



CAF America Issue Brief

ISSUE BRIEF: Art At Risk

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Worldwide, there are countless charities and nonprofits working to create or share art. There are also many trying to protect it.

The missions of these philanthropic organizations include the recovery of lost art, and the restoration and protection of art at-risk or damaged by man or by natural disasters. Irreplaceable works of art ravaged by time, weather, or man include the Parthenon, the Sphinx, and the Sistine Chapel.

Domestic and international charities working to save at-risk works of art face significant challenges including unchecked looting, lack of funds for restoration, and the immutable effects of weather and pollution. Today's economic climate further complicates the task of these organizations as they experience a drop in giving. Despite these obstacles, charities and nonprofit organizations strive to complement underfunded and inadequate governmental efforts, and fill diverse roles as scientists, archeologists, art restorers, and teachers.

The Risks and Challenges

The destruction or theft of art and artifacts, in particular looting during periods of conflict, is not a new phenomenon. However, it recently gained widespread media attention during and in the aftermath of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2003, thieves stole between 13,000 and 15,000 objects of art, including priceless artifacts from the Mesopotamian era, from the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad. Although many high profile pieces were found or returned, thousands are still missing.¹ In the rest of country, systematic looting of archeological sites continues.

In Afghanistan, persistent and widespread looting that intensified after the fall of the Taliban has since evolved into "a sophisticated trade that could be financing the



Many charities dedicate their energies and funds to the conservation and restoration of endangered or damaged art work.

Saving At-Risk Art with CAF America

Europa Nostra, Netherlands

Based in the Hague, Europa Nostra describes itself as "the Cultural Voice of Europe" and as such works to protect and promote the continent's cultural heritage. Over the past 45 years, this CAF America grantee has succeeded in building a European network of over 400 groups working jointly to protect the cultural integrity of Europe's cities and countryside, and historical, architectural, and archaeological sites. In many of its conservation activities, Europa Nostra draws on the expertise of the Europa Nostra Scientific Council—a group of architects, archaeologists, art historians, and historians dedicated to preserving Europe's historical and cultural heritage, in particular the conservation of historical military architecture.

Recent Europa Nostra projects include a successful campaign to preserve the Stockholm City Library, an important example of modern architecture in Sweden, and an ongoing campaign to protect Prague's historic city walls. Other examples of Europe's Nostra cultural heritage program include efforts to save the historic Cyprus city of Famagusta, an appeal for the Protection of Cultural Property in Israel and Lebanon, and a campaign for the conservation of Roman Baths in Allianoi, Turkey.

To learn more about Europa Nostra projects, visit them at their website at www.europanostra.org.

The National Gallery of Australia Foundation, Australia

The National Gallery of Art boasts a diverse collection of art, including an exhibition of French masters on loan from the Musée d'Orsay, an exhibit honoring the work of elder Indigenous artists, Asian and Pacific art, and an extensive sculpture garden. The National Gallery of Australia Foundation supports the Gallery by raising funds to maintain, improve and develop its national collection of works of art. For over 20 years, the Foundation has successfully raised funds to assist with Gallery

country's warlords and insurgents," according to experts.² Taliban members themselves destroyed countless works of art, including the giant Buddhas of Bamiyan and over 2,000 artifacts from Kabul's National Museum of Afghanistan.³

Natural disasters, in addition to their toll on human populations, wreak devastation on artwork, treasured monuments, and archeological sites. A 2003 earthquake in the historical Iranian city of Bam nearly destroyed a 2000 year old citadel, as well as many monuments dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries. Following the damage, Bam was added to UNESCO's List of World Heritage Sites in Danger in 2004. (This is a list to alert the international community that a World Heritage Site is under threat and to encourage corrective action.⁴)

Historic buildings in Havana, Cuba are showing the ravages of time, as years of neglect erode the city's 19th and 20th century architecture. In 1982 UNESCO designated the older section of the city a world heritage site leading to the restoration of a few dozen buildings. However, neglect and lack of funding, coupled with overcrowding in "Cuba's most densely populated district," threaten colonial, neo baroque, and Art Deco homes and buildings.⁵

Pollution and climate change can be equally destructive on art and architecture though their effects may take years to manifest. In 2000, a U.S. research study by the Georgia Institute of Technology revealed that art in galleries and museums are under greater assault by airborne pollution than previously believed. The study concluded that pollution emitted by combustion driven vehicles can accumulate unnoticed for several years and can threaten art in "even the most advanced galleries."⁶ The world's most renowned monuments are not immune. Frescoes and sculptures of the Parthenon in Greece have been damaged over the years by atmospheric pollution, notably acid rain. As a result, many pieces have been moved to safety in the Acropolis Museum, and replaced by replicas.⁷

Art charities have most recently faced challenges stemming from the global financial crisis. In the United States, giving to art, culture, and humanities charities dropped 6.4 percent in 2008.⁸ Similarly, private investment in the arts in Great Britain dropped by 7 percent in 2008/09 (a decrease of 19 million GBP from a record high in 2007/08).⁹ Private art collectors are also feeling "the effects of the credit crunch;" in many cases collectors are selling rather than donating their works of art or contributing less to museums' art acquisition efforts. As a result, art organizations are forced to cope with both the loss of funding and the sale of 'cultural heritages' around the world.¹⁰

What is Being Done?

Arts and culture have historically been linked to philanthropy. As far back as the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, wealthy patrons sponsored artists, writers, and musicians; the resulting patrimony includes the paintings of Leonardo Da Vinci and William Shakespeare's sonnets. Philanthropists (individuals and corporations) continue to support the arts in a variety of ways—through endowments, legacies, one-off donations, and grants to support charities working to preserve art.

Here, a look at how charities (and their donors) are working to save at-risk art:

Science and Art

As we learn more about the long term implications of pollution and climate change, philanthropy and science are coordinating their efforts to protect and restore art. For example, the U.K. based National Trust is increasingly relying on scientific instruments and experiments to restore and save art, and studying recent natural events to create future conservation models. Thanks to information gained from flooding of certain historic homes in Great Britain, the nonprofit's conservation team has developed ways to

programs and the acquisition of works of art for the national collection.

A key Gallery program is the Department of Conservation and its team of experts who assure the conservation and restoration of works in the collection. In fall 2003, this team applied conservation techniques to several bronze pieces in the museum's sculpture garden damaged or at risk from excessive handling, environmental exposure (rain, pollution, ultraviolet radiation), the site location, and vandalism. The Gallery's conservation teams also apply their skills to conservation of textiles, objects, and painting.

To learn more about the Conservation Department's work and the National Gallery of Australia Foundation, visit them at www.nga.gov.au.

Support Art at Risk

To give to any of the organizations listed here or another international charity of your choice visit CAFAmerica at: www.cafamerica.org/dnn/Home/DonateNow/tabid/148/Default.aspx

Visit charities working in the field of Art at Risk

If you or other donors would be interested in visiting any of the projects and/or charities mentioned in this brief, please contact CAFAmerica Chief Executive Officer, Susan Saxon-Harrod at 703-549-8931 or susansh@cafamerica.org for further details.

Resources

Conservation. *The Getty Conservation Institute Newsletter.* The Getty Conservation Institute. A newsletter series on art conservation issues including environmental and emergency management, conservation science, and the destruction of world heritage. To download the latest issue, visit www.getty.edu/conservation/publications/newsletters/index.html.

Katrina's Art. Huffman, Alan. "Katrina's Art." *LOST Magazine*, no. 8 (September 2006), August 29, 2006. This portrait of post-Katrina New Orleans explores the hurricane's impact on the city's art world through compelling interviews with gallery owners, private collectors, and artists. To read this article, visit www.lostmag.com/issue8/katrina.php?page=1.

prevent similar disasters in the future. In addition, the team has implemented systems to monitor dust production by visitors to historic sites and light exposure to certain surfaces to protect existing art and architecture.

Conservation and Restoration

Many charities dedicate their energies and funds to the conservation and restoration of endangered or damaged art work. In addition to restoring damaged paintings, sculptures, and other works of art, conservation efforts can extend to endangered buildings and even cities. In the U.S., the Landmark Trust salvages historic homes, including Rudyard Kipling's Vermont house, and adapts them for modern living. Rent income from these homes pays for repairs and educational programs. The Landmark Trust also operates in the United Kingdom and Italy. In Italy, the nonprofit organization 'Save Venice' took on the ambitious task of aiding an entire city at risk. This American group was founded in the 1960s as part of a UNESCO campaign to save then flooded Venice and still works to protect the city's buildings and precious works of art. Since its establishment, 'Save Venice' is credited with over 200 restoration projects.

Other Actions

Another approach is the 'restoration' of the artists themselves. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Tulane University launched month-long "Restoration Residencies" for New Orleans' artists who had lost their homes or needed resources. The program, which provided over a dozen artists with housing, food, studio space, and a stipend, was funded by several organizations and charitable foundations, including the Ford Foundation and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and the federally funded National Endowment for the Arts.¹¹

Other nonprofit groups focus on preventing the theft or loss of art works or on recovering stolen treasures. For example, the UK-based Art Fund works to prevent the loss of Britain's cultural heritage by offering grants to national museums as well as purchasing works of art under threat of being sold abroad. Recently, the nonprofit contributed £1 million (approximately 1.6 million USD) to a national campaign to save Diana and Actaeona, a painting by the Renaissance artist Titian, from sale abroad.¹²

Another nonprofit group, the Commission for Looted Art in Europe (CLAE), is dedicated to the identification and recovery of looted art, particularly property stolen during World War Two. In addition to their recovery efforts, the CLAE coordinates with governments and cultural organizations to return looted artifacts to their rightful owners. ■

This CAFAmerica Issue Brief presents a synopsis of facts, research and funding opportunities for causes you care about. It isn't meant to be a comprehensive report, and for that reason, provides a list of resources and websites where you can learn more.

CAFAmerica... Your World. Your Move.

CAFAmerica connects US donors with charities worldwide, helping them make a difference for people and causes they care about. We work with individuals, families, corporations and foundations. We also enable foreign charities to fundraise easily in the US.

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CAFAmerica makes global giving effective and secure for everyone. We are changing the culture of global giving, by creating a world where international giving is not uncommon, but done every day.

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Websites

The Baghdad Museum Project

www.baghdadmuseum.org/index2.htm

Climate for Culture

www.moez.fraunhofer.de/en/gf/FuE-Kooperationen/Projekte/ClimateforCulture.jsp

Getty Conservation Institute

www.getty.edu/conservation/institute

Global Heritage Fund

www.globalheritagefund.org

Heritage Canada

www.heritagecanada.org

Institute of Conservation (ICON)

www.icon.org.uk

International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

www.iccom.org

International Council on Monuments and Sites

www.icomos.org

International Council of Museums

www.icom.museum

Organization of World Heritage Cities

www.ovpwm.org

Save America's Treasures

www.saveamericastreasures.org

UNESCO World Heritage

www.whc.unesco.org

World Monuments Fund

www.wmf.org

ENDNOTES

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