



II INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ARCHAEOLOGICAL PLUNDERING AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING. ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES. DEFENCE STRATEGIES. CAVEMUS NE VOLANT

SUMMARIES OF THE INTERVENTIONS

SESSION 1. 12 December 2024.

SECURITY FORCES AGAINST PLUNDERING AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING.

Tiziano Coiro.

INTERPOL'S CAPABILITIES TO COMBAT THE ILLICIT TRAFFICKING OF CULTURAL PROPERTY

INTERPOL's main functions are to share information among countries, bring together experts in movable, immovable, tangible, intangible, natural and underwater cultural heritage at conferences, symposia and workshops to provide training on how to combat illicit cross-border trade.

INTERPOL also publishes poster reports on the most relevant recently stolen cultural property (two per year and in the case of special events), cultural property crime and surveys of member countries.

The Stolen Works of Art database is INTERPOL's main tool for combating trafficking in cultural property. INTERPOL's Stolen Works of Art database is made up of information provided by its member countries and includes descriptions and images of more than 52,000 objects. It is the only international database of certified police information on stolen or missing cultural or artistic objects. The database data will be entered by INTERPOL National Central Bureaus.

The presentation first discusses INTERPOL's main missions in the fight against illicit trafficking in cultural property. Then, it will also briefly explain the information gathering process, the processing of this information and the measures taken against illicit trafficking. Finally, it will discuss how to use and contribute to INTERPOL's database of stolen works of art and the use of INTERPOL's special ID Art App.

Paul Exbrayat.

THE ROLE OF EUROPOL IN COMBATING CULTURAL GOODS CRIMES.

Presentation of the support that Europol brings to law enforcement agencies in their fight against illicit trafficking of cultural goods.

Cameron Walter

THE OSCE HERITAGE CRIME TASK FORCE – GLOBAL BORDER MANAGEMENT & LAW ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CULTURAL HERITAGE TRAFFICKING.

Focuses on the critical intersection of law enforcement, customs, border security and museums cooperation in the global fight against heritage trafficking, and its direct linkages to organized crime and terrorism financing, money laundering and corruption networks. Through the OSCE's Heritage Crime Task Force – a unique in the world task force of customs officers, border guards, police, financial and forensic investigators, state prosecutors, museums, academia and ministries of culture – operational efforts are being coordinated in real-time across Europe and North America to bolster law enforcement capacity, map and target trafficking networks, assist countries in heritage crime investigations and, since 2022, actively assist Ukraine in combatting looting and trafficking of its cultural heritage. Cameron



will discuss the need for cross-agency, cross-border coordination and the success of his team to date including seizures, repatriations, prosecution and assisting Ukraine in building cases for the International Criminal Court focused on contraventions of the 1954 Hague Convention.

Montserrat de Pedro Esteban

OPERATION TULIPA: ANATOMY OF AN ANDALUSIAN PLUNDER.

The Historical Heritage Brigade, part of the General Commissariat of Judicial Police of the National Police, has been exclusively dedicated to the fight against the illicit trafficking of works of art and cultural property throughout the national territory since its creation in 1977, almost 50 years of the 200 years that our institution has just completed.

In this fight, it collaborates closely with other international organizations, such as Interpol or Europol, national institutions such as the Ministry of Culture or the Autonomous Governments and with other security forces, as it cannot be otherwise, given the organized and transnational nature of this type of crime.

An example of this daily effort, fruit of this institutional collaboration, is Operation Tulipa, developed mainly in Andalusia, but which was extended to other parts of our geography. The investigation culminated with the arrest of six people who acted in an organized manner and with the recovery of seventy-one archaeological pieces from plundering, which had been introduced into the legal market once they had been laundered using front men or by falsifying documents.

Juan José Águila.

THE PROSECUTION OF THE PLUNDERING AND CONTRABAND OF CULTURAL PROPERTY.

After a brief presentation of the internal regulations of the Guardia Civil, as well as the collaboration agreements between the Ministries of the Interior and Culture and the Guardia Civil and the Armada to combat these crimes more effectively, within a police force that has more than 80,000 agents, the specialities that are most frequently responsible for investigating these crimes will be highlighted, and some specific cases of looting and smuggling will be presented.

Corinne Chartrelle

LA LUTTE CONTRE LE TRAFIC DE BIENS CULTURELS, L'EXEMPLE DE LA FRANCE.

Pre-recorded video.

SESSION 2. 12 December 2024.

THE ILLICIT TRAFFIC OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL GOODS. NETWORKS AND MARKETS.

Zeynep Boz.

ILLICIT TRAFFICKING OF CULTURAL PROPERTY: THE CASE OF TÜRKIYE

Türkiye is home to a rich cultural heritage spanning thousands of years. This legacy, however, makes the country a target for illegal excavations and cultural property trafficking. Such trafficking not only disrupts historical continuity in Türkiye but also creates security issues by financing organized crime networks.

Türkiye prioritizes cooperation at both national and international levels, which has enabled the country to recover numerous artifacts domestically and engage in international operations and investigations. Education and awareness-raising are fundamental to Türkiye's strategy in combating cultural property trafficking. Yet, despite these efforts, certain challenges persist—particularly the rise of social media videos that indirectly promote illegal excavations. These popular videos, often created with fraudulent intent, carry the risk of attracting young people to these unlawful activities. By normalizing illicit excavations, they contribute to the severe destruction of cultural heritage.



The ease of global communication has created new incentives, as individuals in even the most remote areas can now watch high-priced auctions in market countries live, fostering the appeal of trafficking. Additionally, while it is impossible for cultural artifacts to leave Türkiye legally, a loophole exists in the laws of certain other countries, allowing such items to enter their borders legally. This imbalance works entirely to the advantage of traffickers and highlights the urgent need for regulatory measures across all nations to empower law enforcement.

This presentation will discuss Türkiye's legal regulations, training programs, and digital monitoring technologies, as well as the measures taken against social media threats of this nature. Türkiye's experiences highlight the complex dynamics in preserving cultural heritage and underscore the importance of global cooperation.

Samuel Hardy.

ARTEFACT HUNTING AND CANNABIS CULTIVATION IN WESTERN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA: MULTI-COMMODITY TRAFFICKING AND PLURAL POLICING

Precarious criminals combine various legal and illegal enterprises to make a living. They train, equip and organise themselves and each other through online forums and social networks, sometimes for the trafficking of one commodity in an online community for another commodity. Typically, neither law enforcement agencies nor cultural heritage agencies (nor other civil society efforts) have sufficient personnel to match the scale of the problem or appropriate legal, ethical or technical capacity to fulfil their potential. If it were institutionalised, plural policing, where governmental and non-governmental actors collaborate, could generate forensic evidence and other intelligence.

Ana Vico Belmonte.

EXPORTS AND IMPORTS OF CULTURAL GOODS; A LEGAL GYMKHANA

The fight against illicit trafficking in works of art is a task from which the art market does not exempt itself, working to make it increasingly transparent and reliable. It is not in vain that illegal activities result in unfair and negative competition for legal market agents. Even so, it is a sector subject to continuous criticism and suspicion, since there is no shortage of cases that have led us to be suspicious of this sector.

Approaching the legal market of antiquities leads us on the one hand to defend the work of those who, with their own capital, also safeguard and care for historical heritage; dealers and collectors who honestly care for and protect it. For we must not forget that works of art and antiquities in private hands continue to be Historical Heritage of each country and, therefore, the work that these dealers and collectors do on daily basis is also to protect it. But, at the same time, States are obliged to guarantee that the legal procedures of the art market are clear. The heterogeneous and complicated procedures required by some States can end up leading to a serious and undesirable criminal imputation of dealers or collectors both by action and omission.

Carlos Andrés.

TOOLS FOR COMBATING ILLICIT TRAFFICKING OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE: THE MODEL OF THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE

A brief outline will be given of the reasons for a state-level illicit trafficking service: the tools we have, the main problems we face, ways of collaboration and cooperation with other national and international agents such as police forces, customs, Autonomous Regions, museums, citizens... The Ministry's tasks related to this fight, ranging from preventive conservation to specialized transport of recovered goods, expert appraisals, restitution of national and international works of art and successful operations carried out in recent years.



Marta Suarez Mansilla

DUE DILIGENCE: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

The concept of “due diligence” applied to the art market refers to the deployment of an active and cautious conduct when making inquiries, requesting information or detecting indications that could raise suspicions about the illicit origin of a work to be marketed. Such preventions and inquiries must be made not only by the final buyers, on whom this responsibility is usually placed, but also by the chain of intermediaries involved in the successive transmissions up to the final collector. The lack of a standardized definition of what constitutes due diligence as well as the imprecision and laxity in the documentation that must accompany the works traded leads to a vague and ill-defined notion of due diligence, and this contributes to the laundering of the pieces to be introduced in the market. We will debate on the convenience of orienting these guidelines and detecting points for improvement in order to gain transparency and homogeneity in art market practices.

SESSION 3. 13 December 2024.

THE PLUNDERING AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROPERTY. ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES.

Christos Tsirogiannis.

THE IMMUNITY OF PRIVATE COLLECTORS OF ILLICIT ANTIQUITIES.

During the last 20 years, nearly all known collectors of antiquities were found owning stolen objects. However, instead of admitting that they did not exercise due diligence before these acquisitions, they either talk about the responsibilities of their suppliers only, or they keep silent, especially when they are caught again, with more illicit objects. This talk will briefly refer to some striking cases, before focusing on the most recent case, which has a strong connection with Spain, as well.

Neil Brodie.

THE TRADE IN ANCIENT COINS OUT OF SYRIA

Ancient coins have been traded and collected for centuries in great quantities. Until recently, it has been generally accepted that it is difficult if not impossible to trace the passage of recently stolen or illegally-traded coins through the market. The increasing availability online of the results of coin auctions and other sales, however, offers an opportunity to look more closely at the character and possible origins of coins being traded. This talk describes some preliminary analyses of archived auction results aimed at identifying the presence on the market of ancient coins illegally traded from Syria since the start of conflict there in 2011.

Vincent Michel.

THE CHALLENGES OF LAUNDERING CULTURAL PROPERTY

If the identification of objects resulting from looting is a first challenge for researchers (scientists and law enforcement), its integration and then its circulation in the licit trade with apparent legality is the second challenge to be met... a whole series of laundering techniques reveal our vulnerability and the race against time to stop the traffic!

Axel Kerep.

ARTE-FACT: NEW TECHNOLOGY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ILLICIT TRAFFICKING OF CULTURAL GOODS.

As is the case with many other fields, artificial intelligence (AI) is playing an increasingly important role in the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural goods. AI applications are developed to address specific challenges in combating smuggling activities and networks. These include rapid identification of cultural objects in border con-



trols and seizure operations, surveillance of a high number of internet sites, and tracking of stolen goods on the web sales. All of these processes are automated to streamline time-consuming monitoring operations that are not feasible on a large scale by human alone. The latest tool, Arte-Fact, is now operational for the French Police Art unit (OCBC) and offers a comprehensive range of features to meet the needs of law enforcement agencies.

Michela de Bernardin.

RITHMS PLATFORM: HARNESSING SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS TO ENHANCE POLICE INTELLIGENCE AGAINST ILLICIT CULTURAL HERITAGE TRAFICKING

In recent years, the rise of online marketplaces and destabilizing conflicts in culturally rich, developing countries have fuelled the growth of the art market's "grey" sector. By exploiting the ambiguity around the provenance of artefacts, looted or stolen items are too often allowed to enter auctions and private, sometimes even public, collections undetected. Despite international eCorts, the full extent of this trade and the relationships among its actors remain unclear.

The Horizon Europe project RITHMS (GA 101073932), coordinated by the Italian Institute of Technology, seeks to enhance the capabilities of Law Enforcement Agencies (LAEs) and Border Authorities in combating this complex phenomenon. The RITHMS Consortium brings together police forces, border agencies, SMEs, and researchers from diverse fields, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation.

At the heart of the Project is the development of an interoperable digital platform powered by Social Network Analysis (SNA). This Platform maps relational patterns among actors involved in the circulation of cultural goods, thus providing investigators with actionable intelligence and facilitating the identification of suspects of illicit operations. By integrating various data sources ranging from open-source data to satellite imagery and mobile records - RITHMS oCers new insights into the mechanisms of illicit trade and its connection with other criminal activities. Ultimately, the RITHMS platform will improve the readiness of LEAs to address, mitigate, and eventually prevent looting and related criminal networks.

SESSION 4. 13 December 2024.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PLUNDERING. ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES.

Marianne Mödlinger.

UKRAINIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR SALE IN EUROPE: SOME EXAMPLES FROM BEFORE AND AFTER THE RUSSIAN INVASION

The sale of illicit metal detecting finds in Ukraine did not stop with the Russian invasion. By looking at different case studies before and after the Russian invasion, we highlight some of the difficulties that arise when trying to return these objects to Ukraine, after they have been sold in various European countries.

Francisco Romeo.

PRACTICE AND POSSIBILITIES OF FORENSIC ANALYSIS OF LOOTING SCENES

Looting scenarios are seldom analyzed with forensic techniques by law enforcement agencies involved in the fight against looting. This is due to the fact that in most of the cases the operations are developed on the traffic of the pieces and in few occasions it is possible to determine their concrete origin. However, if known, the analysis of the looting scenario can provide very relevant data to narrow down or even determine the identity of the looters.



Mathilde Mura.

A GLIMPSE INTO THE TARGETS AND MOTIVATIONS OF LOOTERS FROM AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

This presentation discusses how archaeology and its methodologies contribute to a better understanding of looting and participate in combating the illicit trafficking of ancient artifacts. By utilizing remote sensing techniques and ground truthing measurements, a typology of damages was developed as well as a corresponding destruction index. We will explore how using the approach on a broader scale can help define the mechanisms behind destruction, gain insights into the organization of criminal networks, and ultimately contribute to the long-term protection of cultural heritage

Francisco Javier Matas.

METAL DETECTORS: ELEMENTS OF ANALYSIS TO CHARACTERIZE THE LOOTING.

The use of metal detectors to commit a looting usually generates sets of archaeological pieces and elements with historical character endowed with a certain heterogeneous character. Likewise, the way they are used in the field is equally relevant. The analysis of the seized sets can determine the profile of the detector users, and characterize the severity of the damage done.

Vicente Contreras.

A GOOD INSPECTION AND A BETTER REPORT IS THE BASIS FOR A FAVORABLE COURT DECISION

The phone rings:

- Riiin, Riiin...!
- Cultural heritage, tell me...
- Another plunder...!

This is the same story every day... Tired of so much archaeological plundering that repeats itself over and over again, year after year, decade after decade. The lack of a school or mentors to pass on their knowledge to combat this type of crime against the archaeological heritage, has led us to a deep reflection on our actions so far. It makes it clear to us that we have lived in a state of innocence or total disconnection, without a collective reaction. Faced with this situation, at this time, we have opted for an active attitude.

However, within the administration and other institutions, resources are limited, but the mix of vocation, experience and technical preparation makes it possible to address the challenges more effectively, and clear results are beginning to be obtained.

Constant work and continuous reflection on the results not only enrich professional practice in a correct and effective direction, but also help to form a culture of actions within our learning from the experience acquired.

Lucky breaks do exist, but they are few and far between. Therefore, the achievements that are being made are not the product of chance, but of constant work.