

**Antiquities, Sites and Museums Under Threat: Cultural Heritage and Communities in a State of War (1939–45)**

**GHENT UNIVERSITY (Gent, Belgium), 15-16 October 2020**

**Organisers: ANTONINO CRISÀ and JEAN BOURGEOIS**

**PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME**

**THURSDAY 15 OCTOBER 2020**

10:00-10:15 Introduction (Jean Bourgeois – Antonino Crisà).  
10:15-11:00 JOHN & PATRICIA CARMAN (University of Birmingham – Birmingham, UK): *War as a cultural activity* (key-note).

**Session 1: Italy**

11:00-11:30 ANTONINO CRISÀ (Ghent University – Ghent, Belgium): *Sicily in a state of war: the protection of antiquities and archaeological sites (1940–45)*.  
11:30-12:00 SIMON STODDART & FLAMINIA BARTOLINI (University of Cambridge – Cambridge, UK): *Robert Capa, 'Beni culturali' and the Battle of Troina (30 July – 6 August 1943)*.  
12:00-12:30 CARLOTTA COCCOLI (Università degli Studi di Brescia – Brescia, Italy): *Italy 1940–45: the account on antiquities from Allied reports*.  
12:30-13:00 ANNA TULLIACH (University of Leicester – Leicester, UK): *New perspectives on art looting in World War 2: instances of Allied troops' crimes against cultural assets in occupied Italian territories*.  
13:00-14:00 *Lunch break*

**Session 2: Italy & Greece**

14:00-14:30 NATHALIE DE HAAN (Radboud University – Nijmegen, Netherlands): *Safeguarding Foce del Sele (Paestum). Umberto Zanotti-Bianco and Paola Zancani Montuoro*.  
14:30-15:00 THOMAS MORARD (Université de Liège – Liège, Belgium): TBD.  
15:00-15:30 GERMANO GERMANÒ (Politecnico di Bari – Bari, Italy): *Cultural heritage in times of war: the case of the Roman bridge of Canosa di Puglia (Italy)*.  
15:30-16:00 *'Virtual' coffee*  
16:00-16:30 FOTIOS KATEVAS (Kerameikos Museum of Athens – Athens, Greece): *Kerameikos: a significant archaeological site of Athens and its museum during the World War 2 (1940–44)*.  
16:30-17:00 MARIA CHIDIROGLOU (National Archaeological Museum of Athens – Athens, Greece): *Protecting museum antiquities during World War II. Photographs from the National Archaeological Museum, in Athens, with a story to tell*.

**FRIDAY 16 OCTOBER 2020**

09:30-10:15 NIGEL POLLARD (Swansea University – Swansea, UK): *'Even the Germans did not do that'. The British military requisition and occupation of the Museo Nazionale di Napoli (December 1943 to June 1944), and its wider implications for military cultural property protection* (keynote).

**Session 3: Greece & other European contexts**

10:15-10:45 CHRYSANTHI TSOULI (National Museum of Athens – Athens, Greece): *Athenian antiquities in times of conflict: from the Greek War for Independence (1821–33) to the World War II*.

10:45-11:15 JAN DRIESSEN (Université catholique de Louvain – Louvain, Belgium): *'Never-Never Land' under attack: Axis war damage on Cretan antiquities.*

11:15-11:30 *'Virtual' coffee*

11:30-12:00 SUZIE THOMAS (University of Helsinki – Helsinki, Finland): *From 'war junk' to 'isn't it a treasure!' – processes of heritagisation of the material remains of the Second World War in Finnish Lapland.*

12:00-12:30 JEAN-PIERRE LEGENDRE & LAURENT OLIVIER (Musée d'Archéologie nationale – Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France): *Rocks around the bunkers: the destruction of French archaeological heritage during WW2.*

12:30-13:00 VALENTINA SABUCCO (Trident Manor Limited – Darlington, UK): *How the Second World War impacted cultural venues and their use by local communities: the case of the Hancock Museum of Newcastle upon Tyne.*

13:00-13:30 *Discussion & Farewell.*

### ***LIST OF ABSTRACTS***

**JOHN & PATRICIA CARMAN** (University of Birmingham – Birmingham, UK) ([j.carman@bham.ac.uk](mailto:j.carman@bham.ac.uk)): *War as a cultural activity.*

Starting from the position that if war is ever the answer, then the question must be a very stupid one, this talk will aim to put considerations of threats of damage and destruction to cultural heritage in periods of conflict into a wider context, looking at the nature of war itself as a cultural form. Taking a long-term perspective derived from our recent work on the *Bloody Meadows Project* it will start from the premise that a concern for the fate of 'things' (however ancient) is a particular pathology of modernity and it is this pathology that creates the conditions under which objects of cultural value are chosen for attention by aggressors and for particular protection by defenders.

We shall address war as a realm where violent destruction – of people and places – is the paramount aim, and thereby the equation of people with objects representative of those people becomes an essential part of the discourse of war-making: this in part explains how cultural objects become targets. There is more to war than destruction however: it is an aspect frequently overlooked that wars also create new things – among them new classes of people, new artefacts, new landscapes and new forms of cultural expression. The aftermath of wars allows things that were destroyed to be remade and re-modelled. As a cultural activity, war is both destructive and creative. Taking this deliberately provocative approach raises important issues about our attitudes to the destruction of heritage and its protection in wartime which I hope this conference will address.

**MARIA CHIDIROGLOU** (National Archaeological Museums of Athens – Athens, Greece) ([mchidiroglou@culture.gr](mailto:mchidiroglou@culture.gr)): *Protecting museum antiquities during World War II. Photographs from the National Archaeological Museum in Athens with a story to tell.*

Photos from the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, most of them dated in the years 1940–41, will be presented in this paper, as well as information gathered from administrative documents regarding the project of hiding and safeguarding museum's antiquities during World War II. In the last months of 1940 to April 1941, the antiquities of the National Archaeological Museum in Athens were assembled, carefully packed and placed in boxes or buried in pits excavated below the floor of Museum exhibition rooms, for safe storage away from war dangers. The same protective measures were undertaken in other Greek Museums as well. This official project of hiding the antiquities underground proved crucial for their salvaging and protection by war air raids and it led to the preservation of works of cultural heritage.

The pictures from the Photographic Archives of the National Museum which will be presented are eloquent as to the lengthy and strenuous work of safeguarding the antiquities and as to the post-war Museum reconstruction and re-exhibition projects. Through this presentation, I will attempt to investigate the impact of war on the museum's antiquities in general, as well as to trace some aspects of Modern Greek history.

**CARLOTTA COCCOLI** (Università degli Studi di Brescia – Brescia, Italy) ([carlotta.coccoli@unibs.it](mailto:carlotta.coccoli@unibs.it)): *Italy 1940–45: the account on antiquities from Allied reports.*

During the Second World War, the Italian artistic heritage was exposed to serious risk of damage and destruction, mainly caused by aerial bombing. Since the late 1920s, the Italian government had implemented a plan to safeguard and protect works of art, monuments, archaeological sites and collections through the preparation of a “mobilisation plan of works of art in case of war”, in order to transform them into “virtually impregnable fortresses of Italian civilisation”. The elaborate brickwork or timber and sandbag frameworks were published in the monograph *La protezione del patrimonio artistico nazionale dalle offese della guerra aerea* (1942) and illustrated by photographs so magnificent as to amaze the enemies.

After Italy's entry into the war (1940), these protections proved not to be effective enough against the damage caused by the air war, as the Allies themselves noticed when they were able to observe them live (W. B. Dinsmoor, 1944). After the landing in Sicily (1943), the Subcommission for Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives was created as an outpost of a vast Allied programme “for the protection and conservation of works of art and of artistic and historic records in Europe”. In a 2-year span, the so-called ‘Monuments Officers’ supported Italian Fine Arts personnel, ensuring support for first-aid repairs and undertaking the task of salvaging a highly damaged cultural heritage.

By consulting the *Reports* of the Subcommission in Italy, this paper aims to offer a ‘biased’ Allied perspective to shed light and give a first general overview on the fate of the Italian antiquities during the war, with a special focus on damage and reconstruction of archaeological monuments and sites.

**ANTONINO CRISÀ** (Ghent University – Ghent, Belgium) ([antonino.crisa@ugent.be](mailto:antonino.crisa@ugent.be)): *Sicily in a state of war: the protection of antiquities and archaeological sites (1940–45).*

As officially announced by Benito Mussolini, Italy entered World War 2 on 10 June 1940. One of the major, impelling issues caused by the new state of war was certainly the protection of the substantial Italian cultural heritage, which needed to be safeguarded. The Ministry of National Education, which had already designed a plan few years before, imposed new rules and guidelines to protect monuments and sites on a national scale. They were constantly at risk for two main impacting factors: 1) Allied bombing which could cause major damage and destruction; 2) military operations (attacks, landings, troop advance or requisition of historical buildings by the Italian or Germany armies).

Sicily can be considered one the Italian regions which suffered most the effects of war already in mid-1940. Catania, Messina and Palermo were heavily bombed by the enemies until August 1943, when the landing and all Operation Husky were successfully completed by the Allied troops. What do we know about the impact of war on museums and antiquities in the island, which were put at serious risk by the war context?

The scope of this paper is to present my on-going, intriguing Marie Skłodowska-Curie research project entitled *Cultural Heritage in Danger: Archaeology and Communities in Sicily during the Second World War (1940–45)*. First, I contextualise my project within the historical framework of World War 2. Second, I assess a series of targeted case studies (e.g. Agrigento and Palermo), which help us better understand how national and local authorities dealt with the protection of museums, monuments and archaeological sites. Finally, such information will be disclosed through the analysis of new documentary evidence.

**NATHALIE DE HAAN** (Radboud University – Nijmegen, Netherlands) ([n.dehaan@let.ru.nl](mailto:n.dehaan@let.ru.nl)): *Safeguarding Foce del Sele (Paestum). Umberto Zanotti-Bianco and Paola Zancani Montuoro.*

[To be provided]

**JAN DRIESSEN** (Université catholique de Louvain – Louvain, Belgium) ([jan.driesssen@uclouvain.be](mailto:jan.driesssen@uclouvain.be)): *‘Never-Never Land’ under attack...Axis war damage on Cretan antiquities.*

From June 1941 to May 1944, the island of Crete was occupied by the Axis forces, with the Germans in control of the provinces of Iraklion, Rethymnon and Chania, and the Italians (till September 1943) of the eastern part of the island, Lasithi. The intention to turn the island into a fortress against Allied operations and potential invasion brought along a frenzy of construction of military installations that often affected known or unknown archaeological sites. By using published war damage reports as well as first-hand information, this paper presents a first step in a larger *war archaeology* of Crete.

**GERMANO GERMANÒ** (Politecnico di Bari – Bari, Italy) ([germano.germano@live.com](mailto:germano.germano@live.com)): *Cultural heritage in times of war: the case of the Roman bridge of Canosa di Puglia (Italy).*

The particular condition of the alternating Italian alliances during the Second World War meant that the rich architectural and archaeological heritage was more vulnerable to internal attacks by former German allies, whose troops were deployed throughout the peninsula. The retreat of German troops to Italy at the end of the war left behind a destruction from which the heritage suffered severely.

In order to prevent the advance of the American troops, the strategic infrastructures were subject to specific destructive operations, without any consideration for the historical value of the monuments. To this abominable strategy belongs the episode of one of the oldest and biggest Roman bridges in Southern Italy, located on the Ofanto river near Canosa di Puglia. Its arches were blown up by German troops, leaving only few ruins. The outrage was then further perpetrated on the lateral retaining walls, in which a breach was opened to allow a concrete walkway to pass through that also compromised the foundation structure (*platea*) located along the riverbed, one of the best preserved of its type.

Thanks to archive research, historical photographs have been brought to light, including those taken by the American reporter Albert Chance in 1944. They had been used to reconstruct the state of destruction immediately following the bombardment and to define which elements of the bridge, now completely restored, actually relate to the ancient and Roman phases of the structure.

**FOTIOS KATEVAS** (Kerameikos Museum of Athens – Athens, Greece) ([fkatevas@culture.gr](mailto:fkatevas@culture.gr)): *Kerameikos: a significant archaeological site of Athens and its museum during the World War 2 (1940–44).*

The archaeological site of Kerameikos is located in the center of Athens and consists one of the most important archaeological sites of the ancient city. The Archaeological Society at Athens excavated the centre beginning from 1867. Since 1913 the site is explored by the German Archaeological Institute. Therefore, the Kerameikos and ancient Olympia are significant within the German archaeological research in Greece.

The German excavations continued during World War 2 arising several important archaeological discoveries. However, the Museum of Kerameikos, funded by the Germans and established within the archeological site in 1938, appeared to be in the vortex of war conflicts. Over the course of the Italian/German/Bulgarian occupation, Kerameikos was a matter of conflict between the German Archaeological Institute and the Greek Archaeological Services. It was also in the middle of the armed conflicts at least twice in the year 1944, which caused the damage of several monuments and museum's infrastructure.

This paper attempts to provide a comprehensive review of these two aspects through the analysis of several significant data. They derive from the archive of the Greek Archaeological Service. The main scope of my paper is to shed new light on the Kerameikos in that historical context. This research forwards the synthesis of the information related with the German excavation research history during the war and tries to provide a more complete image of the historical facts. The majority of the data are unpublished yet, while the available related references are fragmentary or inaccurate to some extent. Thus, due to these gaps in history, people were blamed for actions that they never accomplish and others which were responsible, remain unknown.

**JEAN-PIERRE LEGENDRE & LAURENT OLIVIER** (Musée d'Archéologie nationale – Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France) ([jean-pierre.legendre@culture.gouv.fr](mailto:jean-pierre.legendre@culture.gouv.fr), [laurent.olivier@culture.gouv.fr](mailto:laurent.olivier@culture.gouv.fr)): *Rocks around the bunkers: the destruction of French archaeological heritage during WW2.*

A great deal of work has been devoted to set up an assessment of the impact of the Great War (1914–18) on the archaeological heritage of the Frontline regions, namely in France and Belgium. But, comparatively, very few research has been carried out on the impact of the Second World War: how has it been destructive, and where? What kinds of sites have been affected? And how war destructions have impacted post-war archaeological research in these regions? In this paper, we propose to draw a first overview of the subject for the French territory, encompassing both German military works, the French Maginot Line and Allied bombings.

**THOMAS MORARD** (Université de Liège – Liège, Belgium) ([Thomas.Morard@uliege.be](mailto:Thomas.Morard@uliege.be)): TBD.

**NIGEL POLLARD** (Swansea University – Swansea, UK) ([n.d.pollard@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:n.d.pollard@swansea.ac.uk)): *'Even the Germans did not do that'. The British military requisition and occupation of the Museo Nazionale di Napoli (December 1943 to June 1944), and its wider implications for military cultural property protection.*

From December 1943 to June 1944, the Museo Nazionale (now the Museo Nazionale Archeologico) in Naples was occupied by No. 10 Base Depot of the British Army Medical Corps as a depot for military medical supplies. This paper examines the specific circumstances that led to that requisition and occupation, immediate responses and consequences of those events, and their longer-term implications.

The Museo Nazionale di Napoli survived the German occupation and Allied bombing of Naples relatively unscathed. As is well-known, a part of its portable collections was evacuated from the museum in June to September 1943, initially to the Abbey of Montecassino and then to the Vatican, with the exception of a portion misappropriated by German armed forces. However, about 75% of the collections remained in the museum when the city was occupied by Allied armies in October 1943. British military authorities soon sought to requisition the building for use as a medical stores depot, and despite strong objections by the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Sub-Commission (the unit within Allied military government tasked with protecting cultural property) the occupation went ahead in December 1943. MFAA objections to the occupation played a central role in an Allied military commission of enquiry in early 1944, but despite its recommendation that the requisition be lifted, the unit remained in place until June of that year. Nevertheless, the commission's broader recommendations were influential in shaping military approaches to the occupation of historical buildings and cultural institutions through the remainder of the Second World War to the present day.

This paper examines the issues at stake in the occupation of the museum, including the question of (as Eisenhower put it) 'military necessity' versus 'military convenience', and Neapolitan public opinion. It also considers the analysis of the situation in the subsequent commission of enquiry and how its findings came to influence later practice.

**VALENTINA SABUCCO** (Trident Manor Limited – Darlington, UK): *How the Second World War impacted cultural venues and their use by local communities: the case of the Hancock Museum of Newcastle upon Tyne.*

During World War II, the North East of the UK, and in particular Newcastle upon Tyne, was in the frontline of the production of ships and armaments for the war effort. Being railways, factories and shipyards in the region often targeted by German bombers, there was high concern that museums in the area could suffer collateral or accidental damage. In this climate, the trustees of the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne held an emergency Council meeting to discuss the protection of the Hancock Museum and its collections.

Based on archival materials and photographs, this paper aims to shed light on how the war impacted the Hancock Museum, its staff, and how the community perceived and used it during the war. Many measures were undertaken to protect the museum collections and the staff. Items such as drawings and fossils were placed in wooden packing cases to be sent to much safer locations.

The process was facilitated by inventories of the most valuable specimens written in the spring of 1938 before the outbreak of the war. A large trench was also dug in the grounds to protect the staff from possible raids, before a more appropriate air-raid shelter was provided by the local municipality. Until 1940 the museum remained closed but allowed members and associates of the Natural History Society to consult the collections remaining in the building during daylight hours. When it reopened in 1940, indoor exhibitions were organised and daily inquiries by the public on all sorts of subjects, and specimens were presented for identification as much as ‘in peacetime’, the Newcastle council’s accounts report.

**SIMON STODDART & FLAMINIA BARTOLINI** (University of Cambridge – Cambridge, UK) ([ss16@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ss16@cam.ac.uk), [fb282@cam.ac.uk](mailto:fb282@cam.ac.uk)): *Robert Capa, ‘Beni culturali’ and the Battle of Troina (30 July – 6 August 1943).*

The Battle of Troina in the foothills of the Nebrodi mountains was one of the most significant defensive battles of the Germans in their retreat towards Messina in 1943, resisting the advance of American forces. Such was the violence of the battle centred on the ancient mountain town of Troina, that much of the settlement was destroyed and 116 local inhabitants killed. These destructive events were memorably recorded by Robert Capa, the famous Hungarian war photographer and these photographs give a graphic account of the destruction of the *beni culturali* of this historic place where Roger the Norman overwintered in his own conquest of Sicily from the Arabs.

The paper will give an account of the destructive forces of war on this distinctive centre, primarily illustrated by the graphic accounts of Robert Capa, supplemented by historical accounts and some fragments of archaeological information from the field survey conducted around the city. Ironically, the substantial destruction of the town enabled a rebirth of monumental remains sponsored by the charismatic priest, Luigi Orazio Ferlauto, creating a new suite of *beni culturali* out of the wreckage of war. This is an unusual narrative of an eclectic style of new *beni culturali* sponsored by religious devotion and the Sicilian health service which has few parallels. War has its own creativity, but not always in a uniformly accepted taste.

**SUZIE THOMAS** (University of Helsinki – Helsinki, Finland) ([suzie.e.thomas@helsinki.fi](mailto:suzie.e.thomas@helsinki.fi)): *From ‘war junk’ to ‘isn’t it a treasure!’ – processes of heritagisation of the material remains of the Second World War in Finnish Lapland.*

Finland in the Second World War found itself stuck between two major world powers. On the one hand the Soviet Union invaded several times, while Nazi Germany offered assistance to Finland, sending over 200,000 soldiers there, the majority based in the north of the country. The soldiers brought with them also Organisation Todt labourers and Prisoners of War, and infrastructural changes in Lapland (including the first roads and railway lines) were rapid. Following a largely harmonious period of cohabitation between locals and the German soldiers, things changed after a treaty with the

Soviet Union required Finland to expel their former ‘brothers in arms’. The ensuing Lapland War led to immense destruction, with scorched ‘scars’ left by burnt structures still visible on the ground in many places. The cultural landscape altered dramatically, with serious implications for local understandings of place.

In the decades following the war, these wartime remains – both portable objects and larger sites – have undergone several transformations, and have a multitude of meanings for different actors. Once considered worthless ‘junk’, many of the military remains of the Second World War now enjoy protection and an official ‘cultural heritage’ status. Certain artefacts have also become desirable to collectors, and so a treasure hunting movement with particular interest in wartime militaria from Lapland has developed.

In this presentation I outline the key findings of the project ‘Lapland’s Dark Heritage’ with regard to the ways in which different people – including local resident Finns and Sámi, as well as tourists and seasonal visitors – make sense of the environment and material left by the events of the Second World War, and especially the so-called Lapland War (1944–45). I offer some theoretical suggestions for the processes at play, and discuss further questions to explore.

**CHRYSANTHI TSOULI** (National Museum of Athens – Athens, Greece) ([chtsouli@culture.gr](mailto:chtsouli@culture.gr)): *Athenian antiquities in times of conflict: from the Greek War for Independence (1821–33) to the World War II.*

This paper deals with Athenian monuments and antiquities under threat during two different military expeditions: during the Greek War for Independence from the Turkish Occupation (1821–33) and during the Axis occupation from April 1941 to October 1944, and the fighting of December 1944 between E.L.A.S. (the army of the left-wing Resistance Movement) and the Greek Government Forces, supported by British troops. An attempt will be made to present the different state of endangered monuments and antiquities and the attitude of the Greeks and the opponents towards them during these historical periods.

On the one hand, old sketches and engravings representing the bombardment of antiquities in Athens during the Greek War for Independence (study case the Acropolis, as well as isolated monuments, such as the Theseion) will be presented. On the other hand, I will show photographic documents and reports on the state of Athenian monuments under Italian and German occupation and partial destruction caused by military installations (on the Acropolis, the Theseion and Sounion), as well as official documents and technical instructions on the project of safeguarding the antiquities by hiding them in pits excavated below the floor of Museums exhibition rooms and in caves in Athens. The protection of antiquities was one of the major concerns of the Greek government during World War 2. Through this presentation, I also seek to assess some aspects of the ethics of appropriation of art works in times of war.

**ANNA TULLIACH** (University of Leicester – Leicester, UK) ([at451@leicester.ac.uk](mailto:at451@leicester.ac.uk)): *New perspectives on art looting in World War 2: instances of Allied troops’ crimes against cultural assets in occupied Italian territories.*

The purpose of this paper is to provide a new perspective on art looting during the Second World War. Indeed, to date the public attention has been mainly focused on the massive art looting campaigns conducted by the Nazis in occupied territories of Europe. My aim is to tell another side of the story, by investigating the range of roles that Allied troops played in wartime in relation to the requisition of historical buildings and the subsequent illicit appropriation of cultural properties in occupied territories of Italy. Through an investigation on the case study regarding the occupation of the Mostra Triennale delle Terre Italiane d’Oltremare in Naples (‘Triennial Exhibition of the Italian Overseas Lands’), I examine an underexplored area: the modalities of Allied troops’ crimes against cultural assets, and the potential contexts that drove Anglo-Americans into committing crimes of stealing

cultural property. Moreover, my aim is to assess the role that the Monuments, Fine Arts & Archives Sub-commission (MFA&A S/C) played in trying to prevent such illicit acts.

Official and unofficial records depict a picture of widespread damage to and appropriation of cultural assets by Allied troops during the Second World War in Europe. In wartime, Allies frequently seized historic palaces and museum buildings to convert them into army bases, military hospitals and army depots. In the course of these requisitions, troops destroyed, damaged and stole cultural objects still preserved there. After the Allied landing in Southern Italy in September 1943, problems with troops' exploitation of monumental buildings, with subsequent instances of looting and damage, were remarkable. One of the MFA&A S/C's roles was to act against the billeting of troops in historical properties and to prevent them to steal and damage objects housed there. Although their efforts in prohibiting these acts were very strong, examples of troops' occupation of historical monuments were innumerable during the entire course of the Italian campaign.

In conclusion, this paper is going to develop themes that to date have been studied only marginally, contributing to and widening the academic discourse on the theme of art looting during the Second World War.



Dresden (1946) (Courtesy of Getty's Image).

This conference arises from the *Cultural Heritage in Danger: Archaeology and Communities in Sicily during the Second World War (1940–45)* project (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship), which has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. 835876).



[up-to-date: 14/09/2020]