

UPDATE: Fearless Girl Statue Caught in Further Legal Battle ? This Time in Australia

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UNITED STATES

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The bronze “Fearless Girl” statue originally appeared in Bowling Green, a small public park in New York City, in 2017, posed in a face off against the Charging Bull statue (Wall Street Bull). The Fearless Girl became a world-famous symbol of diversity and female representation on Wall Street. Presently, the statue’s creator, Kristen Visbal, is embroiled in several legal battles with State Street Global Advisors, which purchased the first statue and say they own the sculpture’s image and name. State Street commenced suit against Visbal in February 2019, alleging trademark infringement over replicas that Visbal created in London, Oslo and Stevensville, Maryland. It is now challenging a replica that law firm Maurice Blackburn commissioned to display in Melbourne’s Federation Square. State Street argues that it originally conceived and launched the project and that Visbal “weakened the message” of the work by selling replicas.

Baltimore Museum to Solely Acquire Work by Women Artists in 2020

Citing decades of marginalization of female artists, the Baltimore Museum of Art has announced that it will only acquire works by women artists in 2020. Each of the museum’s 22 upcoming exhibitions also will center on women, and 19 of the exhibits will highlight works made exclusively by women, including at least one transgender woman, Zachary Drucker.

EUROPE

Turkey’s High Court Rules That Kariye Mosque Was Unlawfully Converted into a Museum, Setting Precedent

The Church of St. Savior in Chora outside Istanbul, Turkey, later converted into the Kariye Mosque, was designated a museum by the Turkish government in 1945. Turkey’s top administrative court, the Council of State, ruled in November 2019 that the decision to convert the mosque into a museum

was unlawful. It is up to Turkey's president to either implement the court's verdict or issue new regulations to protect the status of the 1,000-year-old building and its stunning 14th Century frescoes and mosaics. This ruling has wide-ranging consequences for other monuments in Turkey, including, significantly, the Hagia Sophia Museum, once a Christian cathedral converted into sultan Mehmed II's imperial mosque.

Thieves Escape in Limousine with Stolen Jewels

Two thieves made off with a collection of jewels from the Green Vault in the Palace of Dresden after a nearby fire potentially caused a power outage to the vaults. The perpetrators entered the building through a small window and absconded in a limousine with a collection of jewels. The Green Vault contained Europe's largest collection of Baroque pieces, including gold, rare stones and diamonds. Although authorities still are investigating the number and approximate value of the lost pieces, according to some reports the value of the stolen jewels could amount to more than \$1.1 billion, making this the largest museum heist in history, rivaling the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum theft.

Picasso's Electrician Is Convicted of Receiving and Concealing the Artist's Works

For the past 10 years, an Appeals Court in France has overseen a lawsuit arising out of a trove of works allegedly stored in the garage of Picasso's electrician, Pierre Le Guennec. This past week the court affirmed the convictions of Mr. Le Guennec and his wife for receiving and concealing stolen artwork by Picasso. The couple repeatedly denied stealing the artwork, claiming that Picasso left the couple a box that contained the various collages, paintings, watercolors and lithographs. Mr. Le Guennec later changed his story and claimed that Picasso's widow, Jacqueline Roque, had given him the artwork.

Twenty-Three Suspects Arrested in Grand European Artifact Looting Ring

In October 2018, construction workers at the Tempio di Apollo Aleo archaeological site in Cirò Marina, Italy, discovered a large opening in the chain-link fence surrounding the dig. Italian police collaborated with the international investigation agencies Eurojust and Europol, to arrest 23 individuals, charging them with participation in a widespread artifact trafficking scheme that first began in 2017. The raid spanned more than 80 locations in four European countries and resulted in the seizure of more than 10,000 artifacts, including vases, jars, oil lamps, jewels and coins.

Artist Wins Battle to Force German Museum to Release 3D Scan of Nefertiti Bust

Artist Cosmo Wenman won a three-year legal battle over the release a 3D scan of a bust of Nefertiti from Berlin's Egyptian Museum. Museums have been digitizing their collections and creating 3D scans in an effort to assist conservation. While many have made their scans available to the public, the Egyptian Museum declined to release its scan of the Nefertiti bust. Wenman embarked on a freedom of information campaign to force the museum to make the scan public, and is on a mission to ensure that other museums release their 3D scans and other data. Presently, he is creating his own online project that compiles all of the data for public use.

German Manufacturer Returns Lost Painting to Heirs of Jewish Collector Killed by the Nazis

Dr. Oetker, a German manufacturer of food products, returned Carl Spitzweg's painting *Der Hexenmeister* (Sorcerer and Dragon) to the heirs of its original owner, Leo Bendel. Bendel, a Jewish tobacco dealer, maintained a small art collection during his time in Berlin prior to his prosecution in 1935 and deportation to Buchenwald in 1939. While planning to escape Nazi Germany, Bendel sold some works, including *Der Hexenmeister*, to the Galerie Heinemann in Munich in 1937. Caroline Oetker purchased the painting later that year. Dr. Oetker was previously aware of the painting's history, but states that it took several years to properly identify the rightful heirs.

Another Judge Orders Freeze of Dealer Inigo Philbrick's Assets over Basquiat Scandal

Dealer Inigo Philbrick recently was accused of misleading a company owned by collector Alexander Pesko about the ownership interest in a Basquiat valued at more than \$12 million. A British court ordered a worldwide freeze of Philbrick's assets as claims continue to rise that the dealer sold or borrowed against nearly tens of millions of dollars of artwork that he did not own or have the right to sell. Three separate judges now have approved the request from three separate plaintiffs to freeze Philbrick's assets, demonstrating that Philbrick's legal troubles are far from over.

AFRICA

Cambridge College Agrees to Return Benin Bronze to Nigeria

The Jesus College in Cambridge has decided to return to Nigeria a bronze statue of a cockerel that had been on display in the college refectory. The statue allegedly was looted from the Republic of Benin in West Africa during a punitive expedition in 1897. The student union called for the return of the statue in 2016, at which time the college placed the item into storage. The director of Cambridge's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology hopes that the restitution will add momentum to the undertakings of the European museums in the Benin Dialogue Group, which supports the development of a new royal museum in Benin City.

ASIA

Chinese Museum Forced to Shut Down After Receipt of Three-Day Advance Demolition Notice

After a series of disputes with local authorities, police gave the Redtory Museum of Contemporary Art in Guangzhou, China, only three days' notice to vacate the premises or face demolition. The city is planning to construct new business towers in the Tianhe District, which encompasses the Redtory Art + Design Factory district. The museum's building was one of the last remaining Constructivist-style factories from the early days of the People's Republic of China.

Dispute over Return of a Vast Collection of German Artwork Loaned Pursuant to an Oral Contract

Maria Chen-Tu, a German collector of Taiwanese descent, loaned nearly \$300 million worth of artworks pursuant to an oral contract to Chinese businessman Ma Yue, who is refusing to return the loaned works as his Hamburg-based company, Bell Art Ltd., began insolvency proceedings in January. Ma Yue claims that the verbal agreement with Chen-Tu permitted him to organize exhibitions of the works over a period of 10 years and sell the works to interested buyers. Chen-Tu

argues that the loan was part of a cultural exchange initiative between China and Germany.

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