

European Heritage Prize 2004.

The EAA Committee for the European Heritage Prize, consisting of David Breeze, Scotland, Jürgen Kunow, Germany, Katalin Wollak, Hungary, Sebastiano Tusa, Italy and Kristian Kristiansen, Sweden (chairperson), has decided to award the heritage prize for 2004 to the Illicit Antiquities Research Centre at the McDonald Institute at University of Cambridge.

The Illicit Antiquities Research Centre (IARC) receives the prize for its internationally unique contribution to European and World Heritage protection through their work on investigating and effectively bringing to the attention of individuals, institutions and authorities the illicit trade in antiquities at all levels. And further for having promoted a change of attitude, ethics and legislation through these activities.

The Illicit Antiquities Research Centre was launched in 1997 as a response to increasing international concerns raised about the irreplaceable loss of knowledge of the past caused by all forms of illicit excavations and trade in antiquities. The centre intended first of all to raise public awareness in Britain and internationally about these issues and through that seek appropriate national and international legislation, codes of conduct and other conventions to place restraint upon it.

It further would seek to ensure agreements among national organisations and museums in the UK and beyond on an appropriate policy on the acquisition, display and publication of unprovenanced artefacts. However, it would also seek to co-operate with dealers and auction houses in furthering the understanding of such issues and the adherence to appropriate practices. Finally it would investigate and make publicly known illicit activities relating to antiquities of the Near, Egypt and Asia Minor and to publish such information.

The Centre has not a big staff, but has done an impressive job in raising awareness and changing attitudes all over the world. It has been achieved by effective information campaigns, such as the publication and exhibition "*Stealing History*", an active website and a newsletter *Culture Without Context*. Impressive downloading numbers from the website testifies to its general impact. In addition appearances on radio and television, and political work has resulted in concrete improvements in legislation, especially in the UK.

The IARC remains the only centre in the world dedicated to the problems caused by trade in illicit antiquities. Being independent it has successfully co-ordinated and hosted meetings, conferences and gatherings where archaeologists, police, government ministers and lawyers from countries around the world can meet. From one of these meetings in 1999 a "*Cambridge Resolution*" was passed to encourage effective national legislation, and a new *International Standing Committee on the Traffic in Illicit Antiquities* was founded. In addition several conference proceedings has been published in the McDonald Monograph Series.

Over a short span of years the IARC has achieved a major change of attitude among museums and politicians. It was reflected in the United Kingdoms ratification after 30 years of the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing

the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. However, problems of illicit trade in antiquities have not decreased in scope or complexity, as demonstrated by the situation in Iraq where the centre has played an active role. On this background we find it timely to award the EAA Heritage Price for 2004 to the Illicit Antiquities Research Centre. We hope the prize will help to make IARC an internationally recognised centre of information and policy-formation as regards trade in illicit antiquities, and ensure international support for its work.