Something is Confidential in the State of Christie's

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Abstract

This article is a report on the appearance of "toxic" antiquities, offered by Christie's at auctions in London and New York during 2012, which have now been identified in the confiscated archives of the convicted dealers Giacomo Medici and Robin Symes. The research aims to reconstruct the true modern story and full collecting history of seven antiquities: a bronze boar, a terracotta ship, a pair of kraters, a terracotta statue of a boy, a kylix, and a marble head. New evidence in each case presents a different version of the collecting history from that offered by Christie's. This paper, going in order through the Christie's 2012 antiquities auctions, demonstrates that in many instances the market uses the term "confidentiality" to conceal the identities of its disgraced members, and to put an end to academic or other research for the truth. It also reveals that most of the dealers, galleries, collectors and auction houses listed by Christie's as previous owners have been involved in several other cases of illicit antiquities.[1]

Keywords: Giacomo Medici, Christie's, Robin Symes, illicit antiquities, Gianfranco Becchina.

1 I am grateful for their comments and help to: Professor David W.J. Gill (University Campus Suffolk), Dr Christopher Chippindale (University of Cambridge), Emeritus Professor Patrick Boyde (University of Cambridge), the staff of the Department of Antiquities at the Fitzwilliam Museum (University of Cambridge), Dr Paolo Giorgio Ferri (Italian Ministry of Culture), Nikolas Zirganos (*Ελευθεροτυπία*, *Η Εφημερίδα των Συντακτών*), Fabio Isman (*Il Messaggero*, *The Art Newspaper*). I am also grateful to Max Bernheimer (Christie's), Andrew Gully (Sotheby's) and Senta Zeller (Jean-David Cahn AG) for their answers to my emails.

ἀλλ' ἄγε δὴ τόδε δέξαι ἐμεῦ πάρα καλὸν ἄλεισον,

Τὸν δ' αὖτε προσέειπε διάκτορος Ἀργειφόντης·
πειρᾷ ἐμεῖο γεραιὲ νεωτέρου, οὐδέ με πείσεις,
ὅς με κέλῃ σέο δῶρα παρὲξ Ἀχιλῆα δέχεσθαι.
τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ δείδοικα καὶ αἰδέομαι περὶ κῆρι
συλεύειν, μή μοί τι κακὸν μετόπισθε γένηται.

[Priam:]
"(…) But thou, o generous youth, this goblet take,
A pledge of gratitude for Hector's sake. (…)"

To whom the latent god [Hermes]: "O king, forbear
To tempt my youth, for apt is youth to err:
But can I, absent from my prince's sight,
Take gifts in secret, that must shun the light?
What from our master's interest thus we draw,
Is but a licensed theft that 'scapes the law.
Respecting him, my soul abjures the offence:
And as the crime, I dread the consequence.

HOMER, *Iliad*, 24.429, 432-436, trans. Alexander Pope (1715-1720).

Introduction: Repatriations from the Archives and Christie's Statements

In 1995, the Italian and Swiss authorities confiscated the Giacomo Medici archive in the Free Port of Geneva (Watson & Todeschini 2007:20). Later, in 2002, the same authorities confiscated the Gianfranco Becchina archive in Basel (Watson & Todeschini 2007:292). In 2006, during a raid at a villa complex maintained by the Papadimitriou family (descendants of the antiquities dealer the late Christos Michaelides), the Greek authorities confiscated the archive of the top antiquities dealers of modern times, Robin Symes and Christos Michaelides (Zirganos 2006b:44; Zirganos in Watson and Todeschini 2007:316-317).[2] These three archives – and, especially, the combined information they include (almost exclusively after 1972) - provide an unprecedented insight into the international antiquities market. Research in the archives uncovers the ways in which thousands of looted antiquities, from all over the world, were smuggled by middlemen and "laundered" by auction houses and dealers, before being acquired by museums and private collectors, in contravention of the guidelines of the 1970 UNESCO Convention[3] and the 1970 ICOM statement on Ethics of Acquisitions.

Since 2005, the Italian authorities, based on evidence from these three archives, have repatriated about 200 antiquities, from the University of Virginia (Ford 2008; Isman 2008:25; Isman 2009:87-88), Boston Museum of Fine Arts (Gill and Chippindale 2006; Silver 2010:263-264), Jean Paul Getty Museum (in three different occasions, for the first see Gill & Chippindale 2007; Gill:2010:105-106; Silver 2010:268; for the second and third see Gill 2012b and Ng & Felch 2013, respectively), Metropolitan Museum of Art (in two different occasions, for the first see Silver 2010:252-253; Gill 2010:106; for the second see Gill 2012a:64), Princeton University Museum of Art (in 2 different occasions, for the first see Gill and Chippindale 2007:224-225; Gill 2009a; Gill 2010:106-107; for the second see Gill 2012; Felch 2012a), Cleveland Museum of Art (Gill 2010:105), the Shelby White/Leon Levy private collection (Gill 2010:108; Silver 2010:272), Royal-Athena Galleries (dealer Jerome Eisenberg, see Gill 2010:107-108; Isman in Godart, De Caro & Gavrili 2008:24), the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Padgett 1983-86 [1991]; Padgett 1984; Gill 2009b:85; Gill & Tsirogiannis 2011:32; Boehm 2011) and the Dietrich Von Bothmer private collection of vase fragments in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Gill 2012a:64). Recently, Toledo Museum of Art agreed to return an Etruscan Hydria to Italy (The United States Attorney's Office 2012), while Dallas Museum of Art announced the return of 5 antiquities to Italy and 1 antiquity to Turkey (Richter 2012; Gill 2013b). From the numerous antiquities depicted in the three confiscated archives, the Greek authorities have managed to repatriate only 2 so far, both from the Getty Museum in 2007 (Gill & Chippindale 2007:205, 208; Felch & Frammolino 2011:290).[4]

Following their repatriation, these antiquities were published and exhibited with acknowledgement of their looted past (Godart & De Caro 2007; Godart, De Caro & Gavrili 2008), revealing the true nature of most antiquities in the confiscated archives. So incriminating is the evidence in the three archives presented by the authorities during the negotiations for each object that in no case has any museum, private collection or dealer tried to defend their acquisitions in court. The reason is that the photographic evidence presents, in most cases, the *oldest* part of the object's modern collecting history ("provenance," its first appearance after being looted; smashed and covered with soil, or recently restored, without any previously documented legal collecting history. An attempt to defend their illicit acquisitions during a court case would have brought (apart from the inevitable surrender

2 I had the honour to serve as an archaeologist at the Greek police Art Squad from August 2004 till December 2008 and to participate in the raiding team in Schinousa island where the Symes-Michaelides archive was found.

3 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, Paris, 14 November 1970.

4 I was the archaeologist in the Greek Task Force team which repatriated 4 antiquities in total (2 were not in the archives) from the Getty Museum between July 2006- June 2007, among other repatriation cases. The other members were Mr Ioannis Diotis, the former public prosecutor, the late Giorgos Grigoris, former head of the Greek police Art Squad, Mr Nikolas Zirganos, investigative journalist, Mr Konstantinos Kyriopoulos, then legal advisor to the Minister of Culture, Mrs Eirini Stamatoudi, lawyer.

of the object(s)) a long-lasting negative publicity for the museums, private collectors and dealers involved, additional embarrassment, an extra financial loss and the possibility that their and others' involvement in more cases of looted antiquities would be revealed. The subsequent returns in 2012 and 2013 from the Getty Museum to Italy and from the Metropolitan Museum of Art to Italy in 2012 prove that point.

Although each repatriation case attracted massive media attention (Miles 2008:357; Felch & Frammolino 2011:284) and non-specialists around the world began to be informed about the true nature of the modern international antiquities market, the market itself reacted badly. Having missed the 1970 UNESCO opportunity to reform, the market is now losing a second chance to change its attitude, since it is continuing to offer antiquities depicted in the three confiscated archives (Gill & Tsirogiannis 2011).

Christie's auction house, through Max Bernheimer, its current International Department Head (Antiquities) in New York, declared (Tully 2006):

> Media attention has been focused on the contested pieces but there are plenty of things that are free of repatriation issues and those are the things that people are hot after.

However, Christie's auctioned on 14 April 2011, in London, a Roman marble head of Domitilla Minor, Vespasian's daughter (Christie's 2011:168-169, lot 261), which was offered as 'A Roman marble portrait head of a woman […] Possibly Livia or Agrippina […]', with the following collecting history:

> Private collection, Switzerland, circa 1975. Acquired by the present owner in Switzerland in 1988.

The marble head was sold,[5] but soon after was proved to have been stolen from a statue at the Sabratha Museum, west of Tripoli, Libya (Bailey 2011). The Roman head has been recovered in Italy by the Carabinieri and was returned to the Libyan authorities on 21 January 2012 by the then Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti, during his official visit to Libya (Artdaily.org 2012).

After his 2006 statement, Bernheimer made another statement (Loader Wilkinson 2011):

> Buying through an auction house, where due diligence is incredibly thorough and everything is openly published in the catalogue, limits the possibilities over ownership and repatriation issues later on.

In April 2012 U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement released the following statement (ICE 2012):

> The first investigation tied to Becchina is the case involving the two 2,000-year-old ceramic vessels. In 2009, investigators learned about the sale of an Attic red-figured pelike, circa 480-460 B.C. for $80,500, and a red-figured situla, circa 365-350 B.C. for $40,000, at Christie's New York auction house. The investigation determined that these two objects were looted from archaeological [sic] sites in Italy and smuggled into Switzerland. The ownership of the objects was transferred before they arrived in a Beverly Hills, Calif., gallery and subsequent consignment to Christie's in New York. HSI special agents in New York seized the objects, and upon authentication, both were forfeited for return.
>
> The second investigation tied to Becchina involved a Roman marble statue, a janiform herm that was believed to have been smuggled out of Italy into the United States via Switzerland. HSI special agents in New York initiated an investigation into the sculpture which had been auctioned and sold at Christie's for $26,250. It was later seized at Christie's pursuant to a seizure warrant obtained by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York and in May 2011, forfeited to HSI for return to Italy.

A spokesperson for Christie's made the following statement (Gill 2009c):

> …the transparency of the public auction system combined with the efforts from the U.S. ICE and foreign governments, in this matter, led to the identification of two stolen artefacts.

It is of major importance that these Christie's acknowledged that these objects, identified from seized photographic archives, were "stolen" (Gill 2011). However, these are only few of the total number of cases which demonstrate that the world-leading auction houses (Christie's, Sotheby's and Bonhams) are still offering antiquities which are depicted in the three confiscated archives and raise repatriation issues (Gill & Tsirogiannis 2011; Tsirogiannis, unpublished Ph.D. thesis).

5 Normally, only antiquities which remained unsold during an auction or were withdrawn before an auction are omitted from the final online 'Result' list of an auction, but although sold, the Sabratha Museum head does not appear in the 'Results' list of Christie's website.

Having seen the fate of Becchina objects in Christie's (ICE 2012), we may now explore the current situation in the international antiquities market, using as a case study research on the collecting history of antiquities depicted in the confiscated Medici and Symes-Michaelides archives and offered by Christie's during 2012, in three auctions, in London and New York. Giacomo Medici has been found guilty by Italy's highest court for conspiracy, illegal export and receiving stolen goods (Watson & Todeschini 2007:283) and was sentenced to eight years (Felch & Frammolino 2011:253) and 10 million euros fine (Felch 2012b). Robin Symes was convicted to two years' imprisonment for contempt of court (Watson & Todeschini 2007:258), after Christos Michaelides died in a "sudden and peculiar" (Zirganos 2003:15) accident (Watson and Todeschini 2007:248) on July 4, 1999. The collecting history ("provenance") of the seven identified antiquities was not fully presented in the Christie's auction catalogues, since the involvement of these dealers and other significant issues and details were omitted.

My sources are as follows. Part of the Medici archive was made public by the website of the Carabinieri (True 2011) for a time. Part of the Symes-Michaelides archive was published by Nikolas Zirganos (2006b). Since 2006, several publications included images from the confiscated archives (e.g. Watson & Todeschini 2006 and 2007; Isman 2009; Felch & Frammolino 2011). The Medici, Becchina and Symes-Michaelides archives were publicly presented by the Italian judicial and police authorities during the trials of Giacomo Medici, Gianfranco Becchina, Marion True, Robert Hecht and dozens of Italian looters in Rome, in the period 2000-2011.[6]

Four of the identifications took place before the auctions. For these, I notified Dr Paolo Giorgio Ferri, the public prosecutor who contributed vastly to the Italian repatriations of looted antiquities identified in the three confiscated archives, from the Getty Museum, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Shelby White Collection, Royal-Athena Galleries (dealer Jerome Eisenberg). Dr Ferri, who is now working on illicit antiquities cases for the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, was very interested in the identifications and responded that the Ministry would make all the necessary steps.

The remaining 3 antiquities were identified after the auctions, while researching for the production of this article.

Christie's Auction of 8 June 2012 in New York

On 8 June 2012 Christie's offered for sale at their New York branch 261 lots (Christie's 2012a). According to Christie's, 165 lots and a part of two other lots (nos. 180 and 185) had no pre-1970 collecting history, for 16 lots and parts of two other lots (nos. 180 and 185) it was unclear if they had any collecting history before 1970, and only 78 appeared to have a pre-1970 collecting history. Christie's estimations totalled (by my calculations) $8,052,500-$12,350,500 from the sale of all the lots, and although 79 lots remained unsold, the remaining 182 lots were sold for a total of $8,968,375.

Among the unsold antiquities appear 4 objects (3 lots) which were identified in the Medici archive:

A Greek Bronze Boar

A bronze figure of a boar first surfaced in 1987 as one of the 202 antiquities that the "Thetis Foundation" lent for an exhibition at the Museum of Art and History of Geneva (Zimmermann 1987:37-38, no. 72). The boar stands on a curved bronze base, below which emerges a bronze hook. The antiquity was depicted on a four-legged base of white plastic (Zimmermann 1987:113). The accompanying text (Zimmermann 1987:37-38) makes no reference to the individual from whom the "Thetis Foundation" acquired the figure, nor to any other previous collecting history related to the object. The boar is first presented as "Art Corinthien" (p. 37), but later on the same page is described as "corinthien ou sicyonien." A separate note, "Epire?" (p. 37) apparently expresses a different and very broad find-spot (?) for the boar. In the "Index" (p. 103) its region is presented as "Corinthie."

Four years after Zimmermann's publication, the Thetis Foundation consigned 144 antiquities at Sotheby's London branch (Sotheby's 1991:8-73). These antiquities were presented in 124 lots (lots 1-124) at the auction of May 23rd 1991, which bore the code name "Thetis."[7] All the consigned Thetis Foundation antiquities had previously appeared in Zimmermann's 1987 publication, but for 121 of them, Sotheby's mentioned no collecting history other than their appearance in this publication. In this big group of antiquities was the same bronze figure of a boar (Sotheby's 1991:32-33, lot 54), which was presented as:

> A Greek bronze figure of a sow, (female boar), perhaps Corinthian, […], standing on a thin rectangular base, a large hook for attachment below it […].

This time the boar is presented standing on a modern

6 I am grateful to the journalist Mr Nikolas Zirganos for providing me access to the Medici and Symes-Michaelides archives and to the Greek police Art Squad for accessing their entire archive.

7 Each antiquities auction sale receives a unique sale number and a unique code name, usually of an ancient Greek god or goddess. It appears that this particular Sotheby's auction used the code name 'Thetis' because 'Thetis Foundation' here consigned antiquities at Sotheby's for the first time.

wooden base, evidently made exclusively for this figurine, since the base's upper surface follows the curve of the boar's bronze base, incorporating - and thus covering - the bronze hook.[8] The print of a small label that has been removed is visible near the right corner of one of the wooden base's long sides. This may be an indication that the figure was traded again before its appearance in the 1991 Sotheby's auction, or maybe even before 1987, although the wooden base seems to appear between 1987 and 1991. Its condition seems surprisingly neglected; dust can be observed along the surface of a step which forms the lower part of the wooden base.

The antiquity was estimated at £6,000-8,000 and sold for £14,300. I would have asked Mr Keresey, the Worldwide Sotheby's Director of Egyptian, Classical and Western Asiatic Antiquities, about the buyer of the boar in the 1991 auction, but Mr Andrew Gully, Worldwide Sotheby's Director of Communications, had replied on January 8th, 2013, to my inquiry about another antiquity (see below, case "e"), with the following direction:

> As I said in our initial exchange, Sotheby's does not disclose the names of consigners or buyers. In the future, please use that answer as your guide.

The same figure is depicted in one of Medici's regular (non-Polaroid) images, among 11 other figures and vases against a red background, equally divided in two shelves of what appears to be a case for exhibiting antiquities. The image was produced by Giacomo Medici in his warehouse in the Free Port of Geneva (Zirganos 2006a:24), the same one that was raided in 1995 by the Swiss and Italian authorities, who there discovered thousands of antiquities and the famous Medici archive with its thousands of images (Watson & Todeschini 2007:21-23, 54). The image depicting the boar was delivered, among several other images, to the Greek journalist Nikolas Zirganos by Medici himself, during an interview that took place in late January 2006 in Rome; these images were subsequently published by the Greek magazine *Epsilon* on 19th February 2006 (Zirganos 2006a:22-34). The boar appears at the right corner of the top shelf. Although the print of the previously existing label is still visible on one of the wooden base's long sides, a white thread tied tightly around the boar's right front foot ends in a small paper label which is not readable. A ruler is depicted in front of the objects on the lower shelf. In the caption of the image Zirganos wrote (my translation from the original Greek text):

> One of the images that Medici used to send to potential buyers. The ruler helped them to estimate the scale of the antiquities.

The image proves that the boar was once owned by Medici in Geneva before 1995, since it was not found during the 1995 raid by the Swiss and Italian authorities. It is not known whether the Medici image pre-dates the 1987 Zimmermann publication or was produced after the Sotheby's 1991 auction, since there is no date on the image. However, the appearance of another figure on the same shelf, also published in Zimmermann and auctioned by Sotheby's in 1991, suggests that the Medici image was produced after the Sotheby's 1991 auction and that Medici was the buyer of both figures.

After its last appearance in the Sotheby's 1991 auction, the boar reappeared, this time in Christie's auction of June 8th, 2012 in New York (Christie's 2012a:56, lot 65), with the following collecting history:

> Provenance:
> The Thetis Foundation;
> Sotheby's, London, 23 May 1991, lot 54.
> Private Collection, Switzerland, 2004.
>
> Published:
> J.-L. Zimmermann, *Collection de la Foundation Thetis*, Geneva, 1987, pp. 37-38, no. 72.

In the Christie's catalogue, the figure appears in exactly the same condition as it is depicted in the Medici image. The close-up of the Christie's image verifies the observations made about the images of the boar in Sotheby's 1991 auction and in Medici: the modern (wooden) base follows the curved bronze base of the figure and the print of a label at the upper right corner of one long side of the modern base can be distinguished more clearly. In addition, dust is again observable along the surface of the step which forms the lower part of the modern base. That is, for over 21 years, an antiquity considered a work of art is presented by the world's two leading auction houses without anyone caring to dust its base.

The boar was identified on June 5th 2012, three days before the Christie's auction, in the Medici image published in the *Epsilon* magazine. Immediately, Dr Ferri was informed (my email on 5 of June, 2012). The figure was estimated at $60,000-80,000, but remained unsold.

I enquired by email to Christie's (December 26, 2012) regarding the Thetis Foundation contact details, the name of the consigner of the boar in the June 8, 2012 auction (since it appeared under the title "Various Properties"), the possibility that its consigner was the anonymous owner of the "Private collection, Switzerland, 2004" and if the boar was returned to him/her since it apparently remained unsold. Mr Bernheimer replied (email January 2, 2013):

> Regarding lot 65 from the December 2012 sale,

8 Sotheby's mention the hook in the description of the object, but the hook is not visible in the catalogue image.

> as the Thetis Foundation was not the seller, I do not have contact information. You might find details on the foundation in Zimmerman's 1987 publication, Collection de la Fondation Thétis. In terms of the name of the consignor, again, that information is confidential; it is my understanding that our consignor acquired the piece from the Private Collection, Switzerland, in 2004, and that the Private Collector acquired it from Sotheby's London in 1991. The bronze has been returned to the seller.

Questions regarding this case arise first from the variations between different publications regarding the find-spot and production origin of the boar. The apparent find-spot "Epire?", and the apparently secure production origin "Art corinthien," "corinthien ou sicyonien" and "Corinthien" (in Index) in Zimmermann 1987, became "perhaps Corinthian" in the Sotheby's 1991 auction, without any note either about the previously mentioned "find-spot" or any other. In the Christie's 2012 auction no information was given either about production origin or about find-spot. On what grounds Sotheby's did conceal Zimmermann's hypothesis on the 'find-spot' of the bronze boar ("Epire?")? Did typological or other scientific research lead Christie's to the conclusion that the previous sellers of the bronze boar had inaccurate information on the find-spot and the production origin of the object? From where did 'Thetis Foundation' acquire the information included in its 1987 exhibition catalogue?

Some of the other 11 objects depicted with the boar in the Medici image have their own images in the confiscated Medici archive, depicted on a towel and on the same shelf in the Geneva warehouse. Since the photographic evidence suggests that Medici acquired the bronze boar at the Sotheby's 1991 auction and Bernheimer informed me that the "consignor [in Christie's 2012] acquired the piece from the Private Collection, Switzerland, in 2004, and that the Private Collector acquired it from Sotheby's London in 1991", it appears that "confidentiality" is protecting Giacomo Medici and whoever acquired the bronze boar from him. If Giacomo Medici is the so called "Private Collection, Switzerland, 2004", where did he store and trade this antiquity, almost a decade after the 1995 raid and with a legal case on-going against him in the Italian courts? Conversely, if the boar has a legal collecting history, why did 'Thetis Foundation' not reveal the previous owner of the bronze boar as part of its collecting history? Why did Christie's not reveal that the object passed through Medici's hands, thus demonstrating that Medici was dealing in licit antiquities, as well as (proven) illicit ones? If the bronze boar is not a looted and smuggled antiquity, why did Giacomo Medici not demand that his name should be mentioned in the collecting history supplied by Christie's, thus advertising a legitimate part of his previous activities?

On December 17, 1998 the 'Thetis Foundation' consigned 16 Egyptian antiquities (lots 19, 21-22, 28, 31, 34, 53-55, 58, 64, 392, 397, 401, 420, 426), 22 Classical antiquities (lots 99-101, 104, 106-107, 110, 117, 123-124, 128, 138, 149, 162, 164, 177, 187, 322-324, 331, 367) and 5 Western Asiatic antiquities (lots 206, 209, 439 (2 objects), 444), again in a Sotheby's auction (Sotheby's 1998), this time in New York. From the total 42 consigned antiquities, only 16 appeared in the Zimmermann's 1987 publication (lots 64, 101, 104, 106-107, 110, 117, 123-124, 162, 177, 187, 323-324, 331, 367). No collecting history of any kind was given by Sotheby's in their catalogue for any of the remaining 26 'Thetis' antiquities, which do not appear in the 1987 Zimmermann publication either.

This case verifies that auction houses *do not* publish everything openly and, in fact, hide parts of the object's collecting history (see Gill & Tsirogiannis 2011), but a further point may be made. Following Bernheimer's reply "as the Thetis Foundation was not the seller, I do not have contact information", I contacted Ms. Delaloye, Christie's Specialist (Antiquities Department) by email (January 5, 2013) requesting the contact details of the 'Thetis Foundation' (see case 2.i below), since in this extremely recent auction (October 25, 2012) 'Thetis Foundation' *was* the seller and thus Christie's (the London branch) had the relevant contact details. My email in January followed up a previous email (December 30, 2012) to Ms. Georgiana Aitken, the Head of Department (regarding case 2, below) and to Ms Delaloye, since I received an automatic out-of-office from both. Despite the prompt answers I received by Mr Bernheimer (Christie's, New York), Ms. Delaloye (Christie's, London) never replied to any of my emails. Evidently, then, auction houses block access to the most crucial information for academic research, by not replying at all.

The lack of reply about the contact details of the Thetis Foundation also leaves unanswered the key question about whether the boar figurine is a licit antiquity or not. Christie's New York branch politely denied that they had contact details since Thetis Foundation was not the seller, but the same request, in reference to an auction in which Thetis Foundation *was* the seller, was ignored by Christie's London branch, without any excuse. Once again, "confidentiality" prevailed over truth.

A Greek Terracotta Votive Ship

During the preparation of this article, a terracotta vessel in the shape of a sea-monster, with eight rowers and two coxswains, was identified in a regular image in the confiscated Medici archive (Cd 2, racc. 11, pag. 15, foto 3).

The vessel is depicted on a modern base made of metal

wire, and a tape measure appears extended in front of it to indicate the vessel's length. The fact that the object was photographed at a slight angle from above allows certain observations to be made: the ten ancient figures are depicted sitting on four modern wooden rowing benches, and at least three figures of the rowers appear broken and glued at the level of the thighs (one of them at the arms, as well).

The same terracotta vessel surfaced for the first time in Rodeo Drive, Beverly Hills, at the Summa Galleries, owned by dealer Bruce McNall, where it is termed a "boat." The vessel with its ten figures is depicted in the first antiquities catalogue of the Summa Galleries, in December 1976, in exactly the same condition as it is depicted in the Medici image, but without the modern base. The antiquity was offered for sale as "a votive offering" (The Summa Galleries 1976, no. 65). The only information given by the gallery on the collecting history of the antiquity was "Sicily." According to the price list supplied by the Summa Galleries, the price for the vessel was $4,500.

The terracotta vessel appears to be sold by Summa Galleries to the private collector Gordon McLendon. The link between McLendon and the 'Summa galleries' has been discussed by Gill & Chippindale (2007:216):

> Gordon McLendon donated two Apulian pots to the Getty in 1977 (Appendix A, nos. 20, 21). McLendon, who was involved in radio stations, collected antiquities in part derived from Summa Galleries and Numismatic Fine Arts. It is alleged that Frel encouraged donations from McLendon at an "exaggerated appraisal." In 1977 McLendon also donated an Attic volute-krater attributed to the Kleophrades painter that remains in the Getty.

In the period 1976-1983, the Getty Museum received more than 900 antiquities as a donation from Gordon McLendon, who was "part of a decade-long looting and tax fraud scheme being run out of the Getty's antiquities department" (Felch 2013). Some of these antiquities were proven to have been looted and were repatriated to Italy, e.g. the two Apulian red-figured volute kraters nos. 77.AE.13-14, donated in 1977 (Gill & Chippindale 2007:229, nos. 20-21; Godart, De Caro & Gavrili 2008:156-159, nos. 60-61). One of these kraters, at least (no. 77.AE.13) is depicted smashed in pieces, in a Polaroid image from the Medici archive (CD 2, racc. 23, pag. 8, foto 10).

The terracotta vessel under discussion reappeared on June 14, 1996 at the same Christie's antiquities auction held in New York (Christie's 1996:44, lot 69), where Konrad O. Bernheimer (relative of Max Bernheimer, of Christie's) sold ten ancient textiles (Christie's 1996:25-29, lots 31-40). The Summa Galleries "boat" was presented in Christie's as "A Greek terracotta votive ship". The vessel and its figures were depicted in the same condition in which they are depicted in the Medici image and the 'Summa Galleries' 1976 catalogue, without any base. This antiquity was offered by Christie's as the "Property from the McLendon collection," with the following collecting history:

> Provenance:
> The Summa Galleries, Beverly Hills, Catalogue 1, 1976, no. 65.

Although Summa Galleries offered the object with Sicily as its place of origin, 20 years later Christie's reduced this to "perhaps from Sicily." The object was estimated at $4,000-6,000 and was sold for $12,650.

Finally, the same terracotta vessel was offered for sale in the Christie's antiquities auction of June 8, 2012 in New York (Christie's 2012a:75, lot 90), again as "A Greek terracotta votive ship" which was offered as "The Property of a California private collector." This time, only the vessel was offered for sale, without the eight rowers and the two coxswains. The 4 modern, wooden rowing benches which suggested the existence of the rowers, at least, were also removed. Furthermore, Christie's did not refer at all to the rowers and coxswains presented in its own auction of June 14, 1996, even though this auction appears as part of the vessel's "Provenance" in the catalogue of June 8, 2012:

> Provenance:
> With Summa Galleries, Beverly Hills, 1976 (*Catalogue 1*, no. 65).
> The McLendon Collection; Christie's, New York, 14 June 1996, lot 69.
> with Ariadne Galleries, New York, late 1990's.

In this, the latest Christie's catalogue, the vessel's place of origin was altered again: from Sicily (in the Summa Galleries in 1976) and "perhaps from Sicily" (in Christie's 14 of June, 1996 auction), to "South Italy or Sicily." This time the vessel is depicted on 2 small plastic bases. It was estimated at $15,000-20,000 and finally sold for $22,500. To my inquiry regarding the buyer of this object in the 1996 auction, as well as the names of the buyer and the seller in the 2012 auction (email January 11, 2013), Bernheimer replied on the same day: "unless a client chooses to be identified, the names of buyers and sellers are confidential." The collecting history given implies that Ariadne Galleries was the buyer of the vessel in 1996, but Bernheimer verified only that the private Californian collector who consigned the object in 2012 "indeed acquired the piece from Ariadne." On 12 January 2013 I emailed Ariadne Galleries in New York, requesting "[…] the details (description, provenance, image) of the boat,

as it appeared in a catalogue of your gallery in the late 1990's, as well as the name of the buyer." Ariadne Galleries never replied to my email.

Circumstantial evidence about the two galleries in this object's collecting history should make us wary. Ariadne Galleries was involved in the case of the Icklingham bronzes acquired by Shelby White (for a recent review see Gill 2013a). The owner of Summa Galleries, Bruce McNall, writes in his autobiography that he cooperated with Hecht (McNall 2003:41), confirming a vivid image of their partnership given by Thomas Hoving, the former director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Hoving 1993:338). The director of Summa Galleries in 1976 was Dr Margaret Ellen Mayo; she prepared and wrote their first catalogue, which includes the object under discussion (The Summa Galleries 1976), and she also wrote the introduction to the Hunt antiquities collection volume (Bothmer et al 1983:25-35), which includes the looted Euphronios kylix. Dr Mayo was then the Curator of Ancient Art at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts from 1978 to 2004. During Mayo's curatorship Virginia Museum of Fine Arts appears to have acquired at least one antiquity depicted in the confiscated archives (see Tsirogiannis 2013).

It is not clear exactly when or where this antiquity, which appears to have Giacomo Medici as the oldest part of its modern collecting history, lost its integral part over the years of its circulation in the market, and the whereabouts of the eight rowers and the two coxswains remains unknown. The leading auction house in the world (Christie's) makes no reference at all in its 2012 catalogue to the previous appearance or to the current existence of the ten ancient figures, although it was Christie's who last auctioned them along with the vessel in 1996, an auction mentioned in their 2012 catalogue. In the latest catalogue even the modern rowing benches do not appear and only the ancient holes for the original ones are left to suggest their previous existence to the careful observer. Was the disappearance of the ten ancient figures accidental or deliberate? In each case why did Christie's (and perhaps Ariadne Galleries) not mention the cause of their absence, let alone their existence?

The case of the Greek terracotta vessel is one more reminder of unaffordable intellectual loss. On what grounds is the vessel characterised as "votive," first by Summa Galleries, then by Christie's (twice, in 1996 and in 2012)? Did Ariadne Galleries in the late 1990's follow the same pattern? Did Summa Galleries know if it was originally found in a tomb or a sanctuary? We can only imagine what valuable knowledge we may have gained from any interaction with other votive offerings in an undisturbed, archaeologically excavated and responsibly recorded context. In the same way, why were Summa galleries seemingly confident that Sicily was the vessel's place of origin? Was it the result of typological research that led Christie's (and perhaps Ariadne Galleries) to be less certain about this point? The find-spot of an archaeologically excavated and responsibly recorded antiquity is never questioned. Is the vessel such an object?

These questions lead to others, of the same kind that occur whenever a "toxic" antiquity (one without collecting history before 1970 and, therefore, dangerous even to consider for acquisition) surfaces in the market. Why does the vessel appear in the confiscated Medici archive? Is Medici part of the boat's collecting history? Is Medici *the oldest part* of the vessel's collecting history? Who sold it to 'Summa Galleries'? Why did 'Summa Galleries' and especially Christie's not refer to this individual since, as they claim, "due diligence is incredibly thorough and everything is openly published in the catalogue?" Have Christie's checked all the lots with the databases of the Italian, Greek or any other authorities, before the auction? Did the Italian authorities identify the object and claim it from Christie's, as they did with Becchina objects which surfaced, again in Christie's, again in New York? Whom does the famous "confidentiality" protect, in the end, such that archaeological and other knowledge remains hidden?

A Pair of Canosan Pottery Volute-Kraters

Two Canosan volute kraters appear separately in two Polaroid images from the confiscated Medici archive (nos. Medici CD 3, racc. 74 oggetti passati, pag. 10, foto 3-4). They are depicted with a black cloth background in order that their decoration should be more visible. In the Polaroids, the two kraters are depicted unclean and missing parts of their bases, while one of them is also missing a piece of its rim (the one depicted in Polaroid no. 4). The number printed at the back of each Polaroid image is identical, a proof that the two kraters were photographed with the same film. It is also an indication that the objects arrived together and passed as a pair through the hands of Giacomo Medici.

This observation is verified by the fact that the same two kraters appeared as a pair at Sotheby's *Antiquities and Islamic Works of Art* auction of May 30, 1986 in New York (Sotheby's 1986, lot 24). This time the kraters appeared cleaned, with their bases and the missing piece of the rim (Medici Polaroid no. 4) conserved. The kraters were presented as "Apulian" and Sotheby's gave no previous collecting history or the name of their consigner. The kraters appeared in a section of the Sotheby's catalogue under the title "Other Properties". They were depicted in a single image, framing a bigger Canosan polychrome volute krater (lot 23) and two Canosan polychrome funerary vases (lots 26-27). All these vases, including the pair of kraters, were presented as "Apulian". The two kraters were estimated at $6,000-9,000 and were sold – according to an email from Andrew Gully (Worldwide Director of Communications at Sotheby's) on

January 2, 2013 - for $14,300 (including buyer's premium). Regarding my inquiry (email December 26, 2012) about the names of the consigner and the buyer of the kraters, Mr Gully replied: "Sotheby's does not disclose the names of consigners or buyers."

The same pair of Canosan volute kraters (this time labelled as "Canosan") appeared in the Christie's auction of June 8, 2012 in New York (Christie's 2012a:82, lot 99), in the same condition as that in which they were presented 26 years earlier by Sotheby's. In their catalogue Christie's gave the following collecting history:

> Provenance:
> Private Collection, New York.
> Anonymous Sale; Sotheby's, New York, 30 May 1986, lot 24.

Regarding my inquiry (email December 29, 2012) about the consigner of the kraters, if s/he was the same as the "Private collection, New York" mentioned in the "Provenance" section and if the objects were returned to the seller since they remained unsold, Mr Bernheimer replied (email January 2, 2013):

> Regarding lot 99 from the June 2012 sale, unless a seller decides to be identified in the catalog [sic], the name of the seller remains confidential. The information that the pair came from a "private collection, New York" was passed on from Sotheby's, who originally sold them in New York in May, 1986. They have been returned to the seller.

The kraters were estimated at $40,000-60,000, remained unsold and – according to Bernheimer's email - were returned to the seller, without its being clear if the 2012 seller was the same "private collection, New York" which acquired them from Sotheby's in 1986.

The identification of the two Canosan kraters took place on May 17, 2012 and Dr Ferri was immediately notified (email May 17, 2012). The case was reported on May 31, 2012 in Italy and Greece, by *Il Messaggero* (Isman 2012) and *To Βήμα* (Thermou 2012), respectively. Professor David Gill highlighted Isman's article on May 31, 2012 (Gill 2012c), but in New York, where the auction took place, the press did not refer to the identification of the kraters.

Peter Watson revealed a major scandal at Sotheby's London branch (Watson 1998), that forced Sotheby's to announce that it would "no longer have its general sales of Greek and Roman antiquities or Indian and Himalayan works of art in London" (Watson 1998:311). Part of the scandal concerned antiquities passing through Medici's hands and consigned in Sotheby's London branch. The identification of the two Canosan kraters depicted in Medici's Polaroids and first offered in 1986 by Sotheby's New York branch, perhaps suggests that a something similar could have been revealed for Sotheby's New York branch. Indeed, Sotheby's denial to disclose the name of the kraters' consigner in the 1986 sale supports this suggestion. Is "confidentiality" on behalf of the auction houses protecting Medici here too, as the photographic evidence suggests?

Last, but not least regarding the case of the two Canosan kraters (presented as 'Apulian' by Sotheby's in 1986): Professor Ricardo Elia, researching the appearance of Apulian vases in Sotheby's during the period 1960–1998, concluded that "Sotheby's has had long-term, direct links to large-scale, commercial sources of undocumented Apulian and South Italian vases" (Elia 2001:152).

Christie's Auction of 25 October 2012 in London

On October 25, 2012 Christie's offered at their London branch 289 lots (Christie's 2012b). Their estimations totalled (by my calculations) £3,899,300 - 5,774,300 and, although 61 lots remained unsold, a total £8,080,562 was fetched for the remaining 228 lots.[9]

According to Christie's, 144 lots had a pre-1970 collecting history, 45 lots had an uncertain collecting history with regard to the 1970 UNESCO Convention date, and 100 lots had a post-1970 collecting history, against the UNESCO Convention guidelines.

Antiquities from the collection of Thetis Foundation (lots 143-191) were all offered as "acquired prior to 1970." It is striking that objects of such high quality remained either unpublished, or were published well after 1970, with few exceptions: lot 150 was published in 1966 and 1971, and lots 178 (one of five), 181 (two of six) and 183 appear to be published as early as 1911 (Ridder 1911). In at least one case (lot 171, "An Attic 'head' oinochoe"), part of the previous history of the vase was omitted, since it had been previously offered for sale in the Sotheby's auction of December 17, 1998 as lot 138, again by Thetis Foundation. The vase apparently remained unsold; Sotheby's could "not find any record of what became of it after it did not sell at that sale" (email by Mr Gully of Sotheby's on January 23, 2013) , but the vase must have been returned to Thetis Foundation, since Thetis Foundation consigned it in Christie's in October 2012.

One striking detail about this auction is that Christie's noted that lot 162 ("A Greek bronze horse") was published in

9 According to Christie's online price catalogue, including buyer's premium.

1987 by Zimmermann ("*Collection de la Fondation Thétis*, Geneva, 1987, p. 134, no. 39"), but the bronze horse presented in Christie's October 2012 auction was a totally different object to the one published by Zimmermann. Thus, Christie's gave a fake collecting history to an antiquity which apparently has no prior publication – at least not in Zimmermann 1987.

The Abeler collection, consisting mainly of rings included only one (lot 192) from the 42 objects published before 1970.

Among the unsold antiquities appears one object which I have identified in the Medici archive are the following.

Etruscan Terracotta Votive Boy

In the Medici archive, a regular image (no. Medici CD 2, racc. 4, pag. 12, foto 20) presents an Etruscan terracotta figure of a boy with its hand resting on an unidentified small object. The figure is shown seated, integral with a base, against a red background (identical to the background of the bronze boar and the 11 more figures and vases in their Medici image, see case 1.i above). The terracotta figure is depicted with its head broken off the body, but balanced on the broken neck, propped on what appears to be a small round yellow plastic lid or a roll of sellotape wedged between the head and the neck. Several black spots appear on the shoulders, the left side of the face and parts of the torso and the base. The right thumb and the top of the object that the boy touches with his left hand are missing. A label, stuck on the upper left corner of the image, bears the number "20."

The same Etruscan terracotta boy appeared on November 5, 2011 in the antiquities auction of 'Jean-David Cahn AG' gallery in Basel (Cahn 20011:173-174, lot 173), as "A seated boy with a dove" and was dated "3rd cent. B.C." This time the head appeared restored and the black marks on the surface of the shoulders, the face, the torso and the base had been partially cleaned, leaving light brown marks. The boy's right thumb and the head of the dove appeared in place (restored or conserved). The description of the object in the catalogue concludes:

> […] A crack at the neck. Slightly worn. Minute lacunae. Probably from a funerary monument.
>
> Provenance: Coll. G. Granelli de Croon, Switzerland., acquired on the Swiss art market ca. 1990. The last piece to enter the coll. after a long pause in collecting.

The figure of the boy was given an 'approximative starting bid' [sic] at 12,000 Swiss Francs and sold for 16,800 Swiss Francs, according to the online 'Result list' the Cahn gallery provided after the auction.

After consulting the relevant entry in the Cahn gallery catalogue, I emailed "Jean-David Cahn AG" gallery three times between December 26, 2012 and January 7, 2013, asking the estimated price of the object, whether the consigner was a member of the Granelli de Croon family, and the name of the buyer. On January 28, 2013, I received an email from Ms Senta Zeller (secretary of "Jean-David Cahn AG") attaching the two pages of the Cahn gallery catalogue that I had already noted in all my emails. I replied again that I already had the relevant catalogue and that I would wait for the answers to my questions, but to date (February 19, 2013) I have received none.

About a year later, the same figure appeared - in the same condition in which it appeared in Jean-David Cahn's gallery - in Christie's auction of October 25, 2012 in London as an "Etruscan terracotta votive boy" of the 4th-3rd century B.C (Christie's 2012b:77, lot 99). In the description of the figure, Christie's provided no information regarding any level of restoration or conservation. The given collecting history by Christie's was only: "G. Granelli de Croon collection, Switzerland, circa 1990." Dr Ferri was informed for this identification before the Christie's auction (my email on October 22, 2012). The figure was estimated at £20,000-30,000, but apparently remained unsold.

On December 30, 2012, I contacted Ms. Aitken and Ms. Delaloye of Christie's in London (see supra, case study 1), asking a) if the consigner of lot 99 ("Etruscan terracotta votive boy") was member of the "G. Granelli de Croon collection, Switzerland," and if not, the name of the consigner; b) the email address (or any other contact details available) of the person in charge of the G. Granelli de Croon collection; c) any previous collecting history of lot 99 (prior to its appearance in Cahn AG gallery in 2011, which Christie's had not mentioned); d) if the object was returned to the G. Granelli de Croon collection, since it apparently remained unsold. I never received any answer from any of them.

Jean-David Cahn's gallery has a bad record in recent years. In 2008 the Greek state, after my identification of a looted and illegally exported Attic marble funerary lekythos, repatriated the object from "Jean-David Cahn AG" (Godart, De Caro & Gavrili 2008:204-205; Gill 2008), an operation in which I cooperated with the investigative reporter Nikolas Zirganos and the former head of the Greek police Art Squad, the late Georgios Gligoris.[10] In another case, the Greek state repatriated from Jean-David Cahn in 2007 a marble statue of Lykeios Apollo that had been stolen from the archaeological site of Gortyna in Crete in 1991 (*Patris* 2007). Jean–David Cahn regularly advertises his business in the *British Museum*

10 Document no. 3010/2/2336 – γ/6-6-2007 of the Greek police Art Squad to the Greek public prosecutor's office.

magazine.

Once again, the staff of Christie's London branch did not reply to the enquiries, a tactic followed by "Jean David Cahn AG" gallery as well. Once again, with the striking evidence of the photographic archive from Medici, an attempt to reconstruct the true collecting history of an object was blocked by the very people who advertise their openness in such matters.

Christie's Auction of 5 December 2012 in New York

On December 5, 2012 Christie's offered at their New York branch 224 lots (Christie's 2012c). Their estimations totalled (by my calculations) £8,386,500-13,039,000 and, although 57 lots remained unsold, a total $8,214,937 (including buyer's premium) was fetched for the remaining 167 lots.

According to Christie's, 50 lots and 6 parts of lots (each of these lots consisting of more than one object) had a pre-1970 collecting history, 46 lots and 8 parts of lots had an uncertain collecting history with regard to the 1970 UNESCO Convention date, and 120 lots and 3 parts of lots had a post-1970 collecting history, against the UNESCO Convention guidelines.

Antiquities from the collection of Paul and Helen Zuckerman (lots 183-216) included only 1 lot (196) and parts of 3 other lots (186b-l, 195a-b and 197a) with a post-1970 collecting history, but only 1 lot (187) and parts of 4 other lots (183a, 185a-b, 189a and 191a) are given with a pre-1970 (or 1970) collecting history. From the total 34 lots of the Zuckerman collection presented by Christie's, 25 lots and 7 parts of other lots have an uncertain collecting history ("Provenance: Acquired by Paul and Helen Zuckerman, Detroit, 1960s-1970s") regarding the UNESCO Convention guidelines.

In the same catalogue, 27 antiquities in 19 lots (153-171) were presented as "Property from a distinguished private collection". This anonymous collection contains also a group of old masters paintings, which Christie's auctioned in January 30, 2013 (Christie's 2013). Their catalogue states (p. 103) "The artists of the Renaissance looked to the world of Antiquity for inspiration and this catalogue reflects that important connection." The advertisement of the private collection continues:

> The superb group of works reflects the passion and intelligence of true connoisseurs, ranging from ancient Egyptian canopic jars, painted Attic amphorae to a masterpiece by a less-well known sixteenth-century master such as Pulzone, and iconic works such as the bust of Marcus Aurelius and the Madonna and Child by Fra Bartolomeo.

The "passion and intelligence of true connoisseurs" did not, however, protect them from acquiring unprovenienced antiquities: almost all the lots (153-170, except lot 171, a bust of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius) appeared in the Christie's catalogue with no collecting history before 1970, i.e., the guidelines of the 1970 UNESCO Convention. After the auction, Christie's celebrated the sale:

> G. Max Bernheimer, International Department Head**, and** Molly Morse Limmer, Head of Antiquities, New York**,** said: "Property from a Distinguished Private Collection, which included the glorious portrait bust of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, led the day, attracting multiple bidders throughout the globe. The collection sold for a phenomenal $3.1 million, which was 195% of the pre-sale low estimate, with Marcus achieving a stellar $2 million.

I have now identified 2 of the antiquities in this "distinguished private collection" in the confiscated Robin Symes-Christos Michaelides archive:

An Attic Red-Figured Kylix, "Manner of the Euaion Painter"

An Attic red-figured kylix is depicted in the confiscated Symes-Michaelides archive, in 4 professional images (nos. 0303-0306). A few round holes, visible on the seated figure on the tondo and at least on two of the nine standing figures around the exterior, suggest that the kylix had been broken in some areas and repaired in antiquity with bronze staples, indicated by the green colour of the corrosion around at least one hole (for a similar ancient repair see Elston 1990:61). In these images it can be observed too that the kylix was put together from several fragments and that not all the fragments of the vase were available before its reconstruction. Where fragments were missing, the vase has been restored with pieces of clay which were left unpainted. This, and the fact that the fragments were glued together, indicates that a full-scale reconstruction and a partial restoration of the kylix took place in modern times.

The first public appearance of the kylix in the antiquities market was in Sotheby's antiquities auction of December 13 – 14, 1982 in London (Sotheby's 1982:69-70, lot 232). The vase must have been estimated for more than £15,000-20,000, since this was the highest estimation given in the catalogue for another object (lot 172), whereas the kylix (and 9 other lots among the total 453 lots) was given, instead of a price, the reference "Refer Dept.," equivalent to the recent "Price on Request." The absence of a hammer price in the final price list, released by Sotheby's after the auction, indicates that the

kylix remained unsold on this occasion.

In this sale, the kylix was presented restored: the round holes left both on the interior and the exterior of the kylix from the ancient repair were no longer visible, having been filled with clay and repainted. In addition, the new clay pieces filling the empty spaces left by the original, missing fragments were also painted over. Sotheby's did not mention anything regarding any stage of the restoration of the kylix, did not provide any collecting history, and did not even name its consigner in the auction (Robin Symes and Christos Michaelides? Another dealer involved in antiquities trafficking?) – the kylix was presented in a group of objects under the title "Various Properties."

The same kylix appeared again in Sotheby's London branch some years later, on July 10 – 11, 1989 (Sotheby's 1989: 78 - 79, lot 202). In the Sotheby's 1989 catalogue, the interior of the vase was represented only by a close-up of the tondo decoration, which made it even more difficult to see that the vase had been reconstructed from various fragments and that this reconstruction took place in modern times. The kylix was presented by Sotheby's in the restored condition of 1982. Once again, Sotheby's did not reveal the name of the consigner of the vase in the 1989 auction, let alone the 1982 one; again, the kylix appeared in the "Various Properties" section. Once again, Sotheby's provided no collecting history for the kylix, not even its previous appearance in their 1982 auction. This time, the kylix was estimated for £25,000-35,000 and sold for £24,200.

The same Attic red-figured kylix in the "Manner of the Euaion Painter" was offered for sale by Christie's on December 5, 2012 in New York, with the following collecting history (Christie's 2012c:110-111, lot 159): "PROVENANCE: Anonymous sale; Sotheby's, London, 10-11 July 1989, lot 202." This time, the antiquity was estimated at $80,000-120,000, and it sold for $86,500.

Contradicting the aforementioned statement of Bernheimer that 'due diligence is incredibly thorough and everything is openly published in the catalogue', Christie's failed to mention in their catalogue the appearance of the kylix in Sotheby's 1982 auction. I note too that in the catalogue for December 5, 2012, Christie's stated that 5 objects passed through the hands of Robin Symes (lots 28, 46 (two objects), 82 and 90), but did not record that the kylix, too (lot 159), passed through the hands of Symes-Michaelides.

On January 7, 2013 I contacted Mr Keresey of Sotheby's New York asking the name of the consigner of the kylix in the 1982 auction, the previous collecting history of the antiquity and the name of the restorer of the kylix before the Sotheby's 1982 auction. Mr Gully replied (email January 8, 2013):

> Once again, I am replying on behalf of Mr. Keresey. As I said in our initial exchange, Sotheby's does not disclose the names of consigners or buyers. In the future, please use that answer as your guide. I have no further information in response to your additional requests.

Once again, the two leading auction houses hid the oldest appearance of the kylix when they later offered it for sale. Once again they did not disclose the name of the first consigner of the kylix in any collecting history of the object given later on, obstructing research into whether an antiquity is legal or not.

A Roman Marble Portrait Head of Antisthenes

A Roman marble head of Antisthenes first surfaced in Sotheby's "Important Antiquities" auction of December 9, 1981 in New York (Sotheby's 1981, lot 239). The nose of the head appears worn - but not broken - and the antiquity had been drilled below the neck to receive a metal pole connecting the head to a modern black square base. The head was offered in the auction under the title "Other Properties," without any information regarding its consigner or collecting history, and was termed "Marble head of a Greek philosopher […], possibly Antisthenes, […]." The object was estimated at $5,000-8,000.

To my enquiry (email December 29, 2012) to Mr Keresey asking the name of the consigner, the price realised and the name of the buyer (if the object was sold), Mr Gully replied (email January 2, 2013): "Sotheby's does not disclose the names of consigners or buyers. However, we do publicly state the prices paid for items at auction. Lot 239 sold for $4,840 (including buyer's premium)."

The same marble head appears in the Symes-Michaelides confiscated archive, in 3 professional images (nos. 0012-0014). In these, the head stands on the same modern, black square base, but the entire nose is missing, and a circular hole is visible between where the nostrils should be. These 3 professional images were produced by Dieter Widmer, a Basel-based professional photographer, and bear on the reverse the initials 'RS', presumably for Robin Symes, followed by 3 different 3-digit sequential numbers.

Widmer had produced professional images also for Gianfranco Becchina (Tsirogiannis, unpublished Ph.D) and Herbert Cahn (Robertson 1986:83, fn. 54), father of Jean-David Cahn (see case 2.i above). Copies of professional images produced by Widmer for Robin Symes are depicted in some of the Polaroid images found in the Medici archive, e.g. the 'White Sakkos Painter' Apulian loutrophoros no.1988.431, repatriated to Italy from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston,

an antiquity which passed also through Jerome Eisenberg's Royal-Athena Galleries (Eisenberg 1985:34, no. 104b).

The same marble head of Antisthenes appeared finally in Christie's auction of December 5, 2012 in New York (Christie's 2012c:118-19, lot 168) and in the catalogue's introduction to the "distinguished private collection" (p. 103). In the auction catalogue, the nose appears fully restored, but Christie's failed to mention this restoration in the description of the antiquity. They also failed to mention its auction in Sotheby's 1981, since the only collecting history given in the 2012 catalogue was:

> PROVENANCE:
> Art Market, Zurich, 1988.
> with Royal-Athena Galleries, New York, 1988.

Just as with the kylix (lot 159), Christie's did not record that the marble head (lot 168), too, passed through the hands of Robin Symes, although they indicated Symes' involvement in lots 28, 46(2), 82 and 90.The head was estimated at $100,000-150,000, but apparently remained unsold.

Why did Christie's not indicate the gallery or the dealer who handled the Antisthenes marble head in Zurich? Nefer gallery in Zurich (owned by Frieda Tchacos-Nussberger, see Tsirogiannis 2013) seems not to have been involved here, since the head is not included in their 1988 catalogue.

I could not trace the 1988 Royal-Athena Galleries catalogue in any libraries in Cambridge or London. However, Jerome Eisenberg (owner of Royal-Athena Galleries) has a bad record. Eight objects were returned to Italy by Eisenberg (Isman 2008:24; Gill 2010:107-108). Two of them were exhibited in Athens among recently looted, smuggled and, subsequently, repatriated antiquities to Italy and Greece (Godart, De Caro & Gavrili 2008: 82–83, no. 23; 106–107, no. 35). Two of the eight were auctioned by Christie's in 2004 (Isman 2011). In late 2010, with the help of Professor David Gill, I identified 16 antiquities, which were on sale in Royal-Athena Galleries, in a much worse condition in the Medici, Becchina and Symes-Michaelides confiscated archives (Isman 2011).

On more than one occasion, Eisenberg acquired antiquities stolen from Greek and Italian museums, and he put on sale at least one of them (Axarlis 2001; Isman 2008:24, Felch 2012a). For the purposes of this article, the notable case concerns the biggest ever museum theft in Greece; 285 antiquities stolen from the Corinth museum in April 1990 (Apostolides 2005). Between December 1997 and March 1998 Eisenberg acquired three of these through Christie's, although in 1990 he had drawn attention in his magazine, *Minerva*, to other pieces in the Corinth theft (Axarlis 2001).

So we come back to Christie's. Even after all but three of the stolen antiquities were recovered by the Greek authorities with the assistance of the FBI, Christie's attempted to sell one of the remaining three – a marble head of Serapis - at their New York auction on December 9, 1999. The specialist in charge of the auction was again Max Bernheimer (Apostolides 2005). Instead of a named consigner, the marble head was offered under the title 'Various properties'. This implies that the title 'Various Properties' is being used not only to hide the identities of their consigners, as suggested by the cases of the bronze boar at Christie's on June 8, 2012 (case 1.i above) and of the kylix at Sotheby's in 1982 and 1989 (case 3.i above), but also to cover antiquities thieves.

Conclusions

Several years after the discovery of the Medici, Becchina and Symes-Michaelides warehouses and archives, archaeological material that passed through their hands continues to be offered annually by the top auction houses. However, the market in most cases omits the names of Medici, Becchina and Symes-Michaelides from the collecting history of the antiquities on offer. More museums are currently in the news for having been involved in acquiring looted material which had first passed through the top auction houses (e.g. in late 2012, Dallas Museum of Art announced that it will return antiquities which had been auctioned at Christie's and Sotheby's in the 1990's). Conversely, in the partially presented collecting history of the objects presented in Christie's, I have found that most of the dealers, galleries, collectors and auction houses that appear as ex-owners have been involved in other cases of confiscated, looted, smuggled and stolen antiquities.

Evidence presented here suggests that auction houses are using the term "confidentiality" to cover up the involvement of convicted dealers. At the same time, seriously incomplete collecting histories make the antiquities on sale more attractive to potential buyers who are unaware of the facts. By acting in this way, auction houses are putting their clients and their clients' investments in danger in the event that repatriation claims arise. On an academic level, the auction houses are blocking research into the truth. We must not forget that it is Christie's, through Max Bernheimer, who publicly declared (Loader Wilkinson 2011):

> Buying through an auction house, where due diligence is incredibly thorough and everything is openly published in the catalogue, limits the possibilities over ownership and repatriation issues later on.

Several basic questions remain unanswered. Where were these seven antiquities found? How did they cross boarders? How is it that, even after recent revelations of the

ways in which auction houses 'launder' antiquities (Watson & Todeschini 2007:135-145), objects are still presented and sold without a pre-1970 collecting history? If these antiquities are licit, why were all the members of the market unwilling to release further information or evidence which could date the appearance of these objects before 1970?

Subsequently, wider questions arise. What kind of knowledge – archaeological, historical or other - is irretrievably lost through the modern collecting history of these seven antiquities? How much do we really know about the people who created and used these objects? How much do we learn about our past from objects which are offered for sale in an incomplete condition because the market decided this, without explanation (e.g. the case of the terracotta boat), or because the market decided to add archaeologically unjustified characterizations (e.g. "votive" in the case of the terracotta boat)? How is our knowledge about Antiquity limited every time the market decides to offer limited information for antiquities on sale, just because the market accessed them first? Who gives the market this right and who allows the market still to operate in such a way, after all the scandals uncovered in recent years? Who controls the market of antiquities?

Inevitably, the implications of these questions lead to others. Which organizations and authorities should be held responsible for not actively checking the material in auction houses and galleries? Did national authorities identify these seven antiquities in their own archives? If they did, have they claimed them back? If they did not, what are their reasons? Why is it that it is mainly museums that are returning post-1970 looted and smuggled cultural property and very rarely auction houses, although the evidence in all cases comes from the same archival sources?

The seven antiquities identified in three Christie's auctions during 2012 and in Medici and Symes-Michaelides confiscated archives form a clear indication that the market will continue to sell 'toxic' material. The phenomenon seems to have become worse, as auction houses seem to ignore the very photographic evidence that was successfully used to repatriate antiquities from museums (e.g. Alberge 2010; Isman & Gerlis 2010; Gill 2011; Kontrarou-Rassia 2011; Kotti 2011; Isman 2012; Gill 2012c; Kotti 2012; Thermou 2012; Tsirogiannis' unpublished Ph.D. thesis). The approach that international organizations chose to follow in 1970 has failed in practice. Since 1995, Italian authorities have proved that an active engagement with the problem can give real solutions and actual results; it seems that currently no one is adopting this path as a long-lasting policy. Under the current circumstances, it seems inevitable that the activities of major auction houses in 2013 will produce cases for another report on the appearance of Medici, Becchina and Symes-Michaelides material in the market.

This will not be kept confidential.

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