

## INCENTIVES FOR EXAGGERATING THE PROBLEM

It has been argued<sup>[5]</sup> that campaigners and others have sometimes exaggerated the size of the problem of crime linked to the art market in order to attract government attention and better funding, but UNESCO's recent bogus advertising campaign<sup>[6]</sup> targeting various areas of the international art market shows just how far things can go to create a false picture when agendas like ideology demand it. **If the evidence isn't there, they simply make it up.**

As some of the examples we provide in this paper demonstrate, the failure to check sources properly is commonplace where a source holds considerable public standing and confirms what the audience is looking for. However, such failure can have specific far-reaching consequences, as when the European Commission used an inaccurate 2011 study by UNESCO as direct evidence to justify the imposition of restrictive new cultural property import legislation in 2017 (*See Appendix 4*).

On October 25, 2022, **ARTnews** reported as follows on the activities of New York Assistant District Attorney Matthew Bogdanos – the highest profile campaigner against the antiquities trade worldwide – who heads up the city's Antiquities Unit: "Some have been skeptical of the unit's tactics as well. A 2020 report by non-profit research group RAND found that links between the illicit antiquities trade and terrorist activity had been widely exaggerated, and specifically named Bogdanos as the source of misinformation exaggerating those links. Bogdanos has said he publicly connected the trade with terrorism in order to keep a spotlight on returning antiquities—and despite the report, he staunchly continues his push to do so."

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### Footnotes

[5] Fiona R Greenland, *Inside Isis' looted antiquities trade*, The Conversation, May 31, 2016. See *The allure of numbers that awe*: <https://theconversation.com/inside-isis-looted-antiquities-trade-59287>

**AND** Matthew Sargent, James V. Marrone, Alexandra T. Evans, Bilyana Lilly, Erik Nemeth, Stephen Dalzell, *Tracking and disrupting the illicit antiquities trade with open source data*, The Rand Corporation, 2020. See *Issues with the Current Approach for Assessing the Antiquities Market's Relationship to Terrorist Funding*, page 10: [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2706.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2706.html)

[6] *Compare and contrast: UNESCO's fraudulent campaign against the international art market* launched in October 2020:

<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:5091ee54-fade-4aeb-9f55-3b8dad664be2>