

Antiquities: What Everyone Needs to Know***By Maxwell L. Anderson***

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The ruins of the Temple of Bel at Palmyra, destroyed by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2015, furnish the cover of this book and provide a sober framing for Anderson's discussions regarding the fate of antiquities in today's global context. In this book, Anderson disaggregates 'antiquities' into archaeological materials and ancient art: broadly, the extant, tangible remains of past human cultures. The threats to antiquities he presents are manifold; ideological and religious extremists such as ISIS in Syria and Iraq provide just one context, that of international iconoclasm, within which the destruction of antiquities occurs. Anderson suggests that perhaps even greater risks to antiquities globally exist in unregulated urban development and systematic illegal excavation of archaeological sites. Despite the efforts of national governments and international organizations to combat it, the trade in illicit antiquities is as large as ever, with little sign of abating. Antiquities that bedeck Western museums, acquired through iniquitous means during periods of colonialism and imperialism, may have uncertain futures as repatriation claims from subaltern indigenous groups and post-colonial nations seek to reclaim their cultural patrimony. It is within this complex, contested and somewhat precarious context that Anderson's book is set.

Antiquities is organized into 17 chapters, which are divided into three sections. Each chapter consists of a set of questions and answers, forming the innovative structure of this book. The first overarching section is titled Legal and Practical Realities, which defines who the stakeholders

are in relation to antiquities, the history of collecting antiquities and the key issues that are debated between those both within and outside the archaeological realm. Section Two, Settled Law and Open Questions, presents a series of chapters which cogently outline and explicate international conventions and national cultural property laws, such as the 2003 Swiss Federal Act on the International Transfer of Cultural Property and the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Cultural Property (hereafter 1970 UNESCO Convention). Further, this section delineates the networks and markets through which both licit and illicit antiquities circulate. Finally, Section Three, Scenarios and Solutions, explores how institutionalized antiquities are stored and documented, the potentiality of 3-D replication as a tool for the preservation of antiquities and debates surrounding retention, restitution and repatriation of antiquities.

The book's question and answer format allows Anderson to posit searching questions and to answer them with the authority of his 30 years of experience as an art historian and museum director at institutions such as the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Dallas Museum of Art. His background in art history is most evident in Chapters Four, Five and 11, which, respectively, explore the cosmopolitan argument, the methods for identification of forgeries extant in museums and the art market and the fate of antiquities that make it to museums, as regards their documentation, storage and display. Interestingly, it is Chapters Six, Seven and Eight in Section Two that form the strongest segment of the book. Here Anderson elegantly, concisely and authoritatively explicates the conception, implementation and ramifications of the 1970 UNESCO Convention before exploring the intersections between national cultural property laws, international treaties and foreign legal systems. In Chapters Seven and Eight, Anderson examines the relationship between antiquities (as cultural property) and national identity and how assertions of state ownership over cultural property, enshrined in the juridical systems of many modern states, has led to complex contestations over the rightful fate of antiquities such as Priam's Treasure.

Despite the many satisfying and persuasive answers Anderson puts forth to his questions, there are several areas of concern and confusion in the

book. At several points, Anderson returns to the issue of unprovenanced, illicit antiquities and how they circulate within the art market. Anderson presents a somewhat anachronistic vision of the art market as existing in two forms: a legal market and an illegal market. Only once does he concede (page 169) that many scholars now conceive of the art market as being a 'grey' market: that is, one that is concomitantly legal and illegal (Hardy 2016). Beyond this outmoded distinction, Anderson argues that international treaties and landmark legal cases, such as those involving Marion True, Michael Steinhardt and Frederick Schultz in the United States, have created a defensive environment for both museum professionals and private collectors (pages 37–39, 121–122). As such, Anderson argues, there is great reticence among these collecting communities about acquiring unprovenanced antiquities. Rather than ending up at these 'conventional destinations' (page 38), antiquities are falling into the hands of illicit dealers on the black market, "invisible to scholars and the public" (page 39).

If museums and collectors are no longer buying antiquities with uncertain provenances, one has to wonder who is buying them. Anderson makes it clear that there is an existent illicit market, worth in the range of \$4–8 billion worldwide every year (pages 117–118). If these huge numbers are understood to be correct, groups other than 'organized criminals' must surely be in the market for antiquities. Further, implicit in Anderson's argument is that collectors and museums have a distant relationship with unprovenanced antiquities. In this assessment, Anderson is incorrect. The arrest and prosecution of prominent middle-men such as Giacomo Medici (Watson and Todeschini 2007), Gianfranco Becchina (Brodie 2014) and Subhash Kapoor (Casey 2017) demonstrate the deeply entwined and ongoing relationships between dealers, collectors and major museums. These disgraced dealers sold antiquities to some of the most prestigious museums and collectors in the world, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Louvre: there is no bifurcated black and white market, only a grey market.

There is a broader point of criticism that affects most of the book. Anderson positions himself as a neutral and objective writer, however his theoretical considerations and selection of case studies centre this work firmly within a Western framework. The experience that encour-

ages Anderson's authoritative tone on subjects relating to classical art history and museum curation also facilitates the book's Eurocentrism. Further, the author's unfamiliarity with archaeology is clear as he essentializes archaeologists as scientists, interested only in the production of objective knowledge. Not only is this illustrative of a lack of nuance, but it also prohibits discussion of important aspects of the debate about antiquities and ethics, politics and postcoloniality within the archaeological community. These subjects have been debated by archaeologists for over three decades. The author's lack of critical engagement with these issues, particularly within the discussion of repatriation/restitution of objects, undermines the scope of this book's academic audience.

Despite these issues, Anderson's book will prove useful and engaging to readers interested in the complex issues surrounding antiquities, particularly with the care taken to demonstrate the respective academic, institutional and collectors' perspectives. Anderson covers substantial ground and asks a series of pertinent questions in this book, many of which he answers with authority and accuracy, but others which require greater consideration of their complexities. Therefore, this book is recommended as a comprehensive introduction to the fate of antiquities for undergraduate students and interested readers outside of academia.

References

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