

# **DECLARATION ON THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF UNIVERSAL MUSEUMS: SINGULAR FAILURE OF AN ARROGANT IMPERIALIST PROJECT**

*“Culture is the soul of a nation. The illicit removal or destruction of cultural property deprives peoples of their history and tradition. Restitution is the only means that can restore damage and reinstate a sense of dignity”.*

Anastassis Mitsialis, Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations.  
(1)



*Two riders at the end of the west frieze Parthenon Marbles, Greece, now in the British Museum, London*

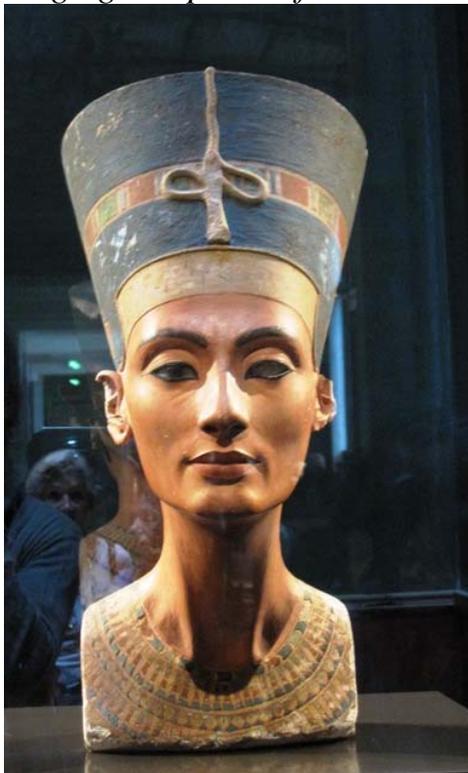
The Declaration on the Importance and Value of the Universal Museum (DIVUM) of 2002 is now 10 years old. Paul Barford has asked “how well have the ideas it embodies weathered that decade.” (2) David Gill had a few days earlier pointed out that James Cuno, a promoter of the DIVUM, had failed to address the flawed aspect of the Declaration, namely, the recent repatriation of looted antiquities by some signatories of the DIVUM. (3)

The DIVUM is a very remarkable document that differs essentially from other declarations and documents that include in their title “Universal”, such as the

[Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) . Whereas the latter aims at uplifting mankind from the miserable and abject conditions into which it has been plunged by unjust and oppressive systems and conditions, DIVUM was aimed at consolidating the results of oppressive systems and preventing the victims from attempting to reverse the results of imperialist adventures. In effect DIVUM was advancing the argument that there should be no attempt to seek to reverse the transfer of artefacts that had been acquired under colonial and other violent and oppressive conditions:

*“The international museum community shares the conviction that illegal traffic in archaeological artistic, and ethnic objects must be firmly discouraged. We should, however, recognize that objects acquired in earlier times must be viewed in the light of different sensitivities and values, reflective of that earlier era. The objects and monumental works that were installed decades and even centuries ago in museums throughout Europe and America were acquired under conditions that are not comparable with current ones.*

*Over time, objects so acquired - whether by purchase, gift, or partage - have become part of the museums that have cared for them, and by extension part of the heritage of the nations which house them. Today we are especially sensitive to the subject of a work's original context, but we should not lose sight of the fact that museums too provide a valid and valuable context for objects that were long ago displaced from their original source.” (4)*



*Nefertiti, Egypt, now in Neues Museum, Berlin, Germany*

The immediate impulse for the DIVUM was of course the desire of the British Museum to ward off the continuous political pressure by Greece regarding the restitution of the Parthenon/Elgin Marbles. But the wider implication for other claims of restitution, such as the Benin Bronzes, Rosetta Stone and Nefertiti are obvious. The British Museum which had engineered the whole project was not one of the signatories but the handwriting of the museum's officials is all over the document; the language and style of the DIVUM can be traced to Bloomsbury, London.

The Declaration was signed in December 2002 by 18 major museums including Art Institute of Chicago, State Museums, Berlin, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Louvre Museum, Paris, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

The signatories sought to provide for themselves immunity against claims for restitution of objects in their museum. That DIVUM would not acquire universal approval became very apparent as soon as it was published. Writers and commentators of various persuasions analyzed and tore the document apart. The literature on DIVUM is considerable but we need mention only a few.

George Abundu, former Director General of the National Museums of Kenya and one time Chairman of ICOM wrote as soon as the Declaration was issued:

*“It seems to me that the Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums is signed principally by a group of large museums who want to create a different pedigree of museum, largely due to fears that materials held in their collections of which the ownership is contested, will face claims for repatriation. It is a way of refusing to engage in dialogue around the issue of repatriation. If the signatories of the Declaration are trying to create the idea that their collections are held in trust for all of humanity, then why do they still call themselves by their original names? Why not “Universal Museum in Britain” rather than British Museum?” (5)*

Geoffrey Lewis, then Chairman, ICOM Ethics Committee declared

*“The real purpose of the Declaration was, however, to establish a higher degree of immunity from claims for the repatriation of objects from the collections of these museums. The presumption that a museum with universally defined objectives may be considered exempt from such demands is specious. The Declaration is a statement of self-interest, made by a group representing some of the world's richest museums; they do not, as they imply, speak for the*

*“international museum community”*. *The debate today is not about the desirability of “universal museums” but about the ability of a people to present their cultural heritage in their own territory.”* (6)

Geoffrey Lewis and George Abungu underline the unrepresentative nature of the project. A few rich and powerful, mainly Western museums got together to defend their selfish ill-gotten artefacts against the claims of States from Africa and Asia, pretending they represented the international community and rendering a great service to mankind by keeping the artefacts of other peoples from destruction. That there were no Africans or Asians signatories did not seem to have occurred to the selfish museum directors of the West.

Mark O'Neill, Head of Museums and Galleries, Glasgow, exposed in an excellent article the contradictions and inconsistencies in the practice of those supporting the notion of “universal museums” and concluded that:

*” Truly universal institutions would grapple with the possibility that, in the words of Michael Ignatieff 'the central importance of human rights in the history of human progress' is that it 'has abolished the hierarchy of civilizations and cultures' .. Only when museums embrace this as their core ethic and epistemology will they realize their potential to help create a more humane world and achieve some sort of universality.”* (7)

Tom Flynn in his fundamental study examined the historical sources of the idea of “universal museum” and declared:

*“The British Museum's recent energetic revival of its Enlightenment origins as a universal museum can be interpreted not only as an elaborate act of birthday self-congratulation, but also as a coordinated attempt to counter increasingly frequent claims for the repatriation of key objects in its collections.”*(8)

But the real weakness of the DIVUM came out quite openly as Italy forced leading American signatories of the Declaration to return objects that had been looted and had been in their museums for long. J. Paul Getty, Los Angeles, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and the Princeton University's Museum, all had to return objects to Italy. It thus became obvious that the DIVUM provided no defence against claims from owners. Indeed Italy put an American dealer and a senior Curator from J. Paul Getty Museum, Marion True on trial for illegal dealings in looted antiquities. (9) Nor were claimants from Africa and Asia, discouraged by the DIVUM from making their claims, Zahi Hawass, former Secretary-General of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities, boldly and loudly presented Egypt's claims for, inter alia, the Rosetta Stone in the British Museum and Nefertiti in the Neues Museum in Berlin. (10) That the majority of States with claims for restitution were not impressed by DIVUM was amply demonstrated by the successful Cairo Conference organized by Zahi Hawass. (11)



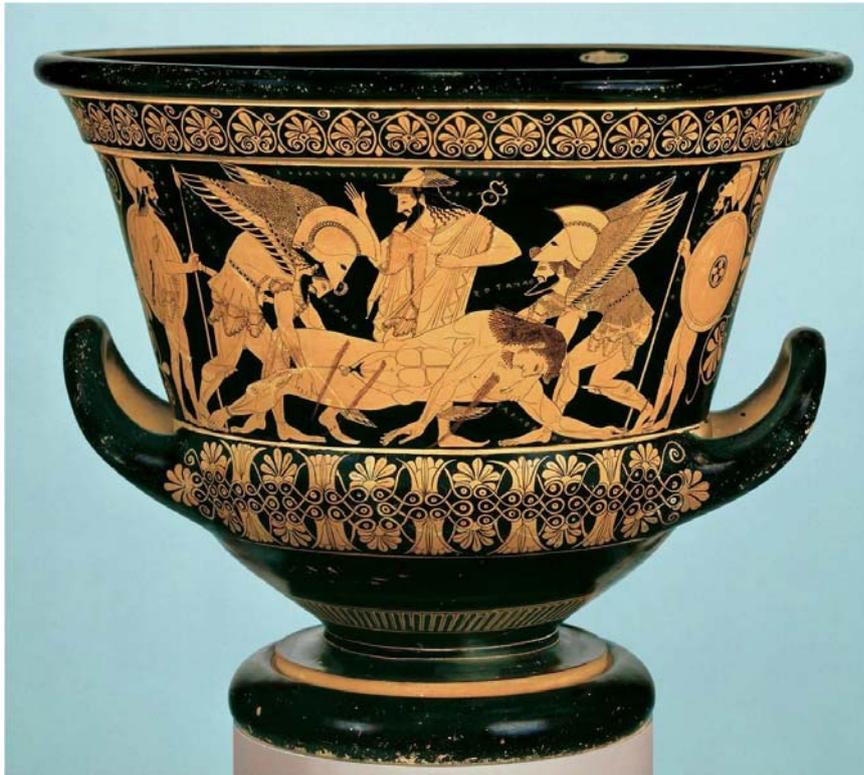
*Head of Hades, Morgantina, Italy, to be returned by J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, USA.*

With the considerable returns to Italy, observers such as David Gill began to question whether the Declaration had any longer a useful purpose or was a useless piece of paper. (12) Gill noted that since the DIVUM, the following American institutions had repatriated artefacts to their countries of origin: Cleveland Museum of Art to Italy, J. Paul Getty Museum to Greece and Italy. Louvre, Paris, to Egypt, Metropolitan Museum of Art to Italy, and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, to Italy.

Gill noted that the objects involved had been purchased since 1970 and that such repatriations showed the “flawed thinking” behind the Declaration. He queried whether the time had not come for the major museums to review their policies and wondered whether the Declaration was worthless. We responded that the document served a useful purpose insofar as it was one that clearly spelt out the arrogant and selfish position of the “great museums” as far as regards restitution:

*“This discredited document did not serve the purpose intended by the signatories and from that point of view may be considered as useless. On the other hand, the document is extremely important since we have no other modern document which spells out so well the selfishness and arrogance of the major museums, their desire to put themselves above morality and justice, their desire to take hold of the narratives concerning the cultural objects of others and to browbeat others into meek submission. The Declaration contains in clear terms and language what the major museums and their directors conceive to be their relationships with other museums, especially those in Africa and Asia. Underlying all this is a singular lack of respect for the intelligence and feelings*

*of those who seek the recovery of looted or stolen objects. There is here a definite attempt to discourage claims for restitution by invoking a superior status for the so-called universal museum and to emphasize alleged functions for humanity which should put them above all principles of morality and legality.”*  
(13)



*Euphronios Krater, one of the artefacts the Metropolitan Museum had to return to Italy in 2006* <http://topics.nytimes.com>

In the course of time, the signatories of DIVUM began to forget their document and even the staunch defenders of the universal museum hardly mention it these days. There is not a single mention of the discredited Declaration in James Cuno's latest book titled *Museums Matter: In Praise of the Encyclopedic Museum*, (14) Dr. James Cuno, former Director of the Art Institute of Chicago and now President and Chief Executive Officer of the J. Paul Getty Trust has been a fervent proponent of the notion of universal museum. The lack of any mention of the DIVUM in his latest publication is not accidental but a conscious decision to avoid a document which has been largely rejected and which is not necessary for explaining the “universal museum” which Cuno has elaborated in several publications. (15) A remarkable point is that Cuno never attempted in the least to answer objections raised by critics to his ideas and kept repeating his views in publication after publication. (16)

Much of the discussions of the decade, as regards restitution and DIVUM, - revolved around the activities of Zahi Hawass, the Parthenon/Elgin Marbles, and

the publications of James Cuno. The decade also witnessed many restitutions to Egypt, Italy, Greece, Peru and Turkey. According to one report J. Paul Getty Museum has returned since 2007 about 50 looted artefacts. (17) There were also minor returns to Nigeria from France. There was no doubt that the Age of Restitution was on its way and many supporters of restitution saw hopeful signs for the future.

[David Gill](#), [Derek Fincham](#), [Paul Barford](#), [Ton Cremers](#) and others provided a constant flow of necessary information and analyses about the issues involved and one could always rely on [Tom Flynn](#) to provide critical analyses and the historical dimensions of the debate.

Neil MacGregor, director of the British Museum, following the same ideology as Cuno, wrote articles, gave lectures and made radio programmes, including his collaboration with the BBC on the *History of the World in 100 Objects*. (18) This series was intended to boost the fading reputation of the “universal museum” that has suffered much at the hands of critics. The later were not impressed and saw in the BBC/British Museum collaboration an indirect way to strengthen the “universal museum.” Tom Flynn saw in the project:

*“A nice well-meaning Radio Four series it may appear, but behind the scenes at the museum MacGregor's BBC project is a rearguard action that Sun Tzu would have been proud of. What's at stake are the epistemological foundations of his institution. If MacGregor deserves praise at all, it is for adopting a cannier strategy to achieve his ends than the blizzard of dismal 'anti-restitutionist' publications launched on the world by James Cuno, provocative director of the Art Institute of Chicago.”*(19)

Another critic saw the project as diversion from the real situation where the Western museums were keeping the cultural artefacts of others:

*“The project appears to be aimed at diverting attention from the fact that the tide of history is moving against the illegitimate detention of the cultural objects of others. It is aimed at impressing the masses about the alleged indispensable role of the major museums and gathering support for their continuing possession that is tainted with illegality and illegitimacy. In the process, public interest for the museum would be stimulated and information about the objects as considered necessary would be produced.”* (20)

Though the BBC and the British Museum project may have delighted and entertained the British public, it does not seem to have affected the discussions on restitution.

The DIVUM in its very first paragraph requests us not to judge past acquisitions of artefacts by present standards and values but by those of their period of acquisition. Nowhere do we meet this argument so often as in the discussions on restitution of artefacts. What is really remarkable about DIVUM is that it came after some forty years of African Independence and uses a language that is reminiscent of the heydays of colonialism. What the Declaration is saying is that we should not disturb the order in the museum world left by colonialism. Objects taken away from Africa and Asia in the colonial period, often with great violence, must be left where they are, irrespective of the circumstances of their acquisition. This conveys the popular idea that we cannot change history or the past or apply our present values and ideas to historical events.



*Queen Mother-Idia, Benin, Nigeria, now in Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin, Germany.*

As we have always argued, claims for the restitution of artefacts are not attempts to change past events. What we seek to effect is a modification of the present imbalance where European and Americans have African artefacts that were undoubtedly looted or stolen from us and left us with few or none of our own cultural icons. We are not interested in the past *per se*. We want correction of a present situation that no doubt has roots in the colonial past. We are not dealing with the past but the present. A situation where the Berlin Museum of Ethnology has more Benin Bronzes than Benin City must surely be seen by all as wrong. Is there any reason why the British Museum should keep the best artefacts that are records of Benin history?

Fixation on the past makes many Westerners unable to understand the Africans' present needs. Many do not understand that our frustration and anger are fuelled by the continuing detention of our cultural artefacts in Berlin, London, Paris and New York; that our efforts are not directed against the notorious British invasion

of Benin in 1897 but the present effects of that invasion: thousands of our best artefacts in Western museums and homes. It seems almost as if in the transmission of our messages, a transformation occurs to our words. When we speak in present indicative, Westerners seem to hear the past historic.



*Rosetta Stone, Egypt, now in the British Museum, London, United Kingdom.*

We do not want to undo history. That is clearly not feasible. Nor do we want to judge history. We are concerned with our museums that are half-empty and do not have the best artefacts because these have been looted or stolen and now adorn private homes or museums in Berlin, London, Paris and New York. The inability or unwillingness of many Westerners to understand the Africans desire to have our artefacts back is what we find amazing. This inability transcribes the survival and persistence of colonialist ideologies in many museum circles. The thinking in these circles is always behind that of the general political development and explains why the DIVUM could be conceived in 2002.

Anytime one asks for the return of an object from a Western museum there is an out-cry: “You want to empty our museums”. This is clearly the figment of the imagination of guilt-ridden and over-anxious “universal museum” directors. It seems to have no effect to assure the British Museum and others that no one has the intention or desire to empty these Western institutions of all their ill-acquired artefacts. Some of the iconic artefacts surely must be returned to the countries of origin as demanded by various international bodies, including ICOM.

As mentioned already, the motivation behind DIVUM was the need for the British Museum to counter attack Greek political pressure. In this regard, DIVUM has woefully failed. The Declaration did not discourage Greece from making its demand for the return of the Parthenon/Elgin Marbles. Greece has gained since 2002 more international support in its effort to recover the Marbles. The Athens International Conference on the Return of Cultural Objects to their Countries of Origin (Athens 17-18 March, 2008) supported the Greek claim and concluded that *"Cultural heritage constitutes an inalienable part of a people's sense of self and of community, functioning as a link between the past, the present and the future"*. (21)

The United Nations and UNESCO have continued to support Greece in its endeavour to secure the return of the Parthenon Marbles. The UN General Assembly has passed countless resolutions urging the return of cultural artefacts to their countries of origin. The latest General Assembly resolution, A/RES/67/80, titled "Return or restitution of cultural property to the country of origin, was adopted unanimously on 12 December, 2012. The resolution had been co-sponsored by 98 Member States including Canada, Italy, Mexico, Russia, Spain, and the United States of America. (22)

The retrogressive ideas of the DIVUM persist in some museum circles even if not clearly articulated as in the writings of James Cuno. His latest book suggests however that even he seems to be indirectly and slowly withdrawing from such untenable positions. (23) As we write, we have received information that the J. Paul Getty Foundation where Cuno is Chief Executive Officer, has announced it will voluntarily return to Italy in 2014 the head of Hades, looted from Morgantina. (24) Surely, if any further proof were required of the failure of the Declaration on the Value and Importance of the Universal Museums, this must be it. When the high priest of the DIVUM abandons its main objective, no requiem seems necessary.

But how is this development to be interpreted since very little information and details have been provided? Has Cuno now abandoned his aggressive stance towards source countries? Is he renouncing the following statement in his book, *Who owns Antiquity?*

*"I question the premise of nationalist retentionist cultural property laws: that it is the right of sovereign nations to legislate the protection of and access to whatever they consider to be their cultural property, that which they claim to be important to their national identities and self-esteem....Antiquities are ancient artifacts of times and cultures long preceding the history of the modern nation-state. And in all but a very few cases, they have no obvious relation to that state other than the accident of geography: they happen to have been found within its modern borders."* (25)

Has Cuno now abandoned this hostility to claims by source countries? What about all the attacks against the Italians and their government? We are never likely to read a clear statement from the most publicised supporter of the DIVUM that he has changed his mind on anything. But his style is changing since he became CEO of the J. Paul Getty Trust. He no more attacks directly. His language is moderate and he even shakes hands with cultural personnel who come to collect their looted artefacts. His public relations image has undoubtedly improved.

[http://www.artsjournal.com/culturegrrl/2013/01/gettys\\_latest\\_repatriation\\_plu.html](http://www.artsjournal.com/culturegrrl/2013/01/gettys_latest_repatriation_plu.html)



*James Cuno, left, and right, Pavlos Yeroulanos, Greece's Minister of Culture and Tourism C. J. Paul Getty Trust*

Some will immediately restrict this restitution to artefacts acquired after 1970. After all, illegal import, export or transfer of ownership of cultural property effected contrary to the provisions of The Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970) after its entry into force were considered illicit before the DIVUM. The Convention was not mentioned in the discredited Declaration presumably because in 2002 many Western States had not ratified the Convention. (Belgium 2009, Germany 2007, Iceland 2004, Netherlands 2009, Norway 2007, Sweden 2003 and Switzerland 2005.). A restrictive interpretation of the J.Paul Getty restitution would have the advantage of saving all pre-1970 acquisitions like the Parthenon Marble, and the Benin Bronzes from further questions. Most of the important and contested cases of restitution involved acquisitions before 1970. This time-restricted interpretation would also be in conformity with the discredited DIVUM. Such an interpretation would suit many Westerners, even the progressives, who find it difficult to accept that artefacts stolen/looted by their predecessors that now are in their museums

should be returned. Their moral objection to stealing/looting seems restricted to the present.

Whatever may be Cuno's position now as regards restitution, it is clear that he is not following openly the line of DIVUM which is not even mentioned these days.

The tide has clearly changed in favour of restitution. France has restored Korean manuscripts looted in 1866; Yale University has returned Peruvian artefacts that had been in the USA since 1912; and Egypt has recovered over the last decade some 5000 artefacts wrongfully taken from the country. Several American museums and universities have returned looted artefacts to Italy and to Greece. The Brooklyn Museum has returned some 4,500 pre-Columbian artefacts taken from Costa Rica a century ago even though Costa Rica had not asked for them. China, Egypt, Greece, Peru, Nigeria and other States have established a conference to press for cases of restitution and submitted lists of objects to be returned to their countries of origin. Turkey's recent efforts to recover its looted artefacts appear to be successful and the Germans have returned the Bogazkoy Sphinx which they had kept for several decades.

The past years have shown that the *Declaration on the Value and Importance of Universal Museums* was an ill-conceived project that has miserably failed but in the process has awakened the peoples of Africa and Asia to the fact that the colonialist and imperialist project may have failed but pockets of resistance to true independence survive in certain circles in the Western world. Recent Turkish efforts to recover its looted artefacts may clarify the unbalanced relationships. Tom Flynn is surely right when he states:

*"Whether the signatories to the declaration considered how their joint utterance might be received by the international cultural community, or the extent to which it might polarise museum professionals remains unclear. However, it is hard to see how a potentially divisive and provocative policy document could have been constructed with such scant regard for the broader museum community, which was not consulted."* (26)

Very few would dare challenge the view expressed by Steven M. Dettelbach, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio:

*"I want every museum, every business and every school child here in Toledo to see and understand that today is about living up to a very basic principle. When you find out that something is not rightfully yours – no matter how special, no matter how beautiful or no matter how costly that thing might be – you give it back".* (27)

The *Los Angeles Times* reports that “*In the wake of a scandal over its acquisition of looted antiquities, the [J. Paul Getty Museum](#) is trying to verify the ownership histories of 45,000 antiquities and publish the results in the museum's online collections database.*”(28)

When a major signatory of the DIVUM, one of the richest museums, now headed by the most prolific and articulate supporter of the nefarious project, declares publicly its intention to examine the legitimacy and legality of 45,000 of its own acquisitions, then it becomes obvious that the DIVUM has been finally laid to rest. Amen.

With this inglorious demise of the DIVUM, Western museums may now consider doing what they should have done already in 1960, the year of African independence: return some of the symbolic and iconic artefacts of the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America and start building with them beneficial relationships based on mutual respect and free from racism.

Kwame Opoku, 25 January, 2013.



*Commemorative head of an Oba, Benin, Nigeria, now in Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA*

1. Presentation by Ambassador by Anastassis Mitsialis, Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations, of the Resolution titled, “Return or restitution of cultural property to the country of origin “A/RES/67/80, 12 Dec. 2012. 2. Ten Years Old: Declaration on the importance and value of universal museums” <http://culturalpropertyrepat.blogspot>
2. “Ten Years old: Declaration on the importance and value of universal museums”, <http://culturalpropertyrepat.blogspot>
3. David Gill, [Universal Museums: Flawed Thinking](#)
4. See attached Annex.
5. *ICOM News*, No. 1. 2004 <http://icom.museum/universal>  
See latest interview of Dr. Abungu by Tom Flynn “Georges Okello Abungu at Forum d'Avignon”<http://www.modernghana.com>
6. <http://icom.museum/universal>
7. Mark O'Neill, “Enlightenment museum - universal or merely global?”  
<http://www.le.ac.uk/ms/>.
8. Tom Flynn, “The Universal Museum: a valid model for the 21st century?”  
<http://www.tomflynn.co.uk/UniversalMuseum.pdf>, Tom Flynn, *The Universal Museum A valid model for the 21st century?* 2010, p.29
9. K. Opoku, “Returned Stolen/Looted Art Displayed by Italy: S Lesson for African and other Countries?”  
[www.museumnews.net/link.asp?](http://www.museumnews.net/link.asp?).
10. K. Opoku, “Return of the Rosetta Stone to Egypt Limits the Greed of the Self-Styled “Universal Museums”,  
<http://www.modernghana.com>
- K. Opoku, “Zahi Hawass Strikes Again”  
<http://www.modernghana.com/news/242484/1/zahi-hawass-strikes-again.html>  
Readers new to the debate on restitution, may wish to read about Zahi Hawass and Egypt’s demands for the Rosetta Stone, Nefertiti and other artefacts. The responses from Western museums show survivals of the DIVUM thinking.
11. K. Opoku, “[Reflections on the Cairo Conference on Restitution: Encouraging Beginning](#) “  
<http://www.modernghana.com>

12. David Gill, The Universal Museum: time for a rethink?  
[lootingmatters.blogspot.com/.../universal-museum](http://lootingmatters.blogspot.com/.../universal-museum)

13. K. Opoku. “ Is the Declaration on the Value and Importance of the “Universal Museums” now worthless? Comments on Imperialist Museology.”  
<http://www.modernghana.com/news/265620/1/is-the-declaration-on-the-value-and-importance-of-.html>

14. James Cuno, *Museums Matter: In praise of the Encyclopedic Museum*, 2011, University of Chicago Press. In course of time Cuno and the supporters of the “universal museum” stopped using this term and started using “encyclopaedic museums”. Perhaps this brings them closer to the encyclopaedists and the Enlightenment. They hope also to avoid some of the critics raised against the word “universal” since these museums are everything but “universal”. True they have stolen/looted from the whole world but does that make them “universal?”

Tom Flynn explains this change of designation thus “*Such was the controversy stirred up by the Declaration that the “universal museum” is now more commonly referred to as the “encyclopaedic museum”. Similarly, the universal museum’s perceived significance as a monument to Enlightenment thought is often used to deflect attention from its subsequent evolution as a product of colonial adventure and acquisitive imperialism*”. Note 41, p. 51, *op .cit*

15. K. Opoku, “[Affirmations and Declarations: Review of James Cuno’s Museums Matter](http://www.modernghana.com)”  
<http://www.modernghana.com>

16. K. Opoku, “Refusal of Intellectual dialogue: Comments on an Interview with James Cuno”, <http://www.modernghana.com>

17. Links to some notable restitutions in the decade. Leading website blogs on antiquities and artefacts reported and analysed fully the various restitutions of the decade.

Looting Matters, <http://lootingmatters.blogspot.com>

Portable Antiquity Collecting and Heritage Issues

<http://paul-barford.blogspot.com>

/Trafficking Culture <http://traffickingculture.org/contact>

Chasing Aphrodite <http://chasingaphrodite.com/>

Museum Security Network [www.museum-security.org/](http://www.museum-security.org/)

CulturGrrrl [http://www.artsjournal.com/culturegrrl /](http://www.artsjournal.com/culturegrrl/)

Illicit Cultural Property <http://illicit-cultural-property.blogspot.com/>

Saving Antiquities for Everyone <http://www.savingantiquities.org>

Elginism [http://www.elginism.com /](http://www.elginism.com/)

The links below may be useful and show also how widely the issue was taken up by the press generally

### **BRITAIN RETURNS TO EGYPT**

[www.news.com.au/breaking-news/egypt-retrieves-artifacts](http://www.news.com.au/breaking-news/egypt-retrieves-artifacts)

Museum Security Network, "Egypt retrieves prehistoric artifacts from Britain"  
<http://www.timesonline.co.uk>

### **FRANCE RETURNS TO BURKINA FASO**

[Recent examples of successful operations of cultural property ...](#)

[www.unesco.org/en/movable-heritage-and-museums/features...](http://www.unesco.org/en/movable-heritage-and-museums/features...)

### **FRANCE TO EGYPT - LOUVRE TO EGYPTt -**

[France Returns Ancient Treasures to Egypt : Discovery News](#)

[Return of Egyptian artefacts by Louvre re-awakens restitution debate ...](#)

[www.elginism.com/similar-cases/return-of-egyptian-artef](http://www.elginism.com/similar-cases/return-of-egyptian-artef).

[AFP: France returns stolen Louvre relics to Egypt](#)

[www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gQVU1X-7yM4...](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gQVU1X-7yM4...)

[BBC NEWS | Europe | Louvre to return Egyptian frescos](#)

[news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8299495.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8299495.stm)

### **FRANCE TO KOREA**

[Ancient Korean royal books welcomed back home-The Korea Herald](#)

[nwww.koreaherald.com/redirect.php?ud=.jsp&newsMLI...](http://nwww.koreaherald.com/redirect.php?ud=.jsp&newsMLI...)

[South Korea: Controversies on the Return of Korean Royal Books ...](#)

### **FRANCE TO NIGERIA**

K. Opoku,, 'France returns looted artefacts to Nigeria: Beginning of a long process or an isolated act?' [http://www.museum-security.org/opoku\\_france\\_nigeria.htm](http://www.museum-security.org/opoku_france_nigeria.htm)

### **GERMANY TO GREECE**

<http://www.unesco.org/>

### **GERMANY RETURNS TO TURKEY**

[. http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/2011:Germany-Turkey](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/2011:Germany-Turkey)

## **USA RETURNS TO EGYPT**

[Metropolitan Museum](#) to Egypt

[New York's Met to return 19 artifacts to Egypt: MENA | Reuters](#)

[www.reuters.com/article/2011/07/30/ozatp-egypt-antiquit](http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/07/30/ozatp-egypt-antiquit).

[Met Museum to return nineteen artefacts to Egypt » Elginism](#)

[www.elginism.com/similar-cases/met-museum-to-return-nin](http://www.elginism.com/similar-cases/met-museum-to-return-nin).

[New York Museum to return artefacts to Egypt](#)

## **USA RETURNS TO ITALY**

[Boston Museum of Fine Arts to Italy](#)

[Boston Museum of Fine Arts Returns Italian Artifacts - New York Times](#)

[www.nytimes.com/2006/09/29/arts/design/29mfa.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/29/arts/design/29mfa.html)

[MFA agrees to return disputed art to Italy - The Boston Globe](#)

[www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2006/07/28/mfa\\_agree](http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2006/07/28/mfa_agree)

[Boston Museum of Fine Arts Returns Italian Artifacts - New York Times](#)

[www.nytimes.com/2006/09/29/arts/design/29mfa.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/29/arts/design/29mfa.html)

[The Cleveland Museum of Art](#)

[Cleveland Museum of Art will return tainted antiquities to Italy ...](#)

[blog.cleveland.com/entertainment/2009/04/cleveland\\_muse](http://blog.cleveland.com/entertainment/2009/04/cleveland_muse)

[Cleveland Museum of Art strikes deal with Italy to return 14 ancient ...](#)

[www.cleveland.com/arts/index.ssf/2008/11/cleveland\\_muse](http://www.cleveland.com/arts/index.ssf/2008/11/cleveland_muse).

[Cleveland Museum of Art Returns to Italy \(2008\) « Trafficking Culture](#)

[traffickingculture.org/case\\_note/cleveland-museum-of-ar](http://traffickingculture.org/case_note/cleveland-museum-of-ar).

[Cleveland Museum of Art Returns 14 Objects to Italy | Illicit Cultural ...](#)

[illicit-cultural-property.blogspot.com/2009/04/cleveland](http://illicit-cultural-property.blogspot.com/2009/04/cleveland)

[More on Cleveland Museum's Returns to Italy: 25-Year Loans ...](#)

[www.artsjournal.com/culturegrill/2008/11/more\\_on\\_clevela](http://www.artsjournal.com/culturegrill/2008/11/more_on_clevela).

## **J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM RETURNS TO ITALY**

[Getty Museum agrees to handover of 40 artifacts to Italy - Arts ... - CBC](#)

[www.cbc.ca/news/arts/artdesign/story/2007/08/02/getty-i](http://www.cbc.ca/news/arts/artdesign/story/2007/08/02/getty-i)

[BBC NEWS | Entertainment | US to return Italian antiquities](#)

[news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/4734670.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/4734670.stm)

[\*\*J. Paul Getty Museum | CHASING APHRODITE\*\*](#)

[chasingaphrodite.com/tag/j-paul-getty-museum/](http://chasingaphrodite.com/tag/j-paul-getty-museum/)

[\*\*J. Paul Getty Museum Returns to Italy \(2007\) « Trafficking Culture\*\*](#)

[traffickingculture.org/case\\_note/j-paul-getty-museum-re](http://traffickingculture.org/case_note/j-paul-getty-museum-re).

[Metropolitan Museum of Art returns to Italy](#)

[NY's Met to \*\*return\*\* disputed \*\*Italian artifacts\*\* - TODAY.com](#)

[www.today.com/id/11476843/site/todayshow/ns/today-enter](http://www.today.com/id/11476843/site/todayshow/ns/today-enter).

[\*\*Metropolitan Museum Offers to Return 20 Disputed Works to Italy\*\*](#)

[archaeologynews.multiply.com/journal/item/341](http://archaeologynews.multiply.com/journal/item/341)

[Met to \*\*return\*\* Euphronios Krater to Italy » Elginism](#)

[www.elginism.com/similar-cases/met-to-return-euphronios](http://www.elginism.com/similar-cases/met-to-return-euphronios)

[PRINCETON UNIVERSITY RETURNS TO ITALY](#)

[Princeton University - Return - Looted Art - Italy - New York Times](#)

[www.nytimes.com/2007/10/27/arts/design/27prin.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/27/arts/design/27prin.html)

[Princeton University Art Museum voluntarily \*\*returns\*\* ancient sculpture](#)

[www.princeton.edu/main/news/archive/S18/36/55G42/index](http://www.princeton.edu/main/news/archive/S18/36/55G42/index).

[Princeton University Returns Art to Italy](#)

[planetprinceton.com/2012/01/26/princeton-university-ret](http://planetprinceton.com/2012/01/26/princeton-university-ret)

[Princeton Art Museum Agrees to \*\*Return 8 Antiquities to Italy ...\*\*](#)

[Toledo Museum of Art to Italy](#)

[Kaplis Returns to Italy « The Toledo Museum of Art](#)

[www.toledomuseum.org/2013/01/10/kaplis-returns-to-italy...](http://www.toledomuseum.org/2013/01/10/kaplis-returns-to-italy...)

[United States Returns Toledo Museum of Art's Smuggled Vase to ...](#)

[www.artandcointv.com/blog/2013/01/united-states-returns..](http://www.artandcointv.com/blog/2013/01/united-states-returns..)

[United States returns Toledo Museum of Art's smuggled sixth ...](#)

[www.artdaily.org/index.asp?int\\_sec=11&int\\_new=6...](http://www.artdaily.org/index.asp?int_sec=11&int_new=6...)

[\*\*USA RETURNS TO PERU\*\*](#)

[YALE UNIVERSITY TO PERU](#)

[Finders Not Keepers: Yale Returns Artifacts To Peru](#)

<http://www.npr.org/2012/01/01/143653050/finders-not-keepers-yale-returns-artifacts-to-peru>

[Finders Not Keepers: Yale Returns Artifacts To Peru  
www.elginism.com/similar-cases/final-machu-picchu-artef.](http://www.elginism.com/similar-cases/final-machu-picchu-artef)

[Last of Yale's Machu Picchu Artifacts Returned to Peru After Years of ...  
blogs.artinfo.com/artintheair/2012/11/16/last-of-yales-](http://blogs.artinfo.com/artintheair/2012/11/16/last-of-yales-)

[Yale agrees to return Machu Picchu artefacts to Peru - Telegraph  
www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/peru/81...](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/peru/81...)

## **USA RETURNS TO TURKEY**

[Dallas Museum of Art returns to Turkey](http://www.dallasnews.com)

<http://www.dallasnews.com>

<http://lootingmatters.blogspot> Museum returns stolen artefacts

<http://www.iol.co.za/scitech/science/discovery/museum-returns-stolen-artefacts-1.1436435>

[Penn Museum](http://www.penn.museum) an "indefinite-term loan" to Turkey, not an ownership transfer.

[Penn museum lends possibly plundered items to Turkey](http://www.philly.com/philly/news/local/20120906_Penn_museum_1)

[www.philly.com/philly/news/local/20120906\\_Penn\\_museum\\_1.](http://www.philly.com/philly/news/local/20120906_Penn_museum_1)

[Penn Museum Strengthens Partnership with Turkey, Agrees to  
University of Pennsylvania Returns Looted Trojan Antiquities to Turkey](http://culturalpropertylaw.wordpress.com/2012/09/13/plundered-)

[culturalpropertylaw.wordpress.com/2012/09/13/plundered-](http://culturalpropertylaw.wordpress.com/2012/09/13/plundered-)

<http://www.penn.museum/press-releases.html>

<http://www.penn.museum/press-releases.html>

18. Neil MacGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, 2010, Penguin Books, Limited, London,

19. Tom Flynn, "History of the World in Looted Objects", *Artknows*, Tuesday, January 12, 2010 <http://tom-flynn.blogspot.co>

20. K. Opoku, "A History of the World with 100 Looted Objects of Others: Global Intoxication?"

<http://www.modernghana.com/news/262643/1/a-history-of-the-world-with-100-looted-objects-of-.html>

21. Athens International Conference on the "Return of Cultural Objects to their Countries of Origin"  
[www.unesco.org/culture/laws/pdf/Conclusions\\_Athens\\_en.p.](http://www.unesco.org/culture/laws/pdf/Conclusions_Athens_en.p.) .
22. General Assembly resolution, A/RES/67/80, titled "Return or restitution of cultural property to the country of origin."
23. See our comments on Cuno's latest book in K.Opoku," Affirmations and Declarations Review of James Cuno's Museums Matter "  
[www.modernghana.com/.../affirmations-and-dec](http://www.modernghana.com/.../affirmations-and-dec)
24. <http://illicit-cultural-property.blogspot.nl/2013/01/getty-announces-return-of-morgantina.html>  
 January 11, 2013  
<http://lootingmatters.blogspot.co.at/2013/01/the-head-from-morgantina-intellectual.html>  
 The Getty Trust, Press Release titled "The J. Paul Getty Museum Announces the Return of a Head of Hades from about 400–300 B.C."  
<http://www.getty.edu/about/index.html>  
[http://www.artsjournal.com/culturegrrl/2013/01/gettys\\_latest\\_repatriation\\_plu.html](http://www.artsjournal.com/culturegrrl/2013/01/gettys_latest_repatriation_plu.html)
25. James Cuno. *Who owns Antiquity?*, Princeton University Press, 2008, p.146  
 See also K, Opoku, "[Do Present-Day Egyptians Eat the same Food as Tuthankamun? Review of James Cuno's Who Own Antiquity?](http://www.modernghana.com/news/168893/1/do-present-day-egyptians-eat-the-same-food-as-tuth.html)"  
<http://www.modernghana.com/news/168893/1/do-present-day-egyptians-eat-the-same-food-as-tuth.html>
26. Tom Flynn, *op. cit.* note 4, p.47.
27. Steven M. Dettelbach, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio Steven, at the ceremony of return to Italy of a looted vase that had been in the Toledo Museum of Art.  
 CE Press release: '[Transfer ceremony clears way for looted ancient vessel to be returned to Italy](http://paul-barford.blogspot.com/2013/01/us-museum-belatedly-honours-very-basic.html)', Toledo, OH January 8, 2013.  
<http://paul-barford.blogspot.com/2013/01/us-museum-belatedly-honours-very-basic.html>  
[http://www.artdaily.org/index.asp?int\\_sec=11&int\\_new=60010](http://www.artdaily.org/index.asp?int_sec=11&int_new=60010)
28. Janson Felch, "Getty Museum review targets its antiquities collection"  
<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/>
- Chasing Aphrodite* "The Getty's Looted Amber: A Window into the Museum's Deepening Dilemma <http://chasingaphrodite.com/>

## ANNEX

### DECLARATION ON THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF UNIVERSAL MUSEUMS (2002)

The international museum community shares the conviction that illegal traffic in archaeological, artistic and ethnic objects must be firmly discouraged. We should, however, recognize that objects acquired in earlier times must be viewed in the light of different sensitivities and values, reflective of that earlier era. The objects and monumental works that were installed decades and even centuries ago in museums throughout Europe and America were acquired under conditions that are not comparable with current ones.

Over time, objects so acquired—whether by purchase, gift, or partage—have become part of the museums that have cared for them, and by extension part of the heritage of the nations which house them. Today we are especially sensitive to the subject of a work's original context, but we should not lose sight of the fact that museums too provide a valid and valuable context for objects that were long ago displaced from their original source.

The universal admiration for ancient civilizations would not be so deeply established today were it not for the influence exercised by the artifacts of these cultures, widely available to an international public in major museums. Indeed, the sculpture of classical Greece, to take but one example, is an excellent illustration of this point and of the importance of public collecting. The centuries-long history of appreciation of Greek art began in antiquity, was renewed in Renaissance Italy, and subsequently spread through the rest of Europe and to the Americas. Its accession into the collections of public museums throughout the world marked the significance of Greek sculpture for mankind as a whole and its enduring value for the contemporary world. Moreover, the distinctly Greek aesthetic of these works appears all the more strongly as the result of their being seen and studied in direct proximity to products of other great civilizations.

Calls to repatriate objects that have belonged to museum collections for many years have become an important issue for museums. Although each case has to be judged individually, we should acknowledge that museums serve not just the citizens of one nation but the people of every nation. Museums are agents in the development of culture, whose mission is to foster knowledge by a continuous process of reinterpretation. Each object contributes to that process. To narrow the focus of museums whose collections are diverse and multifaceted would therefore be a disservice to all visitors.

Signed by the Directors of:  
The Art Institute of Chicago  
Bavarian State Museum, Munich (Alte Pinakothek,  
Neue Pinakothek)  
State Museums, Berlin  
Cleveland Museum of Art  
J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art  
Louvre Museum, Paris  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

**Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence**  
**Philadelphia Museum of Art**  
**Prado Museum, Madrid**  
**Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam**  
**State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg**  
**Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid**  
**Whitney Museum of American Art, New York**