

**David W. J. Gill**  
**Context Matters**  
**Recently Surfaced Antiquities: Ignoring the Evidence?**

Over 350 archaeological objects have been returned to Italy from North American public and private collections in the last few years (Godart and De Caro 2007; Gill 2010). Many of these have been identified from the seized photographic archives of Giacomo Medici, Gianfranco Becchina and Robin Symes. More shocking is that over 270 of these items are derived from museums whose directors are members of the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD).

Cleveland Museum of Art	15
J. Paul Getty Museum	50
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York	21
Minneapolis Institute of Art	1
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	13
Princeton University Art Museum	174
Toledo Museum of Art	1

Some of the returned items are fragmentary. The items from Princeton consisted of 157 terracotta architectural fragments from what appears to be a single Etruscan temple (Gill 2012b). These figures exclude the 40 pot fragments, as well as the fragments of the cup attributed to the Euaion painter that had formed part of the Bothmer bequest, from the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Gill 2012a; Tsirogiannis and Gill 2014). The scale of these returns is a reminder that the US adoption of the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property appears to have made little impact on the culture of acquisition embedded within these institutions (e.g. Gill and Chippindale 2008).

In the face of growing public criticism of museums in the light of the “Medici Conspiracy”, the AAMD issued strengthened “Guidelines on the Acquisition of Archaeological Material and Ancient Art” (2013). These guidelines affirmed that the

I.A AAMD is committed to the principle that acquisitions be made according to the highest standards of ethical and professional practice and in accordance with applicable law and in such a way that they do not provide a direct and material incentive to looting.

It was recognised that the lack of transparency had created a culture in which recently surfaced objects had been acquired by institutions. For this reason, good practice suggested,

III.G The museum should promptly publish acquisitions of archaeological materials and ancient art, in electronic form, including an image of the Work (or representative images in the case of groups of objects) and its provenance, thus making this information readily available to all interested parties.

Museum staff needed to be alert to concerns raised by third parties.

III.I If a member museum, as a result of its continuing research, gains information that establishes another party’s right to ownership of a Work, the museum should bring this information to the attention of the party, and if the case warrants, initiate the return of the Work to that party, as has been done in the past. In the event that a third party brings to the

attention of a member museum information supporting the party's claim to a Work, the museum should respond promptly and responsibly and take whatever steps are necessary to address this claim, including, if warranted, returning the Work, as has been done in the past.

How has the North American museum community responded to these guidelines? The AAMD created an Object Registry and "obligates any of the over two hundred museum in its membership that choose to acquire unprovenanced works to divulge these on the Registry and explain the rationale for invoking an exception" (Anderson 2017, 163). Since the start of this scheme some classical material has been recognised as a result of posting images online. The very partial publication of the Bothmer bequest of pot fragments on the Object Registry allowed an identification to be made with an Attic red-figured cup in the Villa Giulia (Tsirogiannis and Gill 2014).

A more complex example is provided by the acquisition of the marble portrait head of Drusus Minor by the Cleveland Museum of Art in 2012 (Gill 2017). Cleveland's then Director, David Franklin, who resigned the following year, was quoted at the time:

the 2,000-year-old marble head didn't come with a slam-dunk paper trail proving that it could not have been illegally unearthed since the time of the UNESCO convention.

Indeed, the earliest secure point in its collecting history was when it passed through a Paris auction in 2004. However, the museum insisted that it had every confidence in the suggestion that it came from an old Algerian collection. Yet by 2013 Italian scholars had started to draw attention to the fact that the portrait head, and another of Tiberius in a North American private collection (Pollini 2005), had been found during excavations at Sessa Aurunca, to the north of Naples, during the 1920s (Scarpati 2008-11; Cascella 2013; Scarpati 2014).

The Cleveland Museum of Art acquired a monumental bronze statue of Praxiteles' Apollo Sauroktonos ("The Leutwitz Apollo") in 2004 (Bennett 2013). This was presented with a complex collecting history that allegedly included damage during the Soviet invasion of eastern Germany in the final stages of World War II. It was claimed to have been discovered by a Romanian researcher, Lucia Marinescu, in pieces at Leutwitz in 1994. Yet this narrative contains a number of inconsistencies that raise concerns about the validity of the detail (Gill 2013b). Among the issues is how the statue moved from Leutwitz to Switzerland. It should also be noted that the Cleveland Museum of Art acquired the bronze from the same dealer as the portrait of Drusus Minor.

How have these museums reacted when concerns have been raised about objects in their collections? In June 2010 the *New York Times* raised concerns about material derived from Edoardo Almagià that had been acquired by the Princeton Museum of Art: these objects were returned to Italy the following year (Gill 2012b). Maxwell Anderson, the then director of the Dallas Museum of Art, immediately researched objects in his collection and after identifying material derived from Almagià arranged them to be returned to Italy (Gill 2013a). The museum also took the opportunity to return a mosaic to Turkey. Such an approach is in marked contrast to other museums (whose directors are members of AAMD) that are known to have acquired material from Almagià: The J. Paul Getty Museum, Boston's Museum of Fine Art, and the Tampa Museum of Art.

These attempts to ignore the issues surrounding recently surfaced antiquities are not isolated instances. Concerns about the volute-krater in the Minneapolis Institute of Art (MIA) were

first raised in November 2005 (Gill 2011). Yet it was only when Kaywin Feldman, director of the MIA and at the time president of the AAMD, intervened over the disputed Egyptian mummy mask in the St Louis Art Museum that pressure grew for the museum to return the krater. It was handed over to the Italian authorities in September 2011, nearly six years after the first concerns were raised.

The Ka-Nefer-Nefer mummy mask presently in the St Louis Museum of Art (SLAM) is another controversial acquisition whose ownership has been disputed in the courts. It is now clear from the internal emails, including concerns raised by museum professionals and Egyptologists at other institutions, that the curatorial team at SLAM may not have responded to all the available information to resolve the dispute with the Egyptian authorities (Gill 2014).

An equally long-running but unresolved case relates to three items in the Michael C. Carlos Museum at Emory University: a Minoan larnax (inv. 2002.34.1), a Rhodian pithos (inv. 2004.2.1), and a marble statue of Terpsichore (inv. 2002.31.1). Two of them featured in a review of the collection (Gaunt 2005). Concerns were raised in the Greek press by Nikolas Zirganos in June 2007, five years after the larnax and the statue were acquired, and three years after the pithos. It appears that the three had been identified from images recovered from the retrieved photographic archives: two of them are known specifically to have featured in the Gianfranco Becchina dossier. In 2008 the Greek Government approached the Carlos Museum and the museum issued a brief statement that avoided specific mention of the dispute but did include a telling section:

The Museum will not knowingly acquire any object which has been illegally exported from its country of origin or illegally imported into the United States. Any object surrounded by the suggestion of being illegitimate will not be acquired.

Although these pieces have been discussed in the academic literature (Gill 2009), the objects remain in the Carlos Museum, a decade after concerns were first raised. Bonnie Speed, the present director of the museum, is a member of the AAMD.

The tardiness of curatorial teams to respond to new evidence is highlighted by the case of the Paestan krater acquired by New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1989 from the Bothmer Purchase Fund (inv. 1989.11.4: Bothmer 1988/89, 29; Picón et al. 2007, 161, fig. 184 [with incorrect reading of inscription]). The krater was attributed to Python, and shows Dionysos and a maenad in a cart pulled by Papposilenos. It had been acquired through Sotheby's New York in 1989. Tsirogiannis had drawn attention to the images of the krater in the Medici Dossier in 2014 (Tsirogiannis 2014), but it had taken a further two years before the museum contacted the Italian authorities in late 2016. The curatorial conversation was overtaken and made redundant when the krater was seized by US authorities in July 2017.

Tsirogiannis has also written about the Attic red-figured skyphos attributed to the Kleophon painter in the Toledo Museum of Art (inv. 1982.88). The skyphos shows Hephaistos returning to Olympos. It appears in five photographs in the Medici Dossier (Tsirogiannis 2017). It appears that the skyphos was acquired from Nicholas Koutoulakis, and prior to this it has resided in a "private Swiss collection," a collection that can now be identified as belonging to Medici. The Attic red-figured volute-krater that had been acquired by the Minneapolis Institute of Art in 1983 had also originated in a "private collection" in Switzerland (Padgett 1983-86 [1991]), now identified as Medici thanks to the seized

photographic dossier (Gill 2011). The surfacing of this significant new evidence will no doubt mean that the curatorial team at the Toledo Museum of Art will be contacting the Italian authorities.

These examples of returned items or unresolved cases are a reminder that major North American museums need to maintain the highest ethical standards when it comes to the acquisition of archaeological material. The case of the portrait of Drusus Minor serves to highlight the issues of reported rather than authenticated collecting histories. The tardiness of some museum teams to investigate newly emerged evidence relating to objects in their collections needs to be addressed as part of an enhanced due diligence process to be adopted by all museums that collect archaeological material.

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