africa, including Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. “As lawlessness has spread, armed groups — many of them allied to Al Qaeda and Islamic State — have gained influence in an area the UN describes as “potentially one of the richest [cultural] regions in the world,” the article states. Museums, tombs and villages have all be raided in the search for antiquities, it continues, although “solid details on the illicit trade [in] artefacts are scarce”.

<https://bit.ly/2IxJK6g>

Egypt gets tougher to safeguard its ancient treasures

The Arab Weekly: March 8: This article confuses earlier news regarding the trade in Egyptian antiquities anywhere in the world outside Egypt. Earlier articles reported that it applied to all trade; this article states that the law applies to “illicit” trade. However, as illicit trade is already illegal, this does not make sense.

Of equal interest is reference to unnamed “experts in London, using a sophisticated database... to identify looted or stolen items”. This appears to be a reference to the new British Museum database, which only gained funding as a direct result of IADAA’s support, only for the British Museum to break its agreement with the trade on how the database would be used. (See below)

<https://bit.ly/38H092U>

Only two per cent are legal (in translation from German)

Tagesschau.de: March 8: This article reports on claims from the ILLICID report that the overwhelming majority of antiquities traded in Germany are illegal. ILLICID studied more than 6,000 objects from Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Egypt in coming to its conclusion, it continues.

The study concluded that only 0.4% of objects from Iraq and 9.6% of those from Syria that they studied can be assumed to be traded legally. “Measured against the strict import and export regulations that apply to ancient cultural goods from these two countries, this is an alarming finding,” says Markus Hilgert, Secretary General of the Cultural Foundation of the Federal States and head of the research project.

Stressing the scientific nature of the ILLICID project, those behind it are now calling for “more decisive action” against the illicit trade. This should include the digitisation of all commercial publications (one assumes this means auction and dealer catalogues) since 1945, as well as “binding transparency regulations”.

However, this article – and others – raises a number of questions.

As noted in the June 2019 IADAA newsletter, the €1.2m ILLICID report was finally filed months late and to no fanfare in June 2019 in the Technical Information Library Hannover (TIB) (Technische Informationsbibliothek). It ran to nine pages, so brief in fact that initially the umbrella organisation for the German art market, IDK, refused to believe that this was the final report, arguing that it must be an introductory document anticipating a lengthier and more detailed publication. However, when questioned, Professor Dr Markus Hilgert, who headed up the study, confirmed by e-mail that it is the final report. As IADAA’s detailed analysis of the report (see <https://bit.ly/38CQtpM>) showed at the time:

- 6,133 items (1.7% of those studied) were potentially interesting as they came from “AKOM”.
- Of these, 2,387 “potentially” came from Syria or Iraq, although this was not confirmed.
- Only 3,245 (52.9%) of the objects of interest sold, the value heavily weighted by 498 potentially high-value Greek vases and Roman Glass as well as 506 Egyptian sculptures, ushabties and scarabs.
- At no point does the report identify trafficked goods or any terrorism financing, the prime goal of the whole operation.

How the Taggesschau article manages to leap from these findings from a 9-page report – much of which focuses on methodology rather than results – to the conclusions it draws and their scientific authority is unclear. However, it seems to be making claims for ILLICID that the report itself does not make.

Other articles have appeared in a similar vein, with a follow-up set of recommendations from ILLICID detailed in a 50-page document calling for a vast range of checks and balances to regulate the market and ensure trust and transparency.

Dr Christina Berking, who is the spokesperson for the IDK (Interessengemeinschaft Deutscher Kunsthandel), has written a powerful critique of the second ILLICID report and the uncritical media articles around it.

She accuses those behind the study of trying to conceal its real results, of twisting facts, of drawing inaccurate conclusions and of making wrong assumptions in an extended exercise of “creative interpretation”.

“It is scandalous how the ILLICID study, funded by the Federal Ministry of Research and Science, manipulates its own results to confirm its unproven

prejudices,” she concludes.

Bearing in mind the misleading nature of the articles and the claims made in these recommendations – especially where they deem the findings based on ‘scientific’ evidence – in the interests of truth and transparency it might be better to apply such stringent ‘provenance’ measures to those who conducted the study and the journalists reporting its claims without checking them properly.

<https://bit.ly/39BK2P>

Heritage for Sale! The Role of Museums in Promoting Metal Detecting and Looting in Romania

Academia.edu website: Julian Ganciu: December 2018: An interesting in-depth study that investigates how best to protect Romania’s culture. Acknowledging archaeologists’ desire for a total ban on metal detecting, the study argues that this is not a viable proposition and that a ban could actually make looting worse.

“Nowadays, there are bona fide metal detectorists who will report their finds. A law that makes metal detecting illegal could push them to break the law and sell the objects on to foreign collectors.”

Advocating a three-pronged approach, the study concludes that the way ahead is education (closing the gap between archaeologists and the public in understanding the subject and its importance); collaboration between museums and metal detectorists; and improved state investment in archaeological site registration and training.

This combined approach could also be applied to other countries.

<https://bit.ly/2VT6Wng>

Tourists stay away as Egypt reopens oldest pyramid

Al-Monitor: March 16: With blanket news on the coronavirus pandemic, this article is among the first in which Egypt admits that it too has been affected. The article notes the devastating effect on tourism, which it reports is the country’s third largest source of national income at \$12.6 billion for June 2018 to June 2019. The report comes just six days after Egypt reported the flow of tourists in the country as normal (see second link below). The third link below is another article in which the authorities estimate \$1 billion a month losses upcoming.

<https://bit.ly/3d6ecSK>

<https://bit.ly/3d9zEpZ>

<https://bit.ly/2wcXQak>

All Dead Sea Scrolls Fragments at the Museum of the Bible Are Forgeries

Extreme Tech: March 16: The Museum of the Bible has been told that fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls it sent for verification testing are forgeries. “In 2018, the Museum had to acknowledge all five of the sacred text fragments were fake. Next, the Museum sent off the other 11 fragments for authentication. As of Friday, as National Geographic reports, all 16 fragments purchased and shown as authentic have been confirmed as fraudulent.”

<https://bit.ly/2Wk6AGv>

Man Fearing Coronavirus Apocalypse Returns Stolen Ballista

Ancient Origins: March 18: One of the more unexpected consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic concerns a man who returned a ballista that he stole many years ago. Driven by guilt by what he perceived as impending doom, the man approached an intermediary in the Israel Antiquities Authority to help him return the Roman catapult stone anonymously.

<https://bit.ly/2xNoabx>



Record level of Treasure finds boosted by metal detectorists and a tipper truck

Antiques Trade Gazette: March 18: Treasure finds by the UK public have hit a record high, says the British Museum. Its latest report reveals that 1311 Treasure finds across England, Wales and Northern Ireland were reported under the Portable Antiquities Scheme in 2019. The largest number of finds were made in Norfolk, East Anglia, while one of the most impressive finds was an 8th century gold arm ring discovered in Cumbria in the north of England and pictured here.

<https://bit.ly/2J1arjN>

European museums that you can visit via virtual tours

I Am Expat: March 20: As we don't know how long we may be stuck inside, this article offers some cultural relief, starting with the Rijksmuseum, the Van Gogh Museum and the Anne Frank House, all in Amsterdam.

<https://bit.ly/2vNhzok>

Egypt closes museums and tourist sites, thousands of tourists fly back

Egypt Independent: March 21: The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has

announced the closure of all museums and archaeological sites in Egypt from March 23 until March 31.

A statement by the ministry said that this decision is part of precautionary and preventive measures to counter the novel coronavirus. During this suspension period, the statement added that awareness sessions will be held for museum and sites workers on ways to prevent and protect against the virus.

The authorities have said that they will use the period to run awareness sessions for museums and site workers and to “sterilize” tourist attractions.

The news accompanied reports of mass departures by tourists from the country.

<https://bit.ly/2J9v2mg>

The British Museum's Circulating Artefacts Project Works to Stop Trafficking of Cultural Artefacts

Broadway World.com: March 26: This article profiles The British Museum’s CircArt project, billed as “a ground-breaking collaborative initiative against the widespread global trade in illicit antiquities, with a current focus on ancient objects from Egypt and Sudan”.

Based on a detailed release from The British Museum, it states that 4,700 artefacts “have thus far been identified with provenance issues, with many now under investigation by law enforcement agencies”.

The article also details how the project is funded by the British Council’s Cultural Protection Fund, in partnership with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, while BM Director Hartwig Fischer declares: “The British Museum is absolutely committed to combatting the rising levels of trade in illicit material across the world.”

Ground-breaking this project may be, but what neither the BM release nor the articles that have been based on it reveal is IADAA and the ADA’s crucial role in securing the funding for it, nor the failure of the BM to honour any of the undertakings it gave in securing what it acknowledged was our instrumental help in getting the funding.

To be clear, IADAA and the ADA supported – and support – the creation of a database to record objects circulating in the market, and argue that this database should be open to public inspection, particularly as a means for identifying patterns of recent looting. Bearing in mind that millions of legitimate items circulate on the market, we were also adamant in our negotiations with the BM, prior to supporting the funding drive, that this initiative should not be misused by source countries as a means of harassing the trade with unwarranted and vexatious attempts to claim whatever appears on that market, as happens now.

The BM undertook to meet our conditions, as well as to acknowledge the vital role played by IADAA, the ADA and the trade in general in announcing the project last year.

However, it transpired that the BM had not consulted with the Egyptian authorities prior to securing the trade's support, but waited until funding had been promised. When finally contacted, the Egyptians vetoed any mention of, or co-operation with, the trade and insisted that the database remain closed to the public, and priority given to policing the circulation of objects and the trade. The Egyptians have the power to do this since they control BM access to archaeological sites and records within Egypt. The BM acquiesced to the Egyptians' wishes and, in so doing, created the very scenario that IADAA and the ADA had warned against.

Follow-up discussions and agreements with IADAA and the ADA a year ago have also been ignored and now the organisations have written jointly to the Director of the BM, Dr Hartwig Fischer, in search of a resolution.

After all this, we understand that the Egyptians have still not agreed to become partners in the project.

Of equal concern are the claims made in this article regarding the number of objects cited and volume of illicit trade claimed by the BM in its press release. Dr Fischer provides no basis for his claim that levels of looting are growing. In fact, the latest figures from the World Customs Organisation, relating to 2018, show that trafficking of cultural property as a whole, not just antiquities and archaeological artefacts, constitute only 0.08% of seizures globally. The number of archaeological items seized fell by more than half from the 703 recorded in 2017 to just 314 in 2018. If Dr Fischer has other figures that support his claim, he does not give them.

As for the 4,700 items identified as having "provenance issues", the article does not say what these issues are, nor who has decided that they have a problem. It also fails to state how many of these items are now under investigation by the authorities or what evidence there is to suspect them.

With millions of legitimate items in circulation, misdirected accusations against legitimate trade risk creating problems for all involved.

<https://bit.ly/2WNONHN>

Hobby Lobby president Steve Green to give back 11,500 antiques to Iraq and Egypt governments

The Independent: March 28: Hobby Lobby president Steve Green has announced that he is repatriating 11,500 antiquities to the Iraqi and Egyptian governments after amassing the pieces without verifying their ownership histories.

This article notes how his Museum of the Bible should have carried out better checks and accepts criticism on its failure.

"One area where I fell short was not appreciating the importance of the provenance of the items I purchased," Mr Green told the Washington Post, which ran the original story. His comments follow the scandal of the Hobby

Lobby paying \$3 million to settle a US government lawsuit over 3,800 antiquities that had been smuggled out of Iraq.

The Independent's wording is interesting because it equates the lack of paperwork to not having "legitimate historical sourcing".

Mr Green says that the museum now has strict protocols in place to vet provenance properly.

The second link below is to the museum's detailed press release on the issue.

<https://bit.ly/3dK8Rkk>

<https://bit.ly/33YhzHc>

Antiquities smuggling thwarted in Minya

Egypt Today: March 30: The Egyptian authorities have arrested a resident of Minya in the Nile Valley and seized 113 artefacts and coins, which they say have been looted for the purposes of trafficking. The items – some pictured here from a social media post – include Pharaonic, Roman and Greek era pieces.



<https://bit.ly/3awGFIX>

Coins Weekly launch new newsletter with Cosmos of Collectibles

Ursula Kampmann of Coins Weekly, who is very well known to IADAA members and others in the industry, has announced the launch of a newsletter under the banner of Cosmos of Collectibles. This is what she has to say:

“This project is unlike anything else that has been launched on contemporary coins so far. Each coin type is connected to a permanent coin identification number. We include all numismatic issues as new releases of the month, whether it be coins or medals, state or private products, circulation coins or even pieces that are exclusively intended for collecting purposes. We think that every product bears testimony to the history of our time and that the opinion that certain fields are less worthy of collecting than others, as some numismatists like to believe, is always a subjective and thus unscholarly one. “We want to show you how exciting the stories are that can be told by modern coins in our monthly articles. They ask completely new questions about the material. This issue deals with sports motifs: how did it come about that sportsmen and women are the role models of today's nations – and not poets, thinkers, politicians or even generals? How and why did sports receive this numismatic honour? You will be astonished about the background behind this development!

“Our new concept, a comprehensive catalogue and new questions on contemporary coinage, will obviously only bear fruit if we receive support from

mints and coin dealers – in many ways. Please inform us about your new issues at info@cosmosofcollectibles.com. Moreover, we are looking for partners that provide us with photos. We are also looking for sponsors and advertisers. I know that everyone has other priorities in times of the coronavirus. But remember that this very crisis already demonstrated that the internet has become the most important marketplace long ago.”
IADAA wishes this new enterprise every success.

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