CLEVELAND ART MUSEUM – ANOTHER CASE OF DODGY DEALING IN THE ART MARKET?



Another major museum may well be supporting the illicit trade in dodgy (stolen, looted, even fake) works of art.

(See my comment in February on the Metropolitan in New York and some major collections of Graeco-Roman art – [Link])

CLEVELAND (AP) – Some archeologists say the Cleveland

Museum of Art may encourage smuggling and the looting of ancient sites by acquiring a bronze Apollo sculpture with large gaps in its ownership history.

The museum proudly announced the purchase in June, saying the statue might be the only one among about 20 large bronzes in the world that can be linked to the ancient Greek masters.

Now some prominent archaeologists and other critics say the museum should not have bought the work because of the questionable history.

“The root cause of looting is collecting. It’s supply and demand,” Ricardo Elia, an associate professor of archaeology at Boston University, told The Plain Dealer for a story Sunday.

The museum’s director disagreed, saying sharing the work with the public was important and the sale was fair.

Malcolm Bell, University of Virginia art history professor and vice president of the Archaeological Institute of America, questioned the museum’s account

that the artwork was discovered by a retired German lawyer on his family’s estate in the 1990s.

“It sounds like the kind of fabrication that is made frequently in the market,” he said.

Ernst-Ulrich Walter, the lawyer, declined through an interpreter to be interviewed by the newspaper.

Phoenix Ancient Art, the dealership that sold the Apollo to the museum, has run afoul of the law before, said Elia, Bell and others … [Link]





When you see the details of the piece you can understand the attraction to the art market – it has been attributed to Praxiteles and is claimed to be the statue mentioned by the Roman Pliny – it’s not just an anonymous bronze but can be associated with a legendary artist of antiquity – just what the market values most.

And it is rather beautiful!