

## NEWS & NOTES

### LOST & FOUND

**Found:** A massive treasure-trove of antiquities and the remains of structures from four Vietnamese dynasties dating to the 6<sup>th</sup> century, were discovered in November from the Chinese Tan Dynasty and the Vietnamese dynasties of Ly, Tran, Le and Nguyen. Remains of at least 8 humans were found.

Included were terracotta dragons, phoenix statues, ceramic urns, exotic bowls and unicorn heads. Many of the items original from China, Japan and the Middle East, indicating extensive foreign trade during the period. Foundations of a palace from 11<sup>th</sup> century were also found, including wells, an extensive drainage system, traces of an ancient river and lake, and trash dumps.

**Returned:** The Michael C. Carlos Museum at Emory University, which bought a mummy in 1999 from a Niagara Falls freak-show collection, returned the mummy of supposedly Rameses I, pharaoh of Egypt from 1293 to 1291 BC to the permanent collection of the Luxor Museum, via a stop at the Cairo Museum.

**Recovered:** U.S. soldiers and Iraqi police recovered two of the most important artifacts looted from the Iraqi National Museum after the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime. One of the two pieces, the so-called Bassetki copper statue, dated back to 2,300 B.C., depicts a man seated on the ground. It was found in a cesspool during a raid by U.S. personnel and Iraqi police.

The second piece, discovered in the same raid, is a wood and bronze brazier, a mobile fire box used by Assyrian kings to keep warm in winter. It dates to 850 BC.

**Found:** a 17<sup>th</sup>-century Rembrandt print at a thrift shop in central England by the painting expert for Cheffins, a British auction house. Though only 8 x 7 cm. and most likely made after Rembrandt's death in 1669, the print is said to be worth about \$1,350. The auction house will sell the item on behalf of the shop.

**To be Restored:** A mural painted in an underground cellar in Buenos Aires, Argentina, by the Mexican artist Siqueiros, then later hacked off the walls and stored in metal containers, is to be reassembled and restored.

*Ejercicio plastico* was painted by Siqueiros in 1933 to decorate a vaulted wine cellar in a villa belonging to the Argentinian newspaper owner Natalio Botán. Although most of the artist's work reflected his political beliefs, he tried something new for Botán. Siqueiros tried to create the sensation that one was entering a glass box submerged underwater. After Botán died in 1941, one of the later

owners of the mansion had the mural hacked off the walls.

**Recovered:** An elaborately carved stone altar, complete with writing and the image of a powerful king of the late 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. was found by a gang of looters 2 years ago in Cancun. The thieves tried to sell the relic to drug traffickers, but there was conflict among the bands. Then other bands tried to get it over the border of Belize to get the altar. Then scientists decided to use criminal sleuthing and this led to the recovery of the 600-pound Cancun altar. Since then four suspects have been arrested and are to stand trial in January.

**Returned:** An ancient handwritten Book of Psalms taken from the fortress of Ethiopian Emperor Theodos by British troops 135 years ago was returned to Ethiopia in late September. More than 1,000 sacred manuscripts, processional crosses and golden crowns belonging to the emperor are still in the British Library and it is hoped that they will be returned as well.

### MUSEUMS

A graffiti artist smuggled his painting in the prestigious Tate Britain museum in London in October, gluing it onto a gallery wall. Until it crashed to the floor hours later, the work hung unnoticed in a room of 18<sup>th</sup> century landscapes. The artist, known as Banksy, created that latest album cover to the British pop group Blur, selling another version of the painting at a London gallery with a video of him hanging it on the wall for \$25,000. The original is being held in the lost property division of the Tate, according to the museum. The painting depicted a rural scene with police tape stenciled on it, with a caption saying Banksy's work is "inspired by cannabis resin and daytime television".

The Bellevue Art Museum, a Washington venue since 1975 that moved into an architecturally daring Stephen Holl-designed building in 2001, will close. Having fallen victim to a rough economy and a sense that it was more successful as an architectural object than a place to see art, the Board decided to close rather than spend money they don't have.

The Museo Picasso Malaga opened on 27 October, providing for the first time a hometown base for a permanent collection of works by Malaga's famous son. The nucleus of the collection comes from gifts from Christine Ruiz-Picasso, the painter's daughter-in-law, and her son Bernard, with 200 works including paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints and ceramics. The museum occupies the Palacio de los Condes de Buenavista, remodeled to hold the main collection, temporary exhibit space and a restaurant overlooking gardens.

Pinacothèque is a new private museum in Paris, opening with 90 rarely seen or never exhibited works by Picasso owned by his widow, Jacqueline Roque, called "Picasso

Intime", commemorating the artist's death 30 years ago.

The Busch-Reisinger Museum at Harvard is celebrating its centennial with an exhibition called "Before Expressionism" devoted to art in Germany in 1903, the year it opened. The show closes on 15 February.

The Martin Bodmer Foundation in Cologny, Geneva has opened its new museum, a two-storey underground structure designed by Swiss architect Mario Botta. The museum exhibits some of the treasures from the great library of world literature assembled by Bodmer, ranging from Egyptian papyri, early Christian codices, to medieval illustrated manuscripts, and 15<sup>th</sup>-century volumes of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Also are first editions of the Gutenberg Bible, Shakespeare's Comedies as well as manuscript copies of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Goethe's *Faust*.

The Strong Museum in Rochester, New York has announced a new mission to make it the first and only museum in the world to focus exclusively on the "importance of play as it reflects and illuminates the American experience." they have acquired the National Toy Hall of Fame and are building an expansion to attract people from all around the world who recognize how important play is to human beings.

The Ogden Museum of Southern Art has opened in New Orleans, containing the work of painters, sculptors and other artists from 15 Southern states and the District of Columbia. From folk art to shadowy paintings of bayous and back streets, from haunting old photographs to bright modern abstractions, there is no instantly identifiable aspect of the art on display. Lots of outsider art, of course. But history and memory seems to dominate the collection.

The Mori Art Museum, situated atop Tokyo's most imposing skyscraper in the middle of the city's trendiest area, has opened with a ploy to get people to visit the museum of contemporary art as well as the 52<sup>nd</sup>-floor observation deck for the same price. Mission is to nurture and showcase Japanese and Asian artists. Takashi Murakami has created a "carpet" of cartoon characters that lead visitors from the subway station to the ground level "Museum Cone", where elevators whisk visitors to the museum. First show, which opened in October, is entitled: "Happiness, a Survival Guide for Art and Life," and includes work alongside each other by John Constable next to 11<sup>th</sup> century Cambodian statues; Monet is a stroll away from a video by Brit Art's Tracey Emin, a Jeff Koons creation or a Yoko Ono work.

### FALL AUCTIONS

*Reclining Nude (on Her Left Side)* by Modigliani went for \$26.8 million, purchased by Stephen A. Wynn of Las

Vegas casino fame. Léger's *Woman in Red and Green* (1914) went for \$22.4 million at Christie's in early November.

#### WRAPPING

In New York in October, an assortment of 53 artists and celebrities created custom-designed park benches to benefit the Central Park Conservancy in a project sponsored by Target Department Stores. Included were David Salle, Joel Shapiro, Tony Oursler, Ross Bleckner, Jenny Holzer, as well as Joan Rivers, Morley Safer and others. They were auctioned at Christie's on 20 November.

Meanwhile, in Santa Rosa, California, Christo wrapped a doghouse as a tribute to the late cartoonist Charles Schulz, creator of the celebrated "Peanuts" comic strip, whose main characters were Charlie Brown and his flop-eared spotted beagle Snoopy. On view until 19 January 2004 at the Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center in Santa Rosa, CA.

#### PERFORMANCE

In early November, a British performance artist immersed himself in a bath of baked beans, with french fries up his nose and sausages around his head. Mark McGowan, 37, said he would spend 100 hours wallowing like this in the window of a London art gallery to support the traditional greasy British meal.

#### SMELLING ARTISTS

Donald Sultan has created a new limited-edition women's perfume for Neiman Marcus this fall, called Turpentine.

• German artist HA Schult in 1996, created 1,000 "trash people" which has been seen on the Matterhorn in Switzerland in August, including 88-pound garbage men, made of high-tech refuse from German factories and pressed onto molded plastic forms. They have stood at Moscow's Red Square, the Great Wall of China and the Pyramids of Giza. He now hopes to march his army to Ayers Rock in Australia, to New York, and to an iceberg in the Antarctic. (See *Smithsonian*, October 2003.

#### GIVE & TAKE

The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum is giving back all its collection to the artists who made it, deciding not to have a collection but just a Kunsthalle when it's new building in 2004 will replace the warehouse that housed the permanent collection

#### BEVERLY HILLS

Believe it or not, until November Beverly

Hills had no bookstores—Rizzoli had left the city, and 90201 was hungry for books. So what does it take for a German publisher, debonaire and daring Benedikt Taschen to get Philippe Starck to design a store for him, a deluxe version of a wood-paneled library from old Europe, a long narrow space, lined floor to ceiling in American walnut, with bronze-veneered fixtures and paintings by Albert Oehlen, collaging images from Taschen's art, design and erotic books. Money and taste.

At the far end, suspended over the store, is a glass "ice box" containing that single Taschen book that required its own table, none other than "Helmut Newton's SUMO." And there is a bar to attract the intellectual "cortex" of Los Angeles, which is awaiting the new book on Muhammed Ali, called Goat, which weighs in at 75 pounds!

#### EGOISM AT ITS MOST ARTISTIC

Damien Hirst has bought back his own work from Charles Saatchi, the advertising magnate who is one of Britain's largest contemporary art collectors. By owning his key early work, Hirst will be able to control his own market. You know he's smart, when the prices of his work from the late 80s and early 90s have increased twentyfold!

#### AN ARTISTIC CAMPAIGN

John Tagiuri of Somerville, Massachusetts has printed up citations which he puts on windshields of SUVs with "Violation: Earth". His shame-on-you tickets, which resemble those bright orange Boston parking tickets, declare that SUVs are big, bad gas guzzlers. (By the way, he drives a black Toyota Prius, a hybrid electric/gas car. His bumper sticker bursts with pride: "One less SUV."

He started this campaign two years ago, and its has now reached 48 states and he has dispensed more than 1 million tickets. "Doonesbury" featured it last fall. He also applauds the smaller built-on-a-car platform SUVs such as the Honda CR-V and the Ford Escape because they achieve car-like gas levels. He even forgives the four-cylinder version of the Jeep Wrangler. You yourself may have received one of these tickets, printed in Somerville. Tagiuri is known for his many environmental public art pieces.

#### SOFTWARE

Ray Kurzweil's latest invention (along with engineer, John Keklak, is software that allows a computer to create poetry by imitating but not plagiarizing the styles and vocabularies of human poets. Working something like a cyber-blender, the

poetically challenged can toss in rhymes and rhythms and alterations from already written poems. These whirl around a bit, then out pours a new poem.

#### CHURCH OF CRAFT

Now that the American Craft Museum has changed its name (getting Craft out of the name of "Arts & Design) and the Clifornia College of Arts and Crafts has also changed its name and dropped the "Crafts", it interesting to find out that there is a Church of Craft in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Montreal and Stockholm, among other cities. Its do-it-yourself credo is summed upon on its Web site, [www.churchofcraft.org](http://www.churchofcraft.org), saying that the power of creating gives confidence to live our lives with all the love we can. Members meet on the second Sunday of each month at a café, holding classes on such things as Simple Bookbinding and Wildstyle Graffiti History. There is Fiber Study and much more.

#### LIBRARIES & ART

Art professor at Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT has installed Library of Congress call numbers on the university's Olin Memorial Library/ Jeffrey Schiff aims to help people "see the world as an index to the expanding university of the library." Each number—which corresponds to a specific book in the university's libraries—relates to the physical location where it's placed: the tree's number, for example, is that of a book on tree-ring analysis, while the number on the library refers to a series on copyright information.

• The Library of Congress has acquired what is said to be the world's largest private collection of original cartoon art with 36,000 works by over 2,800 artists assembled over 60 years by J. Arthur Wood Jr., a political cartoonist. From *The Yellow Kid* to *Krazy Kat* and *Flash Gordon*, to cells from *Snow White*, and so much more.

#### INTERNET RESOURCES

The Library of Congress has made its copy of the Gutenberg Bible available in PDF format on a CD set for \$80. The 1,300 pages are now on that CD. Other works can be seen at the American Memory project ([memory.loc.gov](http://memory.loc.gov)) where more than 8 million images of American historical materials are available. LC is working with Octavo, a company based in Oakland, California that specializes in high-resolution digital imaging.