

## WHO OWNS THE PAST ?

### **Extent to which policies of cultural agencies have promoted a very euro-centric view of heritage**

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#### **Introduction**

It is a difficult task to attempt to answer such a question as “who owns the past?” A good reason is that it is too simplistic – in my view - to abide by the commonly agreed principle: that the representations of the past – what we call our cultural heritage – belong to the future generations, as everybody seems to agree upon.

I would like here to try another course and question these “principles” and accepted concepts. In doing so, I would like to start by trying to understand **what our “past” is** and suggest that we focus our discussion on the physical representations of our “past”, whether movable or immovable, archaeological or built. I shall therefore eliminate from this presentation all what has to do with music, literature, poetry, cooking, social traditions and the like.

Then, I would like to move on and try to understand **whose “past” is it** we are talking about? Is it my past, my community’s or my nation’s past? Or, is it China’s past which I own? **What is our common “past”** and is there such a thing as a common past, a universal past? Do we all read it the same way and agree on its physical representations?

Also, I wish that, at the end of this presentation we discuss the **necessity of “owning” the past**. Do we really need to own a past? And, more precisely, do we need to own the physical representations of a past and if so, why?

I do not claim to know the answers to all these questions. I simply pretend to throw some light on certain aspects of “owning the past” and try to make this question more understandable, both in its implications and in its magnitude and impact on the past. Like in anthropology and other social sciences, the observer’s own culture impacts on his reading of the society he studies. We see the past of others as we would like it to be, and this can be quite different from the way they see it themselves.

Before I enter the topic, I would finally wish to apologize for the very personal and sometimes shallow thoughts I shall present and for the mistakes no doubt I shall make. As some of you know already, I am not a heritage specialist, barely an economist interested in this field.

### **The International Texts: Conventions, Charters and Recommendations**

To own the past or at least its physical representations, we base this ownership on legal texts, conventions, recommendations and charters. These texts are usually produced by structures involved in cultural heritage that can be classified in four categories:

- they can belong to or be closely associated with the United Nations system, such as UNESCO, the World Bank and regional development banks, or ICCROM, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, created by UNESCO,
- they can be Non Governmental International Organizations such as ICOMOS or the World Heritage Cities Organization. These structures are all related to UNESCO which is the initiator and depository of the international legal instruments for the protection of cultural heritage,
- they can be national agencies of the public or para-public sector such as national boards of antiquities, national trusts, directorates generals of antiquities and museums, etc.

- finally they can be private foundations and trusts and the national or local non-profit making institutions such as the NGOs and citizen's associations.

Within this last group, a few have become very active and important in the international sphere: the Getty Foundation and its Conservation Centre, the World Monument Fund, the Prince of Wales Trust are a few examples. Like all the others, they rely on the definitions and lines of conduct approved by the UN Agencies and particularly UNESCO.

If a technical organization or an international bank further develops its own 'modus operandi' or special regulations in the field of culture, these are always based on the conventions and recommendations approved or adopted by UNESCO's General Conference.

Being universal by nature, the United Nations have devised and approved texts that address global issues. These have been identified by the most active States in the United Nations and fit within the general trend of "development" as understood by the wealthy and advanced nations of the Western World. The others have followed suit assuming that "it is good for them". It is therefore our western notion of heritage which has been imposed in these texts, even if some countries did not have such an understanding and function of heritage in their culture.

If we look at the definitions given to cultural heritage in all the charters and conventions, we notice that except for the International Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage – that is the World Heritage Convention – none gives a definition of what it means by cultural heritage. Charters of ICOMOS and statutes of ICCROM refer only to "monuments", or to "built heritage", to "vernacular heritage" or to "architectural ensembles" to identify their subject of concentration

As for the World Heritage Convention, it considers as "cultural heritage" the following:

- Monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings

and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

- Groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- Sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and of man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological points of view.

Here, a first remark: nowhere do we read in this definition that cultural heritage must be aesthetic, beautiful, and attractive to the eye. To the contrary, the Convention provides a very broad definition encompassing all types of physical cultural heritage. Thus the only criticism one can retain is that the Convention does not provide room for the protection of the immaterial and movable heritage.

Today however, a change is starting to take place. The Director General of UNESCO is pressing very much for the adoption and voting of Convention for the protection of the intangible cultural heritage the draft of which is just ready.

This will certainly provide those countries having a non-monumental and non-material heritage with the ability to be present in the community of “heritage countries”. But will it really work?

### **How Are These Texts Applied?**

To understand how these texts are applied and how they have promoted a euro-centric view of heritage, I shall take the example of the List of World Heritage Sites and see how and under which criteria is a site nominated and then inscribed on this list. The reason for this choice is that this List represents what the international community of heritage specialists considers as our common heritage or, to quote the Convention: those properties – monuments, group of buildings and sites – having an “exceptional, universal

value” and “whose deterioration or disappearance ... constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world”.

Earlier, I said that the text of the Convention provides ample grounds for the listing of most of the types of physical cultural heritage. This however, has not been reflected by the interpretation of the Convention in the inscription of sites in the list. There are several reasons for this deviation from the text. Let us begin to see how a listing takes place:

### **Nomination Procedure to the World Heritage List**

- 1. The States Parties to the Convention (those who have ratified the Convention)**
  - a. Make a tentative list of the cultural and natural properties on their territory that they consider to be of outstanding universal value.
  - b. Select properties from their tentative list for nomination to the World Heritage List.
  
- 2. The World Heritage Centre (the Secretariat of the World Heritage Committee, established by UNESCO)**

Checks that the nomination file is complete.
  
- 3. ICOMOS and, if needed IUCN (for mixed sites and landscapes)**
  - a. Send experts to visit the sites, evaluate their [values], protection and management.
  - b. Prepare a technical report
  - c. Assess whether the property is of outstanding universal value
  
- 4. The World Heritage Bureau (composed of the President of the World Heritage Committee, five Vice-Presidents and the Rapporteur, all elected by the Committee)**
  - a. Examines the evaluation
  - b. Makes a recommendation on the nomination, or
  - c. Asks for further information from the State Party.
  
- 5. The World Heritage Committee (21 State Parties elected by the General Assembly of States parties to the Convention)**

- a. Makes the final decision to inscribe the site on the World Heritage List
- b. Or defers, pending more in-depth information
- c. Or refuses inscription.

The factors which have affected the implementation of the Convention are of a historic, cultural and scientific, political and economic nature.

**Historically**, the Convention was born in the early seventies, when the World was still embarking in the safeguarding of the monuments of Nubia in Egypt. At this period, we still had a very “monumental” vision of cultural heritage, inherited from our common western culture. It was the Western countries that have called for the safeguarding of the monuments of Nubia. In doing so, they have imposed upon all their vision of World Heritage.

This “monumentalist” and selective attitude towards the heritage of mankind has dominated the Convention and its application until very recently.

**Culturally and scientifically** speaking, almost all the specialists who have been in charge of the evaluation of the nominations to the list came from the Western countries. The “International Council on Monuments and Sites - ICOMOS” is the privileged advisory body of the World Heritage Committee. ICOMOS has always sent members from Europe, Australia and the Americas to evaluate nominated sites all around the World. Despite the very open attitude taken by these specialists, eager to assist countries to list properties on the World Heritage List, they remained very shy in their evaluations of the other types of cultural heritage which they based on very “western” criteria of selection: authenticity, state of conservation, management plans, buffer zones, have been invoked to reject very valuable properties. How would an earth built structure remain “authentic”, i.e. conserved with the very same materials for hundreds of years and why should we apply with such rigidity this criteria to indigenous built heritage while we accept that Bauhaus constructions be restored using modern materials since, as a specialist of this architecture puts it “it is not the material but the spirit, the sense of the architecture which needs to be protected”.

This has however begun to change. In 1994, an international conference by UNESCO, ICCROM and ICOMOS took place in Nara (Japan) to discuss the very issue of authenticity. In its final document, the conference recognized the relationship between “cultural diversity and heritage diversity” and values and authenticity, stating for the first time that

“Depending on the nature of the cultural heritage, its cultural context, and its evolution through time, authenticity judgments may be linked to the worth of a great variety of sources of information. Aspects of these sources may include form and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions and techniques, location and setting, and spirit and feeling, and other internal and external factors. The use of these sources permits elaboration of the specific artistic, historic, social and scientific dimensions of the cultural heritage being examined.”

This new vision of the values of heritage has indeed opened the listing process to different types of cultural heritage. New categories such as cultural landscapes and vernacular architecture and sacred places have emerged and are now used in the listing.

Resistances still exist. They are based on the management aspects and on the evaluation of the quality of the information provided in the nomination files. This has to do with the technical capacity of the countries: the Guidelines for the implementation of the Convention have become more and more complex. In its desire to restrict the nomination of ill-protected or poorly managed sites, the Committee and its Secretariat have progressively added technical requirements to the contents of the nomination file. This has served to better control the admission process; but it has also penalised the countries with limited technical capacities to meet the requirements of the guidelines.

From the **economic** point of view, the increasing importance of World Heritage in the tourist sector has pushed state parties to favour the nomination of urban centres and large monuments which are the most attractive sites for tourists, to the detriment of the representativity of the List. On the other hand, non monumental cultures do not have the economic incentive to nominate and resent sometimes the listing as it brings added protection and thus reduces the possibilities of much needed economic activities and revenues.

**Politically** finally. If, during the early days of the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, the Committee was constituted mainly of scientists and heritage specialists, the visibility of the Convention and its importance in terms of reputation in the concert of nations have brought state parties to be represented at the Committee meetings by official ambassadors or other high level civil servants. Heads of delegations to the Committee's meetings and to the General Assembly are now often ambassadors and sometimes even ministers, while the national specialists are relegated to the role of advisors.

Politics have entered the Committee's debates and, a few year ago, we could see countries rallying together to approve or reject a nomination on an exchange of good will basis or because they belonged to the same cultural or political grouping. Since the Committee has been long dominated by rich and western countries, the others simply had no ability to press for their sites.

The "small" countries or countries with no properties inscribed have fought against this situation with the help of the Secretariat and of some western countries. The situation is now improving and more non western or small countries are being elected to the Committee.

### **"Patrimonization" and the Western Understanding of Heritage : a Biased View**

#### **Patrimonization**

The institutionalization of heritage, of the representations of our past, in our societies is a process which has started a long time ago. It has progressively become more and more elaborate and structured, with its codes and rules, its corporations and trades. It is now a quasi economic sector in its own rights, creating employments and generating resources, contributing to the economic betterment of villages, towns and cities, regions and even countries.

Without dwelling unnecessarily on this economic role, let me just note that the economic interests of and in the heritage field have become such that it has begun to follow the same economic pattern as other fields or sectors: grow or die. There are two fundamental



factors pressing for this growth of the field of heritage. One is the need to produce more and more jobs for the continuously growing numbers of “specialists” of heritage produced by the universities: archaeologists, architects-restorers, museum curators, and even tourist guides, to name just a few.

There is also the similar pressure of those who are already working in this field and who need more and more heritage to justify their salaries and their position as “the specialists” of heritage. They are the ones who decide what is or should be heritage and what will not be heritage. In a way, they decide on what represents our past. This has very well been explained since 1995 by Sir Alan Peacock<sup>1</sup>.

The other side that is asking for the growth of the heritage field and pushes greatly for is composed of the economic actors that benefit from heritage, those who exploit its existence. They work in the tourism industry: tour operators, hoteliers, souvenir and pseudo crafts shops, restaurants, specialized craftsmen and the owners of properties in heritage areas, all ask for more heritage since it means more tourism.

Then, and to cover the whole picture, there are the decision-makers: mayors and councillors of heritage villages and towns, parliamentarians of heritage regions, ministers and heads of state of countries where tourism has an important place in the economy.

With our vision of heritage, we have exported these economic functions we assign to it to the other cultures.

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<sup>1</sup> “A future for the Past : The Political Economy of Heritage” by Sir Alan Peacock, Keynes Lectures in Economics, The British Academy, 1995.

## Our Western Understanding of Heritage

Since the birth of the concept, we have considered the cultural physical heritage as monumental or picturesque, aesthetic, and beautiful. Moreover, it has to be picturesque, aesthetic and beautiful by our standards. To illustrate this, I shall refer to three quotations.

Marc Jimenez who writes in his book "*Qu'est-ce que l'esthétique?*"<sup>2</sup> explains this attitude. He writes:

"The anthropology of art teaches us that beauty and ugliness are values relating not only to a culture, a civilization, a given type of society, its manners, its vision of the world, to a given moment of its history. ... [to continue] ... Moved by a spectacle, a masterpiece, or a splendid landscape, do we not invoke beauty as if it was a fixed and unalterable value, non-historic and trans-historic, requiring the unanimity and universality of good taste?"

And Françoise Choay, in her famous book, "*L'allégorie du patrimoine*"<sup>3</sup> provides us with an interesting transition to the impact of our understanding on the heritage of the others. She wrote:

« The notion of historic monument and the conservation practices associated with it have spread outside Europe where they were born and which had long been their exclusive territory. Truly, with the openness of the Meiji Era, the 1870s have seen a discrete introduction of the notion of historic monument in Japan: for this country, who has always lived his traditions at the present tense, who knew history only as dynastic, whose old and recent art was only living, who always maintained its monuments through ritual reconstructions, the assimilation of the western time had to go through the recognition of a universal history, the adoption of the museum and the conservation of monuments as representations of the past."

And André Chastel, in "*Les lieux de mémoire*"<sup>4</sup>, speaks of the new functions of the heritage :

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<sup>2</sup> Marc Jimenez, « Qu'est-ce que l'esthétique ? », Folio-Essais, Paris 1997.

<sup>3</sup> Françoise Choay, « L'allégorie du patrimoine », Seuil, Paris 1992.

“At which moment do we cross from the *miracula*, which expresses the veneration of the sacred to the *marabilia*, which derives only from the aesthetic or intellectual admiration?

In a layman’s language, we have concentrated our thinking and efforts on the protection and conservation of the form, patrimonizing the physical and we have not cared for the protection of the intrinsic values of the heritage, which are not only the quality and authenticity of its conservation. Intrinsic values are more about use, function, representation of spirituality.

How does this reflect on the understanding of the heritage of others and of our heritage by others? Let us take some examples.

While preparing for this lecture, I needed a synthetic presentation of the history of Art and, being quite lazy, I decided to go for a short book of the French “Que sais-je?” series. It is entitled “*Les grandes dates de l’histoire de l’art*”. This book presents a chronology of the creation of works of art since prehistory in a very concise manner. Despite the precautions taken in the introduction, a quick glance at the book brings three comments:

- a) being synthetic and necessarily concise with only 127 small size pages, it is selective and this selection is based on criteria which are not universal, but rather based on the culture of its audience, possibly also on the market value of the works of art; global art versus local art;
- b) it is very Euro-centric in its presentation and does not consider a great many works of art from Africa and Asia;
- c) the more it moves through time and comes closer to us, the more it lists works of art: selectivity is inversely proportional to the length of time that separates us from the date of creation, as if art is being more and more created, as if there is an inflation of heritage and of art.

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<sup>4</sup> « Les lieux de mémoire », directed by Pierre Nora, Gallimard, Paris 1997.

This is a natural pattern. We are usually less inclined to recognize the masterpieces of others and we tend to consider as art primarily the creations of our own culture, of the civilization we belong to.

To the quality of the colour pictures obtained through the best Japanese photo lenses – very “crisp”, very bright, strong colour separation - I shall always prefer the result obtained through a German lens which gives softer colours, a broader “palette” of tints. Conversely, I shall not be able to appreciate without explanations the aesthetic values of an African ritual site because I would not be able to read its symbolism. This ‘personal’ appreciation of beauty and of art is central to our understanding of the heritage of others, to our identifying the heritage of humankind. And, when we look at an earth built hut in a small village of Guinea, we shall not be able to understand its heritage value simply because it is small; shabby and ill maintained. But, for the local population, it is the hut where the sacred “balafon” is protected. Is it form or function we are after?

It is through this prism – that of our western aesthetic values - that we identify art – our understanding of art – and heritage in the productions of other cultures.

But, is there art and heritage everywhere? And do the others see heritage as well in the same monuments that we consider as heritage? Here I would call on anthropology for help. In an article entitled “*Pas de société sans art: pourquoi?*” Carlo Severi, of the French CNRS, wrote in 1999<sup>5</sup>:

“An aesthetic universal faculty was born together with culture. No society without art has ever been and will never be described. No mission report has ever described a society “without art”. Can we ever imagine that someday such a discovery takes place? Such a question leads us to examine the varied meanings of “art” and the relationship between anthropology and the notion of art.”

He then continues and cites Franz Boas who considered that there is art “whenever a technique is mastered until it leads to a perfect form”, which brings us back to the original meaning of art, which as we know derives from “*ars*”, the know-how.

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<sup>5</sup> « Pas de société sans art : pourquoi ? », Carlo Severi, in « La recherche » hors série N°4, Paris 1999.

And, if we accept the fact that heritage and art are very closely connected, that the creation of art has preceded that of heritage which is art recognized as a heritage component or, in the case of monuments, an assembly of arts, then we should accept that there is no society, no culture, which has not created “heritage” items. The basic issue here is to discover what is heritage and what is not heritage in the eyes of these societies and cultures.

Another question deserves to be at least evoked here. It is that of the changing functions of those monuments or sites we have considered as “heritage” or “representations of the past”. I am not sure at all that the monuments we have patrimonized were meant, by their builders, to become “heritage” or representations of the past. Quite often, in doing so and in an attempt to “better protect” them, we have emptied these monuments and sites and turned them into objects of museums, similarly to what used to happen to the “curiosa” in the cabinets of the wealthy and of royalties.

Memorials – war, religion, historical – have been built to become representations of historic events, of religious beliefs, of victories. Since their primary function they were to serve as memorial structures. But what about a beautiful building of the Bauhaus period which was conceived as a villa? It had never been built to remind future generations of something. However, if we accept today that a representation of Bauhaus architecture deserves to be protected as heritage, how many useless structures have we protected only because they are “beautiful”? And, in basing our protection on beauty – as we understand it, how many heritage of other cultures have we disregarded?

### **The Others’ Perspective**

I shall try now to reflect on how other cultures regard “heritage”. I regret however that I have not yet found a text about heritage similar to the “Lettres Persanes” of Montesquieu. Maybe in a near future, an Arab, or an African or a Papuan, fed up with all the heritage gibberish we produce, will write such a critic of the western thinking about forms and structures.

Until that moment, I shall concentrate on some examples of how do the others deal with their heritage.

In China<sup>6</sup>, the notion of heritage is old, but that of safeguarding quite recent. Safeguarding started with the foundations of the contemporary Chinese archaeology and museology, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Until this period, the maintenance of a historic property is the responsibility of its owner.

In 1949, the control of this past has oscillated between two positions. The first wants to mould a new man and eradicate the traditional Chinese civilization, reforming the thinking of the population. This attitude cannot accommodate itself with the remains of the past.

The second expresses the desire to concentrate on the urgent tasks of economic development. It therefore relegates to the back the enhancement of the properties that testify of the history of humanity.

However, depository of a prestigious heritage, the Popular Republic of China has a rich archaeological and architectural heritage. Like what happened with the French Revolution and to assert its existence and perennality; the new state must assert its cohesion. The conjunction of both aspects becomes thus necessary.

The Chinese authorities undertake then a selection of renowned sites. They call them "*wenwu baohu danwei*" – units of historic monuments or heritage safeguarding. "*Wu*" represents here the material, the objects which testifies of the "*Wen*": the history or civilization of China. The word "Unit" – *Danwei*, a notion developed in 1949, applies to economic activities and to culture. This unit – *Danwei* – is a testimony of the Chinese civilization – *Wenwu* – and must therefore be protected – *Baohu*. Hence the name "*wenwu baohu danwei*"

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<sup>6</sup> See Jocelyne Fresnais, « La protection du patrimoine en République populaire de Chine (1949-1999) », Editions du CTHS, Paris 2001.

The geographic distribution of these units justifies the continentality of the territory. Monuments are then decreed as "*wenwu baohu danwei*" according to their role in the unification of the country and the perennality of the regime over the territory.

In the Arab countries of the Near-East, civilization has gone through a different process than Greece and Rome. Except for their mountainous regions, these countries have not known the system of the "*oikos*" and thus, did not have the notion of transmission of a heritage from father to children. It came much later, with the introduction of the Ottoman rule and later of European inspired laws.

Still today, the cultures of the Arab Near and even Middle-East do not consider that the form, the built, represents heritage. As in African societies, they would value much more a place for its spiritual meaning than a monument, except for certain religious constructions. How frequently have I not been confronted with the impossibility to transmit the importance of the protection of archaeological remains or of a monument to a decision-maker, be he secular or religious. Reuse of remains, of old constructions and their transformation have been common practice and, in some cases still are.

Take for example the cases of the churches and mosques damaged during the recent fightings in Beirut, or the renovations of the Mosque of the Omayyads in Syria or of the Al-Azhar in Cairo. In the case of Beirut, I had to explain to the religious authorities that they cannot apply for World Heritage status because of the very heavy renovations and changes to their churches and mosques. Similarly, how can we convince Syrian and Egyptian authorities that, bearing World Heritage status, their most important mosques, which receive daily worshippers and pilgrims by the thousands cannot be renovated and receive modern amenities?

I may have already told the story of the Maronite Patriarch and of the Qadisha Valley in Lebanon, but it is worth recalling. The Qadisha valley is a fantastically beautiful and dramatic landscape in which Christian hermits and later entire villages sought refuge and isolation. It is a very important place for the Christians of the Middle-East. When we came to nominate the valley for inscription on the World Heritage List, the Patriarch's only comment was: "But why? It contains only old things!".

Is it due to the fact that these countries have not managed yet to come to terms with their recent history? Or is it due to the fact that the unity of these countries exists only through the representation of a leader and often religion? Unless it is due to the fact that these populations still use their “heritage” and do not “patrimonize” properties and monuments on an aesthetic basis. I cannot tell for sure. But I am convinced that the introduction of our views about heritage in such countries is difficult, takes time and does not always meet their needs.

### **Owning the past : who and why and its implications**

A strong debate is taking place now about the necessity or the validity of reconstructing the Buddhas of Bamyán in Afghanistan. But to whom do they belong? Has the World taken over ownership and is treating the destroyed statues and its property? What is the objective behind their reconstruction? Is it to obliterate the Taliban's era and prove again that this era of obscurantism will never come back? Or is it to return these religious monuments to the Buddhist community of Afghanistan which does not exist any more? Finally, what do the Buddhist community think of this reconstruction?

What I am trying to say here is that often the ultimate owner of a heritage property should be the one who still recognizes and protects its primary function.

To conclude, I would like to refer to an article of the Financial Times Week-End of 11-12 October 2003, written by Peter Apsden and entitled “A Century of Saving Art”.

[According to Charles Saumarez Smith, Director of the National Gallery] “the World is becoming an even more dangerous place. There are huge gulfs of mutual incomprehension. And one of the things that makes it easier for people to do atrocious things to each other is to dehumanise each other. It is standard practice.

There aren't many ways of combating that but one of them is to give people everywhere the chance to see the highest achievements of art. Museums and galleries have a fantastically important role to play in that. They are an amazing testament to our common humanity. Therefore, arguably, the right approach to museum collecting



should not be a chauvinistic one. It should be much more ambitious, much more generous and inclusive.

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The historian Tristram Hunt, who will speak at a conference organised by the NACF next month devoted to these issues, writes in the fund's current magazine: "For many gallery-goers, the grimy Salford cityscapes of L. S. Lowry or the heterogeneous multiculturalism of Chris Ofili speak far more readily to a conception of Britishness than Gainsborough or Constable."

In other words, not only "whose art is it anyway?" but "which are in the first place?" If we cannot agree on what kind of art best represents Britishness, it surely becomes more difficult to argue for the physical retention of any kind of art in Britain; the terms "heritage" and "patrimony" simply become too unwieldy to be useful.

"I ask Saumarez Smith if he has a strong sense of where a work of art belongs. He remains silent for 25 seconds before answering, and attributes the uncharacteristic pause to the complexity of the question.

He says there is a spectrum of views, from absolute portability on the one hand, to rigorous contextualism on the other, which argues that if a work is related to a particular church in Italy, then it belongs inside that church and nowhere else. "I don't think you can give a universal answer. It depends on the work of art."

However, he says the National Gallery has itself used the context of argument, in arguing that it is better to see a Raphael in the context of other Raphaels than in isolation as a single masterpiece in the US. But he would say that, wouldn't he? He already has his Raphaels. What about the small gallery that has a Perugino and a Leonardo but need a single Raphael to give a truer picture of the Italian Renaissance? He gives a sardonic laugh. "I am perfectly willing to accept that these arguments are quite complicated".

Thank you.