

ART ADVISORY E-BULLETIN

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An art world fairy tale

Once upon a time, there was a man who lived in a desert far away from everything. He was not well known, but his boundless courage was to show the world what it means to believe in freedom of expression. Every day he risked his life, because he believed in all forms of art not just the prescriptive art imposed by his people. His name was Igor V. Savitsky. He was the Robin Hood of the Russian Art world and because of his courage many paintings, which would otherwise have been destroyed or forgotten, lived happily ever after.

Igor Savitsky was a Russian artist, who went to the remote steppes of Uzbekistan in 1950 for an archaeological and ethnographic expedition. He decided to stay on after the dig and began collecting drawings, paintings and other works of art.

Savitsky took it upon himself to collect Russian avant-garde art, which Soviet authorities were banishing and destroying at the time. During the Soviet rule, artists who veered away from communist-approved ideals of Socialist Realism were either executed, sent to mental hospitals or Gulags. Savitsky saved works by artists such as Kazimir Malevich, Wassily Kandinsky and Marc Chagall, amongst others.

Today, the so-called Savitsky Collection, which currently comprises approximately 90,000 items, is housed in the Nukus Museum. The museum is situated in a little-known area called Karakalpakstan, in the remote north-western region of Uzbekistan. The collection includes works that run the gamut of early 20th styles, from Fauvism and Expressionism, through to Futurism and Constructivism and champions forgotten Soviet artists, who were delving into new directions pre 1930s.

In 1998, after the *New York Times* ran an article about the Savitsky Collection, collectors began arriving from the West in private jets with

bags of money, but Ms Babanazarova, the museum's director, refused to sell, so that anyone willing to travel to this pearl in the desert can enjoy this treasure.

www.savitskycollection.org; www.desertofforbiddenart.com



Igor Savitsky (center) on expedition – mosaic of works from the Savitsky Collection.

Design is doing just fine

Several auctions in the last few months have demonstrated that the world of 20th century design is as buoyant as ever.

At a Phillips auction in London this April, Marc Newson's Lockheed Lounge chair (ill.), a chaise longue made from welded plaques of aluminium, sold for £2,434,500, thereby keeping it firmly in the position of the most expensive design object in the world.

Meanwhile in May, Christie's Paris achieved 11 world records and a combined total of 8.3M during three design day sales. Among the top lots were a ceiling light by Fontana Arte, which sold for 47,100 and the *Escargot* ceiling light by Serge Mouille which went for 39,900 after a strong bidding battle.

And finally, at a recent 20th Century Design auction held at Sotheby's, New York on June 9, sales totalled \$3,721,875. The highlight of the auction was *Tables Feuilles, 1980*, a Diego Giacometti table made from patinated and gilt bronze and glass. It sold for \$406,000, thereby far exceeding its presale estimate.



From left to right : Spring records by Marc Newson, Serge Mouille and Diego Giacometti

Tension in United Arab Emirates

Is absolute freedom of expression still a dream in the United Arab Emirates?

The 12th Sharjah Biennial, which recently came to a close, received

only tepid reviews this year. Entitled '*The past, the present, the possible*' and curated by Eungie Joo, the biennial was criticised for failing to address some of the more challenging themes associated with UAE's past and present, such as human and women's rights, the value of labour and the grip of religion on daily life.

Perhaps the notion that one has to play by the rules of the Sheikh or not play at all still stands? After all, Sharjah ruler Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed al Qasimi fired the esteemed artistic director of the Sharjah Art Foundation, Jack Persekian, some editions ago for failing to censor an installation by Algerian artist Mustapha Benfodil, which was deemed blasphemous. This act along with the fact that a lot of artists in this year's biennial focused on some of the UAE more inconsequential facets, such as animals and sand, suggests the only way to play it is to play it safe.

Meanwhile artists Ashok Sukumaran and Walid Raad and Andrew Ross, professor of New York University, were recently banned from entering UAE because they spoke out about the treatment of labourers working on Abu Dhabi outposts of institutions such as the Guggenheim and the Louvre.

The decision to ban the artists was met with outrage from the international art community. Sixty museum directors, curators, editors and other art-world heavy weights, penned an open letter to the UAE on the first of June condemning the travel ban imposed on those who criticised its treatment of labourers.

Several organisations, including Human Rights Watch and Gulf Labor are investigating the treatment of workers in the UAE. Meanwhile artist Molly Crabapple wanted to collect her own evidence and snuck into the site of the future Guggenheim to interview workers.



Abu Dhabi: the future Guggenheim (Gehry Partners); right : inside of Le Louvre (Jean Nouvel)

Sculpture in the City 2015

Sculpture in the City is a public art exhibition in the City of London, which transforms the Square Mile for ten months with its installation of contemporary art pieces by leading artists. Set amongst London's iconic cultural landmarks such as Richard Rogers' Lloyd's building, Norman Foster's Gherkin and The Leadenhall Building also known as the Cheesegrater, the dynamic exhibition currently in its fifth edition aims to enhance the urban environment.

The exhibition will run July 9, 2015-May 2016. This year, Damien Hirst will be exhibiting his colossal *Charity* (2002-2003) sculpture. Adam Chodzko's 22-foot wooden kayak, *Ghost* (2010) will be suspended from the ceiling of the Leadenhall Market and Japanese artist Tomoaki Suzuki's miniature figures will be dotted about the Gherkin plaza. Other artists to display works are Ekkehard Altenburger (Germany); Bruce Beasley (USA); Ceal Floyer (UK); Laura Ford (UK); Shan Hur (Korea); Folkert de Jong (Netherlands); Sigalit Landau (Israel); Kris Martin (Belgium); Keita Miyazaki (Japan); Xavier Veilhan (France); and Ai Weiwei (China), whose work is yet to be

announced and will be installed in September to coincide with the opening of his exhibition at the Royal Academy.

Previous editions of Sculpture in the City featured works by Julian Opie, Anish Kapoor, Franz West, Tracey Emin, Michael Craig-Martin, Yayoi Kusama, Jake & Dinos Chapman, Antony Gormley, Jim Lambie and Joao Onofre amongst others.



Damien Hirst, *Charity* (2002-2003)

The cradle of civilisation at risk

We have witnessed regimes in war-torn countries attack art and heritage time and time again. During the WWII, Hitler (himself an unsuccessful artist) ferociously attacked modern art as degenerate and works, which did not match his aesthetic ideals, were plundered, sold or destroyed.

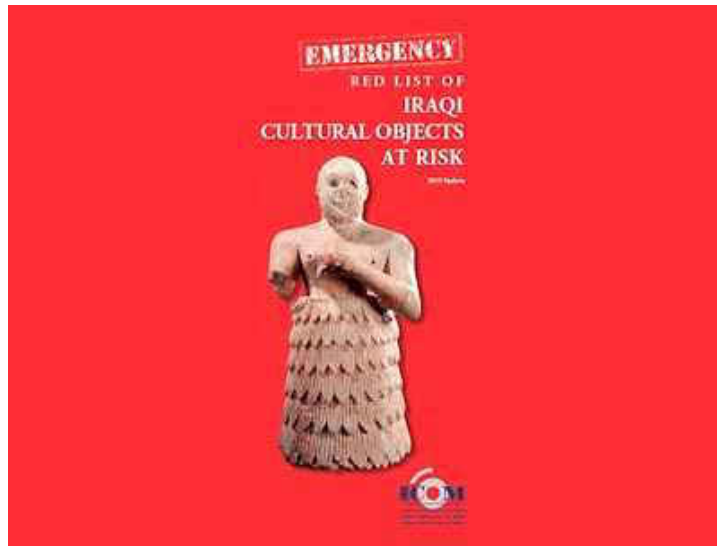
Today we are witnessing how ISIS, the Islamic militant group, is forging a campaign of destruction against some of the world's most important cultural sites. The United Nations referred to ISIS's on-going destruction of Iraq's heritage, including the tomb of the biblical prophet Jonah, numerous religious buildings and the ancient ruins of Palmyra, currently under threat, as war crimes.

Following the passing of a non-binding resolution by 193 member states, the UN has agreed to do what it can to prevent looted relics to be sold on the black market.

The Iraqi ambassador Mohamed Ali Alhakim warned the assembly: "The destruction of Iraqi cultural heritage, the cradle of civilization, is no less barbaric and serious than killing Iraqis."

Meanwhile in Paris, the International Council of Museums has issued an "emergency red list" identifying which Iraqi antiquities are at risk of being looted and illegally exported. Objects on the list range from millennia-old Mesopotamian goods to 19th-century artefacts from the reign of the Ottomans. The list also highlighted which objects did well on the black market. These included vases, coins, stone tablets and sculptures.

Jean-Luc Martinez, the head of the Louvre museum said whilst presenting the red list: "In recent months we have witnessed massacres of minorities in Syria and Iraq but also the destruction of priceless works of cultural heritage. [...] These are two parts of the same strategy that has been described as 'cultural cleansing' which seeks to erase entire segments of human history."



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- **Time Savings** as we are able to manage all areas of the collecting process on our clients behalf, we are able to build or sell complete collections with as much or as little involvement from the client as they wish.

Art Calendar Highlights

Masterpiece Fair, London

25 June – 1 July 2015

www.masterpiecefair.com

Kulturforum Berlin

Mario Testino : In your face

Ending 26.07.2015

www.smb.museum/ausstellungen/detail/mario-testino-in-your-face.html

Palazzo Cavalli Franchetti, Venice

Glasstress 2015 : Gotika

09 May – 22 Nov. 2015

www.glasstress.org/event_2015/16

Fondation Gianadda, Martigny

Matisse en son temps

20 June – 22 Nov. 2015

www.gianadda.ch

Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain

Beauté Congo

11 July – 15 Nov. 2015

www.fondation.cartier.com

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"Text by Anne-Céline Jaeger for 1858 Limited"

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