

News Round-up

THE WORLD LAST MONTH



Vertigo at Guantanamo (2016), a work by the Guantanamo detainee Ammar al Baluchi, who has been banned from showing his art publicly

US RETAIL GIANT RETURNS IRAQI ARTEFACTS

The US arts and crafts retailer Hobby Lobby handed over nearly 4,000 antiquities to the Iraqi ambassador in Washington, DC, for repatriation to Iraq. The firm bought the objects in 2010 for \$1.6m from a dealer who has not been publicly identified. The antiquities were shipped to the US via the United Arab Emirates and Israel in crates that were falsely labelled. At the conclusion of a US investigation into the purchase last July, Hobby Lobby was fined \$3m for illegally importing artefacts into the country. The retailer is owned

by the Green family, evangelical Christians who opened the Museum of the Bible in Washington, DC, last November to show biblical artefacts.

PAKISTANI PRISONER CANNOT SHOW HIS ART

A prisoner in Guantanamo Bay who stands accused of helping to plan and finance the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US will not be allowed to publicly display the art he makes in his cell, a military commission judge ruled. Ammar al Baluchi, a citizen of Pakistan, previously showed his work in an exhibition at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New

York, which closed in January. Al Baluchi has been in US custody for 15 years; no trial is currently scheduled.

NEW PERFORMANCE ART FOR SAN FRANCISCO

The San Francisco-based collector Carla Emil revealed plans for a new foundation called C Project that will commission artists to create new, site-specific performance pieces in the city. The Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson will inaugurate the foundation's activities in November with a three-day recitation of love songs at the Women's Building in the city's Mission District. "I complained for a long time about San Francisco's lack of venues like the Park Avenue Armory in New York and the Turbine Hall at London's Tate Modern, which present genre-spanning, ambitious art projects," Emil told the news website Artnet. "And then I decided I would [launch performances like theirs] myself."

PACIFIC STANDARD TIME GENERATES \$430M

The second edition of Pacific Standard Time, a series of exhibitions of Latin American and Latino art that was held at 70 museums and galleries in Los Angeles and southern California from September 2017 to January 2018, raised \$430m for the region, an economic impact analysis found. Around 2.7 million visitors came to the shows, 30% of them from outside California, generating income across the arts, hotel, transport and retail industries as well as in tax revenue for the state.

NEW BLOOMBERG GRANTS FOR THE ARTS

Bloomberg Philanthropies, a grant-making body set up by the media entrepreneur and former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, announced that it will expand its arts funding programme to seven further cities in the US. Around \$43m will be awarded to 200 small and medium-sized cultural organisations in Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Denver, New



The statue of Captain Cook in Sydney that was vandalised in 2017

Orleans, Pittsburgh and Washington, DC. Recipients will be provided with "general operating support" and "arts management training".

CONTROVERSIAL BRAZILIAN COLLECTOR OFFERS ART TO GOVERNMENT

The mining magnate Bernardo Paz offered the Brazilian government part of the art collection he displays at Inhotim, a sculpture park and botanical garden with several galleries dotted across the landscape in the state of Minas Gerais. The art has been offered in lieu of payment for more than \$150m in liabilities left by Paz's companies in the mining and steel industries, the BBC reported. The collector is appealing the nine-year jail sentence he received last year when a court found him guilty of using \$98.5m received as donations to Inhotim to meet the obligations of his other companies. If the government accepts the offer, it is expected that it will lend the art it takes from Paz back to the organisation that runs Inhotim and will not remove it from public display.

CRACKDOWN ON CUBAN ARTISTS

Cuban artists taking part in an independently organised, ten-day art show in Havana entitled #00Bienal were threatened, detained and interrogated, or had the professional credentials that allow them to work

as artists revoked. The Cuban-American artist Coco Fusco, who travelled to the Caribbean nation for the exhibition, was denied entry to the country, while the Spanish artist Diego Gil had his tourist visa revoked and was forced to leave. In the days leading up to the show, state-backed organisations described it as promoting "enemy interests in Cuba". The exhibition's organisers described it as a success but said that no second edition was planned.

PROTESTS OVER VENICE'S 'THEME-PARK' TURNSTILES

As part of a pilot project to control the flow of tourists into Venice, turnstiles were installed at the city's two main pedestrian access points. The next day, Venetian protestors dismantled them. "Venice is not a theme park," one of the protestors wrote on social media. The turnstiles were then reinstated. JoAnn Locktov, an American guide-book author who has been visiting the city for 20 years, told the Independent newspaper that the barriers are "nothing more than a distraction from the critical issues that are killing Venice: uncontrolled tourism, uncontrolled hospitality development and zero infrastructure strategy for residents, tourists and the environment. There's a lack of housing and a complete absence of respect for Venetian residents."

PLEA FOR FLORENCE TO BE PROTECTED

A group of professors, art historians and other public figures in Florence published an open letter to the city's mayor, Dario Nardella, warning that the city will soon become "like Venice" unless drastic steps are taken to regulate crowds and to stop housing in the city centre from being rented out to tourists. Residents are increasingly being forced to relocate to the outskirts, the letter warned. "The risk is that Florence will become one huge suburb with an open-air museum at its centre," they wrote.

GERMAN MUSEUMS GET NEW CODE OF CONDUCT

Germany's culture minister, Monika Grütters, gave museums a new code of conduct for handling artefacts acquired during the colonial era. It includes guidance on provenance research and restitution claims. Grütters also pledged funding for this work. The move follows the resignation last year of the art historian Bénédicte Savoy from the advisory committee of the forthcoming Humboldt Forum, which will house Berlin's non-European collections. Savoy complained of a lack of provenance research in the preparations for the new institution. She is now advising France's president, Emmanuel Macron, on how to return artefacts from French museums to Africa.



A protest against the installation of turnstiles in Venice to control pedestrians

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WILLIAM KENT, 1685–1748

The Marriage of Henry V

Pencil, ink and heightened with white on buff paper
25 ¼ x 21 ¼ inches; 641 x 540 mm, Drawn 1729
A study for the painting in the Royal Collection