



Welcome to this month's NMDC newsletter which contains an update on our activities and news from the museum sector in the UK and beyond. www.nationalmuseums.org.uk

NMDC News

NMDC Submission to Select Committee Inquiry into Tourism

The NMDC made a submission to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee Inquiry into Tourism, outlining the major contribution that museums and galleries make to British tourism and the important role they will play in the 2012 Olympic Games. The submission also highlights some of the challenges museums and galleries face in maintaining their position as world class tourist attractions, and sets out recommendations for government support. You can read the submission on the NMDC website at: www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/tourism_select_committee.html

Members' News

National Gallery Director to Move to Royal Academy

Charles Saumarez Smith is to leave the National Gallery in the autumn to take up the newly created post of Secretary and Chief Executive at the Royal Academy of Arts.

In a statement the Chairman of the National Gallery said that Mr Saumarez Smith would be a great loss to the Gallery and that "he leaves the National Gallery in robust health with an increase in visitor numbers of 9% last year". www.nationalgallery.org.uk/about/press/2007/directorleaving.htm

Director of the National Maritime Museum to Step Down

Roy Clare will step down as Director of the National Maritime Museum on 31 May this year to pursue a new opportunity in the heritage sector. He plans to continue his activities on the Board of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, the Board of Creative and Cultural Skills and on various programmes for workforce development in the sector.

British Museum to Administer Treasure Act

The British Museum has taken over administrative services for the Treasure Act 1996, including: valuation of treasure finds; invoicing museums; payment of rewards; and supporting the Treasure Valuation Committee. Locating these functions in one organisation will improve the service to finders of Treasure, landowners, occupiers and acquiring museums. To avoid potential conflicts of interest, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport will continue to undertake valuation, invoicing and payment of rewards for finds that the British Museum has shown an interest in acquiring.

www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Press_notices/archive_2007/dcms044_07.htm

Natural History Museum at Tring

The Walter Rothschild Zoological Museum has been re-named the Natural History Museum at Tring. Part of the Natural History Museum since 1937, the Hertfordshire Museum has also updated its website and signage to bring it in line with the Natural History Museum brand.

The Museum hopes the change will attract a larger and more diverse audience to visit its collections and temporary exhibitions. www.nhm.ac.uk/about-us/news/2007/march/news_11284.html

New Trustee Sought for Royal Armouries

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is seeking to appoint a new Trustee of the Royal Armouries. The deadline for applications is: **Monday 16th April**.

Details are available at: www.royalarmouries.org/extsite/view.jsp?sectionId=3227

New Gallery Opens at St Fagans

Oriel 1 (Gallery 1) at St Fagans: National History Museum, one of Amgueddfa Cymru National Museum Wales' major centenary projects, opened to the public on Saturday 31 March 2007. The gallery uses objects, photography, film, art and personal stories to explore what it means to be Welsh and to live in Wales today. Local communities, schools, authors, artists and poets played a role in the creation of Oriel 1 and the Museum will continue to work with visitors to develop the Gallery.

www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/847/

Space Gallery at Science Museum to reopen

A major redisplay of the Science Museum's space gallery will open on 26 April - the 45th anniversary of the launch of the first satellite to carry UK scientific experiments, Ariel 1. *Exploring Space* will celebrate the exploration of space and investigate the benefits it brings, highlighting some of the missions the UK has participated in and the stories of scientists behind those missions.

Key new exhibits include the Spacelab 2 X-ray telescope - which was on the Space Shuttle in 1985 - full-size models of the Huygens Titan probe and Beagle 2 Mars Lander and a computer-generated animation of the satellites that orbit Earth. The lunar module has been conserved and reconfigured to a new level of accuracy. www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/about_us/press_and_media/press_releases/2007/03/463.aspx

Tate Modern Extension Approved

The £215 million development of Tate Modern has been granted planning permission. The new building, on the south side of the gallery, will provide more space for modern and contemporary art. Facilities for young people, learning and visitor engagement will be central to the new development.

The London Development Agency has committed £7 million to kick-start the development so that it might be completed in time for the Olympics in 2012. The project will now enter the delivery phase and a project team will be appointed. www.tate.org.uk/about/pressoffice/pressreleases/2007/9121.htm

National Museums Northern Ireland Launch Titanic Website

The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum has launched a website dedicated to the Titanic and its place in Belfast's history. The site www.titanicinbelfast.com includes unique content from the collections of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, and connects the story of the Titanic and its passengers to that of the shipyard and the city.

The website will be launched in the USA in the summer, at an exhibition about the Titanic in Washington organised by National Museums Northern Ireland and partners, as part of the Rediscover Northern Ireland programme. www.magni.org.uk/newsroom/?article=539

Bank of Scotland Sponsors Exhibitions at National Galleries of Scotland

Bank of Scotland will invest over £400,000 over the next two years in *Bank of Scotland Total Art*, a series of two major art exhibitions at the Royal Scottish Academy, featuring Andy Warhol and Joseph Beuys. The Bank's support will create an innovative education programme with a special focus on young people and aims to ensure that modern art reaches the widest possible audience.

www.nationalgalleries.org/index.asp?centre=html/6-bulletinBoard/6_bbFS.asp

New Trustees for National Galleries of Scotland

Mrs Ray MacFarlane and Mr Alasdair Morton have been appointed to the National Galleries of Scotland. Ray MacFarlane is a Senior Director of Bank of Scotland Corporate and Deputy Chair of the Scottish Arts Council/Scottish Screen Joint Board. Alasdair Morton is Head of Policy Innovation in Retail Markets at the Royal Bank of Scotland Group. The appointments are for four years from 1 April 2007.

www.scottishexecutive.gov.uk/News/Releases/2007/03/22124421

National Archives Slavery Portal

The National Archives has launched an online exhibition about the abolition of slavery. The exhibition draws together historical documents and information relating to Britain's involvement in the slave trade and its eventual abolition. The site is a starting point for anybody interested in learning about the history of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act and contains links to collections, online resources in The National Archives and other archives, and to the Archive Awareness Campaign, whose theme for 2007 is Freedom and Liberty. www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/slavery/

The National Archives has also produced [six new research guides](#), in collaboration with experts and community leaders, to introduce researchers to the material on slavery held in The National Archives.

Conference: *New Collaboration, New Benefits: Transnational Museum Collaboration*

This conference will explore how new transnational cultural collaborations are being developed, examining frameworks for international cooperation and the role of government. Speakers will discuss the challenges of building partnerships, skills sharing and exchanging ideas, and explore new areas for collaboration such as joint fundraising, conservation, research, design, capacity building and training.

The conference is organised by ICOM UK in partnership with ICOM China, The British Museum, the Shanghai Museum, Museum of London, V&A, and international museums and universities.

For more information contact: Lucy Watts, ICOM UK Executive lwatts@museumoflondon.org.uk

June 26-27, 2007 Fudan University, Shanghai

www.mda.org.uk/icom-uk/shanghai.pdf

Current Issues

Prime Minister's Speech on Culture and Creativity

On 6 March the Prime Minister gave a speech at Tate Modern on Culture and Creativity. He said that London was now the creative capital of the world and welcomed the success of the cultural sector in making best use of the 'mixed economy' framework established by the Government.

The Prime Minister recognised the contribution that arts and culture make to the economy and society, saying that the arts have been an important part of what Britain has become over the last ten years. He praised the cultural sector for achieving excellence, while increasing access.

A transcript of the speech is available at: www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page11166.asp

NMDC wrote to the Prime Minister welcoming his speech and in particular the emphasis he placed on the importance of museums for regeneration, cohesion, cultural diplomacy and tourism and the Prime Minister's assurance that funding for culture would not be "boom and bust".

To coincide with the Prime Minister's speech, DCMS published *Culture and Creativity* in 2007 'a snapshot of the cultural life of the nation'. The report highlights the Government's achievements and outlines challenges and opportunities ahead. These include: maintaining excellence; raising participation levels; the Heritage White Paper; and a Green Paper on the creative economy, to be produced this summer. www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Publications/archive_2007/culture_creativity_2007.htm

Budget March 2007

The Budget announced on 21 March includes changes to Gift Aid, a reduction in the basic rate of tax and confirmation that the Comprehensive Spending Review will be published in the autumn.

The Budget includes an increase in the value of benefits that Gift Aid donors may receive, to 5% of the donation for those donating £1,000 or more, with the upper limit increased to £500. This recognises the need for charities to build relationships with donors, giving them the opportunity to thank them and to demonstrate how donations are used.

The Government has said that it will consult the charitable sector on measures to increase the take-up of Gift Aid and conduct an awareness-raising campaign. DCMS will assess the impact of changes on donations over the next nine months, to gain evidence to make the case for further measures.

Charity groups calculate that the decrease in the basic rate of income tax from 22 to 20 pence will result in an approximate reduction of 11.4% (over £70 million) in Gift Aid for charities. The Charity Finance Directors' Group (CFDG) and acevo have called for reform of Gift Aid, to create a simpler, opt-out system to drive up usage.

https://www.acevo.org.uk/index.cfm/display_page/news_press/control_contentType/news_list/display_open/news_788

The Chancellor also announced a new £80 million fund for local communities for the years to 2011 and said that he would look into providing help for churches and heritage buildings.

www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/budget/budget_07/report/bud_budget07_repindex.cfm

The Chancellor's Budget speech is at: [House of Commons Hansard Debates for 21 Mar 2007 \(pt 0004\)](http://House.of.Commons.Hansard.Debates.for.21.Mar.2007.(pt.0004))

Lyons Inquiry into Local Government

The Lyons Review into Local Government was published alongside the Budget. Along with other measures, the report recommends that the Government should conduct a review to look at "where practical, to remove or merge existing reliefs or exemptions", including the Council Tax relief for charities (currently 80%). www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1165334

2012 Olympic Games Funding

On 15 March Secretary of State Tessa Jowell announced the budget for the Olympic Delivery Authority. The total budget of £5.3 billion would come from Exchequer funding (£6bn), the National Lottery (£2.2bn - 20% of lottery income for good causes from 2005) and London (£1.2bn). This includes existing commitments from the Lottery of £1.5bn and the Greater London Authority and London Development Agency of £875m.

The additional National Lottery contribution of £675 million would consist of £425m from BIG and £250m from other lottery distributors, including an additional £90 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund (making a total of £161 million) and an additional £63 million from the Arts Council (total of £113 million). Resources for BIG Lottery good causes delivered through the voluntary sector would be protected and it is the Government's intention "that no existing lottery projects need be affected".

The decision on the lottery will be subject to resolution in both Houses.

www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Minister_Speeches/Tessa_Jowell/oral_statement_funding_2012games.htm

The Arts Council response is at: www.artscouncil.org.uk/pressnews/press_detail.php?rid=10&id=832

2012 Cultural Olympiad Plans to Create Regional Creative Programmers

A network of experienced regional representatives is to be set up to move forward Government plans for the Cultural Olympiad in the run-up to the 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. Each of England's eight regions outside London is to have its own 'Creative Programmer' who will:

- Encourage and enable arts and cultural bodies to get involved, and create opportunities for people to take part;
- Become a link between the regions and London's 2012 organising committee (LOCOG);
- Ensure that each region's heritage is as well represented as its 21st century technology.

www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Press_notices/archive_2007/dcms047_07.htm

Government White Paper: Heritage Protection for the 21st Century

DCMS has published *Heritage Protection for the 21st Century*, a white paper which sets out legislative measures to improve and simplify the heritage protection system. Key changes proposed include: a faster, more open system, devolved to English Heritage; a single Register of 'designated' historic sites and buildings; and increased protection for vulnerable sites.

English Heritage will expand its programme of training and capacity building for local authorities and provide them with guidance on new issues. The white paper applies primarily to England and Wales and legislation to enact the proposals will come before Parliament when Parliamentary time allows.

The white paper is available at: [The white paper, Heritage Protection for the 21st Century](#).

Responses to the proposals should be submitted by **1 June 2007**.

The White Paper has been broadly welcomed by the Heritage Sector, but concern has been expressed about the absence of committed resources to deliver the proposals in the white paper. A summary of responses from the Heritage sector will be available at www.heritagelink.org.uk

National Audit Office Report on Heritage Lottery Fund

The National Audit Office has published its report into the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The report concludes that the Fund has been successful in supporting projects that are helping to preserve the heritage of the United Kingdom and make it more accessible, and that its robust processes and thorough approach to assessing applications have led to better, more sustainable projects.

The report recommends developing the support and training offered to applicants, monitoring projects more closely as they progress and setting in place a system to share knowledge between applicants. It suggests that the Fund should review its approach to partnership funding and continue to develop how it captures the benefits arising from its grant-giving.

www.nao.org.uk/pn/06-07/0607323.htm

Gender Equality Duty Comes in to Force

The Gender Equality Duty comes into force on 6 April 2007. All public authorities in England, Wales and Scotland and other public organisations - including National Museums - must demonstrate that they are promoting equality for women and men and that they are eliminating sexual discrimination and harassment. Guidance on requirements to meet the Gender Equality Duty can be found at:

www.eoc.org.uk/Default.aspx?page=15016

Report on Capability Review of DCMS

The Cabinet Office has published a capability review of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The report recognises DCMS' "knowledgeable, committed staff" and "positive working environment" and successes, including winning the bid for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The report states that the department has some challenges ahead, in particular the 2012 Olympics, and identifies areas for further action to enable DCMS to respond effectively to future challenges, based on "a rigorous analysis of the Department's added value" which should drive all other transformation and capability improvements.

DCMS has drawn up an action plan that outlines the work it is doing to respond to the review's findings. This includes strengthening leadership, with a new board structure and changes to its Olympic team.

DCMS is one of five departments in the third tranche of the capability review programme, which is part of wider civil service reform. The capability review and DCMS' action plan are available at: www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Publications/archive_2007/capability_review.htm

Heritage Lottery Fund's Collecting Cultures

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is inviting applications for funding to its new museums and galleries collections development initiative *Collecting Cultures* from **23 April 2007**. *Collecting Cultures* will support acquisitions, curatorial skills, research and increased activities for the public. A total of £3 million is available, for grants from £50,000 to £200,000 and projects that run for up to five years.

Applications will be handled under the normal HLF Heritage Grants process, with additional guidance provided to help applicants. Guidance notes will be available on the HLF website from 23 April and applications can be submitted between **23 April and 1 November 2007**. Decisions will be made in May 2008. www.hlf.org.uk/English/MediaCentre/Archive/Collecting+Cultures.htm

Scotland's Heritage Policy Launched

Scottish Historic Environment Policy is a series of policy documents that sets out Scottish Ministers' vision and strategic policies for the wider historic environment and provides greater policy direction for Historic Scotland. Scottish Historic Environment Policy 1 (SHEP1), the overarching policy statement for the historic environment, has been published. It sets out a vision for the future and provides a framework for the work of organisations that have a role and interest in managing the historic environment. The policy document is available at: www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/shep1

Museums and Galleries Month - Museum at Night

Part of Museums and Galleries Month, Museum at Night/Nuit des Musées will be celebrated in museums and galleries across Europe on Saturday 19 May. This promotion is now in its third year and coincides with International Museums Day on 18 May. Last year some 3,000 museums took part.

This year Museum at Night sees fifty UK museums screening the family film *Night at the Museum*, as a result of a Museums and Galleries Month agreement with Twentieth Century Fox, and many others, including the V&A, National Portrait Gallery and National Gallery, organising late night openings and special events over the weekend of 18-20th May. www.mgm.org.uk

Government Plans Energy Ratings for Public Buildings

Public buildings over 1000 sq metres, such as museums, galleries and government buildings, will have to display Energy Performance Certificates - like consumer friendly fridge ratings - from April 2008, under new regulations to implement the EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive.

This measure, which will enable visitors to see the annual carbon emissions of each building, is intended to encourage energy improvements to public buildings, help cut public costs and lead the way in cutting carbon emissions. www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1002882&PressNoticeID=2394

New Director of Communications at Museums Libraries and Archives Council

Lynda Scott joins from the Office for Criminal Justice Reform. She has over 20 years communications experience, mainly in the public sector. For the last three years, Lynda has been communications director for one of the main government IT programmes (CJIT), joining up justice across three main government departments. She will take up her post at the MLA on 16 April. www.mla.gov.uk

New Appointment at Arts Council England

Vivienne Bennett, currently Project Director of Transforming Tate Modern, has been appointed Director, Visual Arts Strategy, at Arts Council England.

www.artscouncil.org.uk/pressnews/press_detail.php?browse=recent&id=845

Website of Events to Commemorate the Bicentenary of the Abolition of Slavery Act

A new website www.abolition200.org.uk provides news of national bicentenary events and activities. Backed by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, Awards for All and 24 Hour Museum, the website offers a searchable database of events and has a special area for teachers and schools. It also highlights opportunities for groups wanting to apply for National Lottery money to help fund their commemorative events and activities.

At a launch at the National Portrait Gallery on 15 March 2007 Culture Minister David Lammy welcomed the tremendous response of the cultural and heritage sectors to the commemoration of the parliamentary abolition of the slave trade, praising the variety and breadth of the exhibitions and events on offer. www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Press_notices/archive_2007/dcms040_07.htm

New Plan for Wandsworth Museum

Wandsworth Council is joining forces with the Hintze Family Charitable Foundation, a sponsor of the arts, to establish a new plan for Wandsworth Museum. The proposal would involve the setting up of an independent trust to manage the museum. Trustees would have access to the existing collection and would run the new service with support from volunteers.

www.wandsworth.gov.uk/Home/MyWandsworth/Pressreleases/newspage_detail.htm?id=4943

Tourism Industry Recovers to pre-2001 Levels

New research indicates that Britain's visitor economy has recovered to pre-2001 levels. Based on available 2005 data, the value of Britain's visitor economy is now estimated at £85 billion which, accounting for inflation, places it £600 million ahead of its worth in 2000.

Inbound tourism expenditure has been strong since 2001, with 14% growth in real terms, helped by the enlargement of Europe, which has led to growth from Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary and increased visits to the UK from countries such as India.

Britons make over one billion tourism day trips a year, spending £44.3 billion, and take 139 million overnight trips (£23 billion), well ahead of the 66.5 million trips abroad taken by Britons.

www.visitbritain.com/corporate/presscentre/presscentrebritain/pressreleasesoverseasmrkt/jan-mar2007/tourism_recovery.aspx

MDA Publishes Revised SPECTRUM Standard

MDA has published a revised version of SPECTRUM, the UK and international industry standard for documentation. The new version has been updated to reflect current best practice in the heritage sector and recent changes in legislation and represents a significant revision to the 2005 third edition.

New features include the integration of relevant parts of MLA London and MDA's *Revisiting Collections* initiative and material to support the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Cultural Property Unit guidelines on due diligence in combating illicit trade.

The revised version of the standard can be downloaded at: www.mda.org.uk/spectrum.htm

MayFair II Conference

This two day event organised by EUCLID, the UK agency for European information and knowledge for the cultural sector, celebrates the recent enlargement of the EU and provides an opportunity to learn about arts and culture in central and eastern Europe. With presentations and workshops from the 12 countries that have joined the EU since May 2004 and two candidate countries, Croatia and Turkey, the conference offers an opportunity to exchange knowledge, network and explore links for future co-operation and exchange.

9-10 May 2007 Tate Modern, London www.euclid.info/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=41

ProjectsETC Moves to Creative Knowledge Lab

Following the closure of Culture Online, ProjectsETC, which aims to help people create great digital projects in the areas of Education, Technology and Culture (ETC), has been taken over by Creative & Cultural Skills. The website will become part of a suite of online resources to help people develop their skills in the creative and cultural sector and will integrate with the Creative Knowledge Lab.

www.projectsetc.org

Museums & Heritage Show: Focus on Design & Interpretation

The 2007 Museums & Heritage Show will include over 30 free seminar sessions, a Museums Association one-day conference on live interpretation and a free drop in Design & Interpretation Surgery. Members of the Association for Heritage Interpretation will offer free and informal one-to-one expert advice. Admission to the Museums & Heritage Show is free.

9-10 May, Earls Court, London For more information visit www.museumsandheritage.com.

Parliamentary Report

Tribunals Courts and Enforcement Bill (HL) 2006-07

The Tribunals Courts and Enforcement Bill, which introduces provision for immunity from seizure, has been considered by the Public Bill Committee in the Commons. Details of proceedings are at:

www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/pabills/200607/tribunals_courts_and_enforcement.htm

In the Commons debate on the Bill held on 5 March, Sir Patrick McCormack mentioned the NMDC contribution to the section of the bill on immunity from seizure.

[House of Commons Hansard Debates for 05 Mar 2007 \(pt 0011\)](#)

Commons Debate on Cultural Diplomacy

On 13 March, MPs held a debate on Cultural Diplomacy, following the recent Demos report. MPs broadly supported the recommendations in the report, praised the work abroad of National Museums and made suggestions for additional activities.

Conservative Shadow Culture Minister Edward Vaizey noted that while searching National Museum websites, he had not been able to find information about their work abroad. He urged National Museums to “shout about the things that they do”.

For the Government, the Minister for the Middle East, Dr. Kim Howells, assured the House that cultural diplomacy is a key component of the government’s effort and stated that “the Olympics will provide a great opportunity for us to emphasise the importance of cultural diplomacy”.

The debate can be read in full at: [House of Commons Hansard Debates for 13 Mar 2007 \(pt 0004\)](#)

Commons Discuss Regional Museums (England)

On 5 March Arts Minister David Lammy answered questions on Regional Museums in England in the Commons. MPs expressed support for the Renaissance in the Regions programme and concern that progress made would be jeopardized by reduced funding in future. Sir Patrick Cormack called on David Lammy to acknowledge that “we cannot have flourishing provincial and regional museums unless the great national museums are also flourishing” and that National Museums are “seriously underfunded at present”. The Minister disagreed with the assertion that National Museums were under funded and said that they “hold up incredibly well in comparison with many of our European partners”.

[House of Commons Hansard Debates for 05 Mar 2007 \(pt 0001\)](#)

Prime Minister Talking About Museums Again...

In response to a question from Mr. Sadiq Khan about Wandsworth museum, the Prime Minister said: “The museums do an immense amount of good for our young people and the broader community. As a result of our introducing free museum entry for our national museums, we have had had millions more people going to museums—some of them from some of the lowest-income families”.

[House of Commons Hansard Debates for 21 Mar 2007 \(pt 0003\)](#)

Commons Debate on the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade

On 20 March the Commons held a debate on the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, which highlighted many of the activities held by museums and galleries to mark the anniversary.

www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmhansrd/cm070320/debtext/70320-0004.htm#07032055000001

International Issues

Metropolitan Museum to Provide Digital Images to Scholars at No Charge

In order to assist scholars with teaching, study and the publication of academic works, The Metropolitan Museum of Art will distribute, free of charge, nearly 1,700 high-resolution digital images of works in its collection for use in academic publications. This new service, which is effective immediately, is available through ARTstor - www.artstor.org - a non-profit organisation that makes art images available for educational use and follows a similar move by the V&A earlier this year. More than 730 institutions in North America, Australia, and the United Kingdom currently licence ARTstor

www.metmuseum.org/press_room/full_release.asp?prid={A113E0AD-AA4E-471B-8F04-736A21F1A70A}

Head of Smithsonian Resigns

Smithsonian Secretary Lawrence M. Small has resigned. Cristián Samper, head of the National Museum of Natural History, has been named acting secretary.

Small has been criticized by members of Congress, his pay and expense accounts have been subject to scrutiny by the Smithsonian inspector general and the Senate recently voted to freeze an increase in funding for the Smithsonian. Two committees have been appointed to look into management operations at the Smithsonian, which includes 18 museums and research facilities.

newsdesk.si.edu/releases/si_resignation_announcement_of_the_secretary.htm

The Art Newspaper reports that a report by leading US museum directors concludes that the eight art museums funded and run by the Smithsonian Institution "have reached a critical point. Drastically under funded, they are unable to lead...at a time when their creativity and high visibility give them vast potential to affect the lives of our citizens." The report recommends actions to improve the museums. www.theartnewspaper.com/article01.asp?id=592

Artefacts Returned to National Museum of Afghanistan

1,400 Afghan ethnographic and archaeological objects, which were stored under the aegis of UNESCO in Switzerland since 1999, have been handed back to the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul. Founded in 1930, the National Museum was looted and vandalised under the Taliban regime. The building has been restored and it reopened to the public in October 2004.

portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=37016&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

Albright-Knox Auction Makes \$18 Million

The New York Times reports that the first auction of antiquities from the collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York made more than \$18 million. The star of the auction was an intricately decorated bronze wine vessel from the Shang dynasty, bought by Compton Verney for \$8.1 million.

www.nytimes.com/2007/03/21/arts/design/21albr.html?_r=1&ref=arts&oref=slogin

Russia Exhibits Looted German Treasures

Merovingian artefacts seized by Soviet soldiers in Germany at the end of World War II are on display in for the first time in sixty years at an exhibition at the Pushkin Museum, Moscow. The exhibition, organised in conjunction with the Hermitage and the Berlin Museum of Prehistory and Ancient History, will travel to the Hermitage, but not to Berlin. Germany is negotiating with Russia over the return of artefacts taken by Soviet soldiers in 1945 and could not guarantee the return of the objects.

www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2382818,00.html

Netherlands Buys Restituted Paintings

The Washington Post reports that the Dutch government has paid €3 million to buy four 17th-century pictures that were returned last year to the heir of art dealer Jacques Goudstikker, a gallery owner who fled the Nazis. Goudstikker's heir will donate a fifth painting to the government. The five old masters will return to museums in Gouda, Den Bosch, Utrecht and Delft.

www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/06/AR2007030600327.html

Forthcoming Meetings

Marketing Group

Monday 4 June, 2pm, venue TBC

HR Forum

Friday 8 June, 11am, venue TBC

UK Affairs Committee

Wednesday 13 June, 2pm, Manchester Art Gallery

NMDC meeting

Friday 13 July, 11am, V&A

If you have any comments on the NMDC Newsletter or would like to contribute to a future edition, please email the Editor, Zoë Nasatyr, at news@nationalmuseums.org.uk

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