



IADAA CELEBRATES ITS 30TH ANNIVERSARY

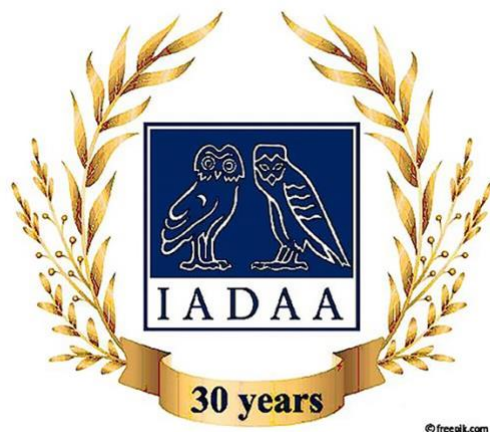
The Founding of IADAA by James Ede, Honorary President and one of the founding fathers of IADAA

I went to my father to ask for a job in 1978, following inglorious careers both at Oxford and in the Army. After some arm-twisting on my part, almost forty happy years as a dealer in antiquities was the result. I recount this because he tried strenuously to put me off joining him as he felt that there was no future in the field; even at that time a small but vocal section of the archaeological establishment was starting to condemn the private sale and ownership of antiquities. They maintained that the trade was responsible for the plunder and destruction of archaeological sites.

My father sold his first antiquity in 1959, and by the late 70s was selling to a wide range of museums, university teaching collections and private collectors. He had a large number of friends in the academic world, and we enjoyed close and mutually beneficial connections with scholars and museums round the world.

Fortunately, he was mistaken in his belief that dealing in ancient art had a future of 'no more than ten or twenty years'. Yet at the same time he was right in his view of which way the wind was blowing. Ironically, the 80s and 90s were probably the best of times to be a dealer, but the huge rewards enjoyed by the more buccaneering part of the trade (including auctioneers) led to increased awareness that a good proportion of the material on the market, particularly at the top end, had come from illicit sources. The fault lay not only with the trade, but also with source countries who made little or no attempt to enforce their own laws. Despite this fact, it was the trade in the firing line, and it was clear that an international trade association was needed to protect reputable dealers and to engage with the various authorities and governments whose efforts to curb illicit dealing were often clumsy and misdirected.

In 1993, four dealers, David Cahn, Hans Humbel, Bruce McAlpine and I had a meeting and the seed of IADAA was planted. The inaugural meeting took place at the Westbury Hotel in London on Sunday the 4th of July 1993, where I was elected to be the first chairman. Since those days IADAA has been fortunate to have had the voluntary services of a succession of devoted chairmen – for the last ten years it has been Vincent Geerling.



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From the first it successfully attracted the best reputable dealers from around the world (and successfully resisted attempts to join by the less reputable). It has therefore gained recognition as the voice of the licit trade and been given representation at many summits and conferences held by international organisations such as UNESCO and UNIDROIT, law enforcement agencies and governments. This is exhausting work, but I can honestly say that without it the trade would probably not exist today. Time and again IADAA managed to persuade these bodies to curb or modify their policies. In recent years, the Newsletter keeps track of and exposes the hypocrisy and ignorance shown by so many critics of the trade and lazy journalists. Even so, the tide of regulation continues to flood in. We all know that the remains of our ancient past need a healthy, legal trade in order to survive. The need for IADAA has never been greater.

James Ede, Honorary President of IADAA

Defamatory attack on IADAA and its officers – a response

On June 11, the French newspaper *Libération* published an article by the journalist Emmanuel Fansten which, among other claims, directly accused IADAA chairman Vincent Geerling and deputy chairman Antonia Eberwein of being involved in the trafficking of antiquities.

The first thing to note is that not only are the claims untrue, but they are also utterly unfounded, with Fansten's article unwittingly admitting that the evidence for making them was not there.

Further to this, having been supplied by their lawyer, cultural heritage specialist Yves-Bernard Debie, with a very detailed dossier of evidence clearly demonstrating that the claims were not true, Fansten chose to ignore it in favour of the published article, which he appears to have largely written before he approached Vincent Geerling and Antonia Eberwein for information.

At the heart of the story is a simple error: an informant who believed that he had found a stolen Egyptian funerary mask on Antonia Eberwein's stand at BRAFA after becoming convinced that it matched an allegedly trafficked mask spotted on Facebook.

The informant tipped off the Belgian police who seized the mask in February 2020, convinced of its illicit nature. However, a comparison of the two masks quickly showed that they did not match and had numerous indisputable differences.

What the police appear not to have understood is that such masks were made in huge numbers over a period of about 300 years, and that they were designed to a variety of templates, so that many appear very similar.

It later transpired that the Facebook post that sparked the seizure was faked: the "looters" depicted turned out to be experts taking part in lawful excavations organized under the direction of Professor Kerry Muhlestein of the Brigham Young University. Objects included in the post were clearly fake, and the post also pictured Mr Khaled EL-Anany, Minister of Culture in Egypt, and even Mr Mustafa Waziri, Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities.



Above: At the February 1, 2022, Paris conference: Vincent Noce, far left, Henrik Hanstein, President of the Federation of European Auctioneers (back shown), Alexandre Giquello, President of the Drouot, Professor Marc-André Renold, Christie's CEO Guillaume Cerruti, IADAA Chairman Vincent Geerling (with microphone) and far right with his back to the camera, Roberto Riccardi, Head of Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage. Emmanuel Fansten's article attempts to smear Vincent Geerling's reputation by linking him with the Louvre scandal, reporting that he was at Jean-Luc Martinez's side at the conference. In fact, as can be seen here, Martinez was not even part of the panel and Vincent Geerling has nothing to do with either him or the Louvre.

All of this was easy to see in the Facebook post, clearly exposing it as fake. Maître Debie supplied all this evidence to Fansten. So why did neither he, nor the informant or police take it into account? And why was none of it mentioned in the *Libération* article?

The Belgian police are then understood to have set about looking for evidence of other stolen masks that might match the one they had seized, and found another very similar example provided by the Central Office for the Fight against Trafficking in Cultural Property (OCBC). After close comparison by an expert Egyptologist, it too turned out not to be the seized mask.

So having seized the Eberwein mask on the basis of information that proved to be false, the Belgian police sought new evidence to justify the seizure, but did not find it. Despite this, to this day, three and a half years later, they have not returned the mask to her.

The *Libération* article reports that unnamed investigators from the OCBC said Vincent Geerling and Antonia Eberwein were traffickers and even gangsters who were “suspected” of “transgressive practices”. However, it presents no evidence to support such claims, and the word “suspected” indicates that actual evidence must be lacking.

Fansten went further, relating how Vincent Geerling had been at former Louvre director Jean-Luc Martinez’ side at a Paris conference on cultural property on February 1, 2022 – five months before legal action against Martinez began – as though this was clear evidence of some sort of illegal conspiracy between the two that linked Vincent Geerling to the Louvre scandal. In fact, Vincent Geerling had been invited to take part in a discussion panel chaired by journalist Vincent Noce that also included Christie’s global CEO Guillaume Cerruti, Professor Marc-André Renold, specialist in art law at the University of Geneva, and Roberto Riccardi, Head of the Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, as well as other major figures from the art market. Fansten made no mention of them, and Martinez was not part of their panel, which begs the question as to why he singled out Vincent Geerling for mention. This distortion of the truth to fit his narrative illustrates Fansten’s approach to character assassination across the whole article.

Curiously, what Fansten did pick up on was Vincent Geerling’s speech at the conference, which was entirely unrelated to the issue of the mask. Fansten reports (in translation from French): “After condemning the European regulation as too restrictive in his speech, Geerling underlined that the evidence of (extensive) trafficking and looting is lacking.” What was the point in mentioning this?

Fansten’s questionable handling of the issue is further evident in his shift from reporting the alleged suspicions of the police to making his own direct and unattributed comment, personally accusing Vincent Geerling and Antonia Eberwein of criminal activity by stating: “How could the president and vice-president of IADAA find themselves involved in such trafficking?” – and this despite the article already admitting that the police did not have evidence to support the claims.

Fansten’s reporting includes an additional smear, referring to an IADAA newsletter of nearly three years ago: “In a September 2020 newsletter, shortly after the seizure by the American authorities of the sarcophagus sold by Christophe Kunicki to the MET in New York, Vincent Geerling had openly taken the side of the people targeted by the investigation, not hesitating to criticize the investigations conducted in the United States.”

A reading of the newsletter entry shows this to be untrue. In fact, it explores the conflicting claims made by all sides in the debate over a stele and the sarcophagus mentioned, including the contradictory available evidence, and concludes: “All these questions need to be answered before we judge those involved.”

Somehow, from this Fansten concludes that the case had “multiple ramifications [which] ended up spilling over to the Dutch dealer [Geerling], who officially closed his Amsterdam gallery to focus on his lobbying and consulting activities.” Another unsubstantiated smear.

In fact, Vincent Geerling had nothing to do with the case and closed his gallery for no other reason than that he was retiring as a dealer at the age of 72.

Because Antonia Eberwein's mask is clearly not the one seen on Facebook, it is also not related to all the additional claims Fansten makes in his article regarding a looted Egyptian sarcophagus being cut up and sold off in pieces. This demonstrates Fansten's ignorance further, since such cartonnage parts were never part of sarcophagi but were separate pieces with which mummies were dressed, so cannot have been cut from them. This basic error calls into question the entire set of claims surrounding this other "crime".

Maître Debie, who had supplied the extensive dossier of information and a briefing to Fansten on behalf of Vincent Geerling and Antonia Eberwein, has condemned the journalist for his actions and, under French law, demanded that Libération publish a robust response which he has written addressing the false claims. The *Gazette de l'Hôtel Drouot* has also published a rebuttal article from Maître Debie in [French](#) and [English](#).

Meanwhile IADAA is reviewing the matter further with a view to additional action.

What the Story of a Botched \$1 Million Auction Reveals About the Clash Between New Anti-Money Laundering Laws and Client Confidentiality

Artnet News: May 30: Although it concerns the collapsed deal to buy a painting at auction in France, this article focuses on how ill-thought out regulation can backfire. In this case, anti-money laundering laws in the EU appear to clash with data protection rules, at least as Paris auction house Artcurial is concerned.

IADAA adviser Ivan Macquisten, who also advises UK customs on the practicalities of administering the law now it has been introduced there, is interviewed at the end, warning of the looming crisis that is the EU's new import licensing regulation for cultural goods.

Claims of money laundering and terrorism funding just don't add up

Letter, as sent from IADAA and the ADA to Antiques Trade Gazette: May 31:

The latest transnational operation to tackle cultural property crime raises serious concerns once again about claims from Europol and Interpol.

These operations, involving numerous countries and their police forces, have been running for around ten years now under titles such as Athena, Odysseus and Pandora, this latest being Pandora VII.

More than once we have checked the claims being made by law enforcement in their media releases following these operations and found them wanting. This latest operation is no different.

The [Europol media release](#) states that the operation led to the arrest of 60 people and the recovery of 11,049 stolen objects across 14 countries. However, as the ADA and IADAA know well, there is a great deal of difference between seizing items and showing that they are stolen, just as arrests do not equate with convictions.

The twin priorities in carrying out these operations have always been to clamp down on money laundering and terrorism financing, but while there may have been limited evidence of the former across the years, we have heard of no evidence at all of the latter.

Once again, we contacted Europol asking the following: a) *How many arrests have led to successful convictions?* b) *How many seizures proved to be valid + how many had to be returned to their owners?* c) *How many seizures were shown to be linked to money laundering?* d) *How many seizures proved to be linked to terrorism financing?*

Europol's media office replied on May 10 as follows: "Unfortunately, we won't be able to help as we do not have these figures. Europol is not a statistical organisation – Europol's priority is to support cross-border investigations and the information available is solely based on investigations supported by Europol."

Confirmation, then, yet again that Europol has no statistics to support the claims it makes, with the further emphasis that Europol is "not a statistical organisation". If so, what is it doing making statistical claims it admits it cannot support in the introduction to its media release, claims that history tells us will influence policy at a national and international level?

Interpol, which has also denied having any reliable statistical information in this field, compounded the error.

As others have also argued, without accurate clear-up figures to qualify them, the published data serves no purpose beyond propaganda. To our knowledge, no such clear-up figures have ever been published over the past decade.

It is of concern that yet again a number of leading media outlets have reported the unsupported claims without checking them, thereby spreading what is essentially fake news further.

If money laundering and terrorism financing links to the art market are as widespread as the authorities would have us believe, why it should be easy to provide the evidence instead of misleading the public in this way.



New York prosecutors helping Middle East nations recover stolen artefacts

Arab Weekly: June 5: "Under Alvin Bragg, who became district attorney in January last year, more than 950 pieces worth \$165 million have been returned to several countries including Cambodia, Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey and Italy," this article begins.

Quite apart from the inaccuracy of describing the pictured Persepolis relief as "twice stolen", the article also shows a Sumerian alabaster bull, which together with a Mesopotamian limestone elephant were valued by the DA's office at \$275,000 – a highly inflated figure that begs the question: who is carrying out these valuations?

Now an Italian archaeologist, Gianfranco Adornato, a professor of Greek and Roman art and archaeology at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, says that despite the fanfare with which the items were returned and put on display, many of them – seized from disgraced dealer Robin Symes and collector Michael Steinhardt – are fakes.

He told the Art Newspaper: "I suspect other forgeries among the objects; not only the pottery—easily recognisable thanks to the iconography—but also some sculptures do not look genuine. We should look at them more closely as the surfaces were smoothed by acids and the incrustations look artificial."

So, not worth the tens of millions of dollars claimed by the New York District Attorney's office after all. It will be interesting to see whether DA Alvin Bragg, or Assistant DA Matthew Bogdanos, downgrade the super-inflated values they have been claiming for seized property to boost the credibility of the Antiquities Unit.

Dutch museum banned from Egyptian dig after upset on music show

Dutch News: June 6: A widely reported story on how a Dutch museum has been banned from a dig in Egypt following claims of cultural appropriation of Egyptian history in one of its exhibitions.

As the article reports, the museum provoked anger on social media over the show, which claims to show "how ancient Egypt and the area around the Nile have inspired modern musicians of African origin".

What has particularly angered protestors is the depiction of black pop and film stars as Tutankhamun, Nefertiti and Ramses.

The Egyptian authorities have reacted by banning the museum from the dig at Sakkara, "because they believe it is 'falsifying history' in its 'Afrocentric' exhibition".

The director of the National Museum of Antiquities has called the ban "unseemly" and said the exhibition was created with great care, hinting at racism among the objectors.

The artists behind the show, David Cortes and Danny Hastings, have dismissed the outcry as "preposterous", with Cortes explain: "I wanted to be respectful of this great civilization, while also acknowledging this new subculture that speaks of our time."

Cyprus Digital Heritage website launched

Financial Mirror: June 7: Cyprus has launched a joint project with the European Commission and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to protect the island's cultural heritage via a new website: www.cyprusdigitalheritage.com.

“The website includes virtual tours featuring cultural heritage sites restored and conserved by the bicomunal Technical Committee of Cultural Heritage (TCCH),” the FN reports. The immersive 3D tours feature interactive maps, 3D reconstructions, and other multimedia elements, enhancing the virtual tour experience and enriching the exploration of Cyprus’ cultural treasures.

Dutch Supreme Court orders Crimean treasures, some over 2,000 years old, returned to Ukraine

Fortune: June 9: When Russia invaded and annexed Crimea in 2014, a notable collection of ancient gold Crimean treasures was on loan to the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam. Russia claimed ownership of the 300-piece collection of bronze swords, golden helmets, precious gems and other artifacts along with Crimea, while Ukraine argued that the collection was part of its heritage.

Now the Supreme Court of the Netherlands has ordered the collection to be returned to Ukraine. The decision, citing the lack of national recognition for the Russia-annexed Autonomous Republic of Crimea, upholds a lower court ruling.

French Archaeologists Decry the Loss of 7,000-Year-Old Standing Stones on a Site That Was ‘Destroyed’ to Make Way for a DIY Store

Artnet News: June 9: Carnac, in southwest France, has long been a tourist destination thanks to its prehistoric standing stones. Now dozens have been removed to make way for a retail store after being deemed of “low archaeological value” by local officials, this article reports. “Debate is raging among historians, politicians, and cultural authorities as to whether this constitutes damage to a site of archaeological value,” it states.

According to local archaeologist Christian Obeltz, 39 standing stones, standing up to 40 inches high, were removed. They are estimated to date back some 7,000 years, based on carbon dating conducted in 2010.

The removal came after the local mayor’s office granted planning permission for a new DIY store on the site last year. The application succeeded because only four of the stones were thought to be important archaeologically, according to Isabelle Chardonner, director of the Regional Directorate of Cultural Affairs for Brittany. It was also reported that some of the stones had been moved before.

US decides to rejoin UNESCO and pay back dues, to counter Chinese influence

ABC News: June 12: The United States will pay more than \$600 million in suspended membership payments as it rejoins UNESCO. It quit almost a decade ago over the organisation’s decision to admit Palestine as a member.

Although the dispute remains unresolved, the US sees China’s growing influence in UNESCO as a more important issue to address – something it cannot do effectively without returning to the fold itself.

“U.S. officials say the decision to return was motivated by concern that China is filling the gap left by the U.S. in UNESCO policymaking, notably in setting standards for artificial intelligence and technology education around the world,” the article reports.

The US decision is subject to a vote of approval by member states, but as the US has traditionally contributed more than 20% of UNESCO’s budget and the back payments will be contingent on approval, that seems a mere formality.

UNESCO’s director general, Audrey Azoulay, called the move “historic”.

It is the second time that US withdrew from UNESCO. “The United States previously pulled out of UNESCO under the Reagan administration in 1984 because it viewed the agency as mismanaged, corrupt and used to advance Soviet interests. It rejoined in 2003.”

In a First, Archaeologists in the U.K. Have Used 3D Scans to Study a Mysterious Roman Burial Practice

Artnet News: June 14: Why did the Romans pour liquid gypsum over their dead before burying them in coffins? It’s a mysterious practice that continues to puzzle archaeologists. Now, though, archaeologists at the University of York in England have adopted modern technology to investigate further. Using 3D scanning, they have been able to examine fine detail within the coffins, which show that as the gypsum hardens and the bodies decay, the mould left preserves the position, imprint and contours of the dead and their clothing.

Woman Finds 3,000-Year-Old Egyptian Goddess Figurine During Beach Walk

Newsweek: June 15: A woman relaxing at the beach in southern Israel has found an ancient figurine identified as being of the Egyptian goddess Hathor. Lydia Marner, 74, found the ancient Egyptian figurine on Palmachim Beach in southern Israel, about 17 miles south of Tel Aviv,

spotting it in the waves.

The figurine is thought to be more than 3,000 years old. It is pictured here courtesy of Yoli Schwartz of the Israel Antiquities Authority.



New campaign to anonymously return illegally held antiquities nets thousands of items

The Times of Israel: June 15: The Israel Antiquities Authority has extended a campaign to persuade members of the public to return illegally held antiquities to the state anonymously in a general amnesty.

Thousands have been returned so far and the authorities believe that up to 15% of the public hold such pieces.

The campaign — “If it’s old – return it with a click!” — encourages private citizens who have artifacts to report them online and return them anonymously and without questions.

“We are totally shocked by the intensity and the amount that people are returning,” Yair Amitzur, the director of IAA’s educational initiatives for the central region, told *The Times of Israel*.

Reports of cultural destruction and looting as fighting escalates in Sudan

Museums Association: June 16: The Sudan National Museum has been raided by fighters involved in the ongoing conflict, according to a video posted on social media that apparently shows them looting its bioarchaeology lab where the remains of mummies are being studied. The museum, which has already been damaged in the fighting, lost its staff when they fled in April, while other institutions have also been attacked.

ICOM has published a denunciation of the attacks and has warned of cultural property trafficking.

California man on trial for allegedly importing Roman mosaic looted during Syrian civil war to US

Art Newspaper: June 16: Yassin Alcarihi, a 56-year-old man living in southern California, is on trial for smuggling an 18ft wide Roman mosaic into the United States, possibly from Syria, via Turkey in 2015.

Charged with lying about the contents of the shipment in 2020, he is reported as having declared its value to be \$587, when the authorities estimate it is worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Alcarihi claims that he thought the mosaic was Turkish and fake, blaming an inexperienced customs broker for the errors over documents.

IADAA member Randall Hixenbaugh, brought in by the defence to give his professional assessment of the piece, is reported as saying that it may not be genuine, pointing to the suspicious detail of a female figure in the mosaic wearing pants. He estimated its value at \$30,000, according to the *Art Newspaper*.

A government appointed expert is expected to testify that the mosaic is genuine and 2,000 years old.

The prosecution argues that Alcarihi was much better informed about the mosaic than he is making out and says that his texts indicate this.

Rare 3,000-year-old sword found in Germany so well-preserved it still shines

BBC: June 20: Archaeologists have found an astonishingly well-preserved 3,000-year-old Bronze Age sword in Germany. The bronze blade with an octagonal hilt was discovered in a grave along with other items, in the southern town of Nördlingen, and is thought to date from the late 14th Century BC.

“The state of preservation is exceptional! A find like this is very rare,” said Professor Mathias Pfeil, who is the head of Bavaria's State Office for Monument Protection (BLfD). The BLfD also said the sword, shown here, would have been very complicated to make, as its handle is fused with the blade.

“They think it was a real weapon as opposed to an ornament but said the grave and other things found in it are still being examined so they can learn more.”



ARCHÄOLOGIE-BÜRO DR. WOIDICH

Austrian government to propose law on returning museum objects acquired in a colonial context

Art Newspaper: June 20: Following on from [its report last month](#) that the Berlin States Museums were working on a policy of returning artefacts acquired legally but possibly under colonial duress, here the *Art Newspaper* reports on how the Austrian government looks likely to follow suit: “The Austrian government aims to propose legislation governing the restitution of objects in national museums acquired in a colonial context by March 2024, the culture secretary, Andrea Mayer, told a press conference today.”

Mayer added: “The rulers of European countries long viewed large parts of the world as places where they could help themselves; they simply took artefacts and saw that as their natural right. Calling out this injustice and following it up with serious debate and concrete actions is Austria’s responsibility too.”

The government has appointed a committee led by the scientific director of Vienna’s Weltmuseum, Jonathan Fine, to look into the matter. Its job is to identify items for possible return and to submit them to the government for approval.

Relevant items are those whose owners did not want to part with them at the time and lost them “under conditions of violence, looting, theft, coercion or by deceptive means”.

Fine estimates that up to 200,000 items in his own museum’s collection may be affected.

Feds return trove of seized ancient coins to Greece

The Hill: June 21: Another return to Greece by the USA, and another example of Homeland Security undermining its credibility by promoting fake news, as yet again their agents claim that "Trafficking in antiquities is a multibillion-dollar criminal enterprise". In this case the agent was R. Sean Fitzgerald, HSI Chicago special agent in charge.

The Hill takes HSI to task on this point, writing: "There are no clear estimates of the size of global antiquities trafficking, though repatriations like the one conducted by HSI are valued in the hundreds of millions per year.

"Yet the trade can be overestimated as well as underestimated in monetary terms, further complicating strategies to combat antiquities smuggling.

"There is, for example, the vexatious claim that the illicit trade in cultural objects is valued at billions of dollars annually and ranks with drugs and arms as one of the three most serious illicit trades. The claim has been refuted many times but never seems to go away," wrote researchers in a 2021 Journal of Field Archaeology paper."