PROVENANCE RESEARCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY:
OBJECT HISTORY AT THE MENIL COLLECTION

by

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Dedication

Dedicated to my family.

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ABSTRACT

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OBJECT HISTORY AT THE MENIL COLLECTION

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University of Houston-Clear Lake, 2018

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In museum collections across the United States, antiquities collections often lack documented ownership histories. This paper explores the context of that problem in relation to a particular museum, The Menil Collection in Houston, Texas. Specific examples of artworks are presented to illustrate how a lack of provenance can be problematic. During the course of the de Menils' decades of collecting, laws, international agreements and attitudes changed and evolved. Objects purchased during that time period therefore do not necessarily conform to today's standards in terms of provenance records. This paper also explores motivations for collecting, looking at Dominique and John de Menil and their relationship with various dealers. Finally, this paper proposes ways forward, looking to museum studies and digital humanities as areas we can find solutions for research and display of current museum collections.

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CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

Provenance is the ownership history of a work of art or artifact. Just as people have biographies, objects have biographies as well. Histories may include political relationships with other countries, excavation field notes or drawings, purchases from private dealers or public auctions, and donations from patrons. Equally important is the term "provenience," defined as the precise physical location where an archeological object was found. Another word for provenience is findspot. From an ethical and legal standpoint, provenance is increasingly important to museums and collectors.

The Menil Collection

In 2014, an innovative opportunity for student interaction and research was created named the Collections Analysis Collaborative (Rice University "Collections Analysis"). The collaborative is an institutional agreement between Rice University, the University of Houston-Clear Lake and The Menil Collection formed by Drs. Sarah Kielt Costello, Paul Davis and John Hopkins. Through a credit course at Rice University, students researched artworks in the Menil's antiquities gallery, focusing on the objects' histories before coming into the collection. The term "antiquities" refers to works of art or artifacts made in the distant past, by the civilizations of ancient Greece, Rome, countries bordering the Mediterranean and the Near East. Investigating each piece in detail, the students' analyses are accessible on The Menil Collection's website. To further research the collection, the Menil Collection went a step further and invited scholars from across the United States to research objects and present their findings at an October 2016 symposium (Rice University "Collaborative Futures"). This project, along with a semester-long internship undertaken by the author, is an outgrowth of that affiliation (see Appendix A).

The Menil Collection as a whole reflects the tastes and interests of the family, otherwise encompassing African Art, European and American modern art. There are roughly 600 objects belonging to the ancient Mediterranean section of the Menil Collection. The de Menils purchased the majority of these objects between the 1950's and 1970's (Van Dyke "Losing One's Head" 131). Purchasing continued into the 1980's on a more limited scale, up until Dominique de Menil's death in 1997. The gallery of Arts of the Ancient World was designed and installed under her guidance in 1987 and has undergone renovation in 2018. Objects in this section span thousands of years, from an Upper Paleolithic inscribed tool to pieces from ancient Greece, Rome, Egypt and the Near East (Menil "Ancient World").

Mrs. de Menil was fond of ancient art and was the force behind acquiring these objects. In a lecture at the University of St. Thomas on the art of collecting, she professed "…I am a frustrated archeologist. I am fascinated by ancient pieces – by their beauty and what they reveal of their time" (Shkapich and de Menil 144).

The Collaborative Futures Conference

The Arts of the Ancient World gallery, like many other collections formed in the last century, is comprised largely of objects lacking full documentation. Of the 144 antiquities shown from the Menil Collection in the *Ten Centuries that Shaped the West* exhibit of 1970, only two (1.4 %) have a definitive findspot: the Düver reliefs (Hoffmann 289). At the Collaborative Futures conference held at the Menil in October 2016, Hellenistic scholar Dr. Jennifer Gates-Foster proclaimed:

> Most lack a secure history – have neither provenience or provenance. No archeological findspot can even be surmised for most of them…indeed, all of these objects, I just want to be clear, were looted from archeological sites sometime in the late 19th or 20th centuries. Full Stop. They are all looted. (Gates-Foster)

To take a more measured approach, one may say not all of these objects were scientifically excavated. Ancient artwork has been found by professional tomb robbers but there are finds that are happenstance as well. The commonality of this issue is illustrated in an article from 2000 (Chippindale and Gill "Material Consequences" 476). The research analyzes seven American collections, both privately and museum owned, demonstrating that of 1,396 items, only 349 (25%) had some indication of a findspot (including those "said to be" or probably from). Only 145 objects of the 1,396 (10%) were from a named findspot. If between 75% and 90% of these particular collections have no provenance, this information points to a high percentage of items that may have been bought through illicit activities, forged, or transported from their country of origin illegally, without documentation.

The issue is how to proceed with research and exhibition of these items while maintaining transparency and integrity. The Menil Collection is not alone in this endeavor. Museums across the United States are encountering the same problem regarding object provenance, some of which surfaced due to World War II repatriations. The purpose of this study is to illustrate the types of problems brought about by lack of provenance and to look at ways forward with regard to existing museum collections.

CHAPTER II:

PROVENANCE

Provenance Research

The field of provenance research is divided into two main areas: paintings and sculpture looted from the World War II era and the field of antiquities. There has been much research done to facilitate the return of stolen artwork related to World War II. The American Association of Museums set up a database, the Nazi-Era Provenance Internet Portal (NEPIP), to identify artworks that have missing histories between 1933 and 1945. Researchers in antiquities' provenance can learn from the systems already in place involving works from the Nazi era.

One of the most famous restitution cases of World War II is the portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer, by Gustav Klimt, which was prominently displayed at Gallery Belvedere in Austria. The 2015 movie *Woman in Gold* (Curtis) gives the hundred-year-old painting contemporary relevance. It is a captivating real-life tale, enough to make a major motion picture. This paper argues that antiquities have an equally compelling story to tell, and museums do themselves a disservice by not telling it. The connections of people, objects and power can make 2,000-year-old artifacts come alive in present time. The challenge museums face is how to engage the public with trajectories that make the historical relevant and contemporary.

Databases for World War II Era Artwork and Antiquities

One might ask why have antiquities been treated differently from items looted in World War II. One facet of this question may be the laws addressing each. The United States passed the Washington Principles in 1998 that forced museums to review any paintings or sculptures without known provenance during the war years. The UNESCO convention, governing antiquities, is a suggested guideline for collecting but it is not a law. Museums participate in the guidelines on a voluntary basis. When the American Association of Museum Directors (AAMD) presented its 2008 guidelines for best practice, the Association still allowed museums to collect pieces without documented provenance. However, the Association recommended that they had to have a good reason to do so and post photos on the AAMD Object Registry.

Though similar to the Nazi-Era Provenance Internet Portal (NEPIP) website, the AAMD Object Registry has many fewer entries. Member museums are prompted to include pieces purchased only after 2008 – a full 38 years after the UNESCO convention. Since 2003, NEPIP has posted 29,000 items from 176 museums (La Follette "Looted Antiquities" 674); in contrast the Object Registry has 1,142 objects from 28 museums (AAMD). Participation in the Object Registry is limited by the small membership of the AAMD (242 museums as of November 2018) and the fact that not all members possess antiquities collections. For these reasons, the Object Registry reflects only a fraction of the antiquities in the United States (La Follette "Antiquities").

The numbers and the willingness of museums to take part in the NEPIP database show an ethical approach to righting the wrongs from World War II. The lines surrounding repatriation of classical antiquities are much blurrier. Many times, it has been the museums themselves who knowingly or unknowingly collected unprovenanced pieces.

Guidelines

The 1970 UNESCO Convention and the Cultural Properties Implementation Act

The change in emphasis on provenance since the 1960's is due to two major agreements that have altered the scene of antiquities collecting: the 1970 UNESCO Convention regarding cultural property import and export and the 1983 Cultural

Properties Implementation Act (CPIA). These agreements defend cultural heritage and reinforce the ban on illegal trade and export of antiquities.

After World War II, various countries were concerned about protecting cultural heritage (Lobay 466) and saw the need to stem the trade of illegal art and artifacts. In 1970, the UNESCO Convention was signed in Paris. Its full name is "The Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property." This agreement established guidelines to control the trade of items that were stolen and exported illegally in an effort to reduce the wide scale plundering of archeological sites and theft of materials.

It was not until 1983 that the United States enacted the Cultural Property Implementation Act (CPIA). This act allowed the United States to enforce restrictions on imports of stolen cultural property from countries signed on to the UNESCO convention (Lobay 467). Neither the convention nor the act is law; the only United States law regarding these issues is the Stolen Property Act.

American Association of Museum Directors Guidelines

Provenance research illuminates the context of pieces in relation to these national and international guidelines. The American Association of Museum Directors (AAMD) in 2013 amended its original guidelines on the purchase of archaeological works to encourage academic collaboration and thorough review. The focus of these agreements has been predominately on new acquisitions. It has come to light that existing collections should be held up to this standard as well.

The role of education is often part of a museum's mission statement. If current collections are to retain their educational goals, it is pertinent to fill in the gaps in object histories as part of that mission. To present a museum piece with a label that only

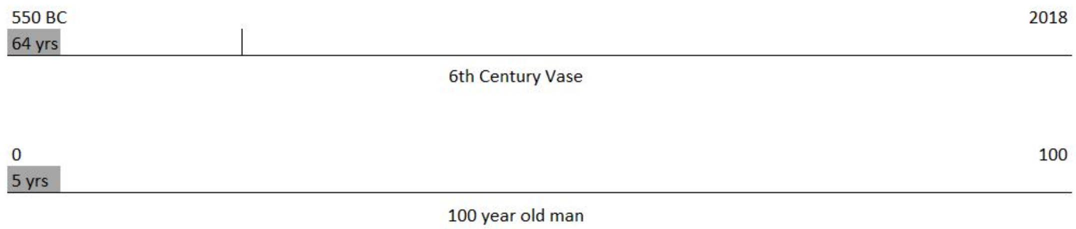

Figure 2.1 Object Biography versus Life Biography

addresses its creation and use in ancient times is analogous to writing a biography of a hundred-year-old man by reviewing just the first four years of his life (Figure 2.1). The complete object history can be a learning experience, traversing politics and economics. Missing modern histories obfuscate the full educational worth of antiquities. Comment authors Watson and Todeschini: “the clandestine trade is more than breaking the law, it is a sad and significant loss to scholarship and our understanding of the classical world” (359). In an effort to be transparent about recent histories, institutions may have to admit there are inexplainable gaps. A less than stringent attitude towards provenance, pre or post-1970 could come to question a collection’s rights of ownership.

Proactive Measures

Museums have much to gain by taking a more proactive stance in review of past collecting activities. Research about extant collections internally could deflect future controversy. By acknowledging lack of object biography, museums may avoid surprises. The civic reputation of museums and professional reputation of curators is at stake. Undertaking this issue in a forthright manner could save institutions resources and avoid legal action.

The case of the University of Pennsylvania demonstrates an example of the benefits of repatriation (Green 9). The University returned a collection of gold jewelry that was bought in the 1960’s back to Ankara, Turkey. This repatriation helped the University of Pennsylvania continue its long-standing archeological excavations in

Turkey. In 2016, the Turkish government reciprocated with a loan of 120 objects to the University of Pennsylvania museum's *Golden Age of Midas* exhibit. As a result of repatriation, the United States and Turkey were able to share in safeguarding cultural heritage with a bonus of extended reciprocal loans and continued diplomatic relations.

CHAPTER III:
PROBLEMS WITH UNKNOWN PROVENANCE

The de Menils' collecting careers spanned decades. During that time the rules, agreements and international laws gradually changed. Even though a large portion of the de Menils antiquities were bought before the signing of the 1970 UNESCO Convention, and thus can be considered free of ethical concerns, those often still lack complete histories. The following information highlights some of the issues in relation to collecting pieces without a secure place of origin or history, as outlined by Chippindale and Gill in their 2000 article. Problems of disinformation can create several scenarios, which this paper will outline with examples from the Menil Collection.

Separated Siblings: Etruscan Serving Vessel and Candelabrum

In the *Ten Centuries* catalogue, Herbert Hoffmann explains that an Etruscan serving vessel (Figure 3.1) from the Menil was said to be found in Ancona along with a candelabrum (Hoffmann 194). The candelabrum (Figure 3.2) is owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met) and is currently on display. The Met has confirmed the pieces were together in the past (Moske). The dish was purchased by the de Menils in 1964 from J.J. Klejman. The bill of sale indicates the handles were cast in the lost wax process. Originally bowls or dishes would have been raised, or hammered, from a single flat sheet of metal. This process would make the metal of the vessel much thinner than that of the cast handle. Over time, this difference would cause heavier cast pieces to outlive the original vessel. Often the handles would be repurposed.

Figure 3.1 Serving Vessel with Handles in the Form of Figures, Attributed as 4th century BCE. Hellenistic; Italy. Copper alloy, 4 7/8 × 14 × 14 inches (12.4 × 35.6 × 35.6 cm). The Menil Collection, Houston. Photo by Hickey-Robertson.

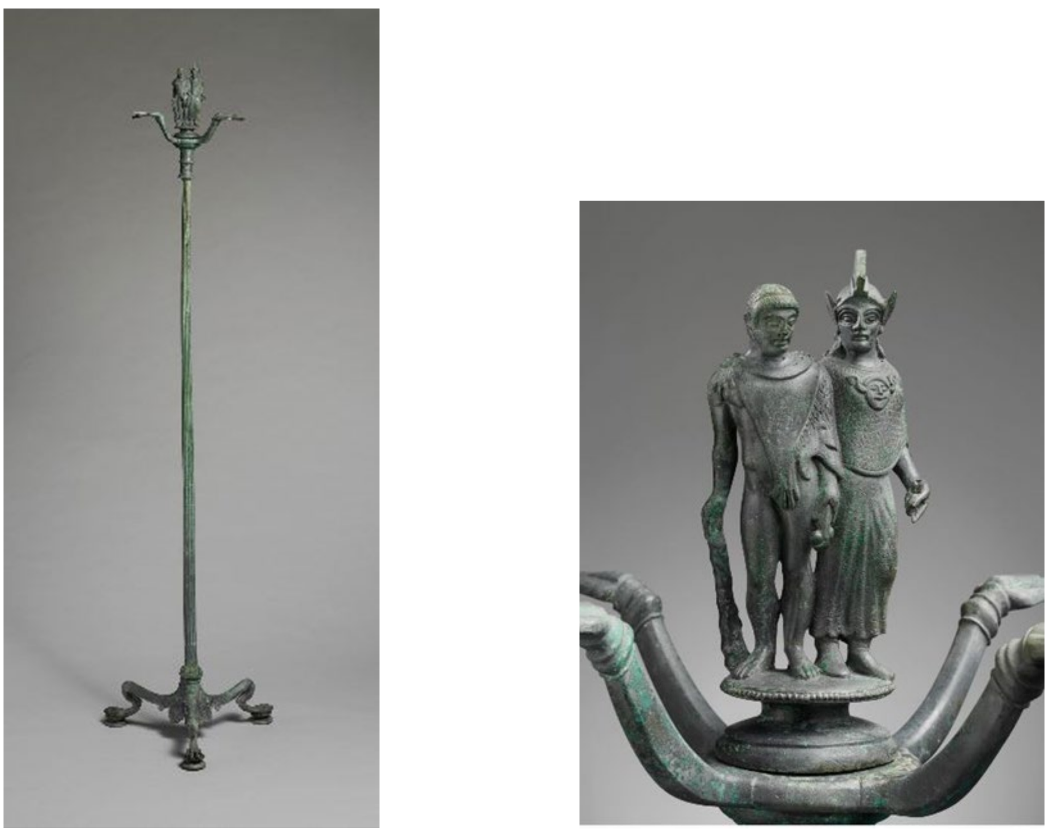

Figure 3.2 Candelabrum, Etruscan, Classical, ca. 500-475 BCE, Object 61.11.3 (Metropolitan Museum of Art US).

The flat-bottomed vessel is 14" in diameter and 4" high. It is made of a copper alloy, with handles that have been cast. Both handles are small sculptures which portray a nude young man. He wears only high laced boots and is in a horizontal position of repose. His eyes are wide open. Stippling and line tracing lend details to the figure. Floral calyxes support his head and feet. The calyxes are joined at the rim with a palmette design. The exterior is decorated with three small grooves. Its overall color is a mottled turquoise due to the patina. This object could have been used as a vessel for wine or as a funerary object.

The young man's boots point to a military connection but the figure lacks any other accouterments such as a helmet or cuirass. It seems more likely that this youth is an athlete or an idealized wrestler (Talland). The floral palmettes with an emerging figure could suggest immortality or the cycle of life (Hoffmann 193). Use of nude athletes as decorative handles follows the evolution of handles on Praeneste cistae (containers) in which nudes replaced soldiers as figurative models around 350 BCE. After the mid-4^{th} century anthropomorphic handles were in vogue for a variety of vessels and utensils (Brendel 335). To pick up the dish one would have to grasp the figure, reinforcing a performative gesture of being served.

Examining both the candelabrum and the flat dish together would be helpful to glean more information than one could separately. For instance, were they both used or were they made specifically as grave goods. Items of this caliber indicate an elite household. It may be possible to perform a metallurgical analysis to see if both items were created in the same place. The Metropolitan may have further information in their files about additional household pieces found with the group. Although "said to be from" Ancona, there is no indication as to who said it. Does an implied findspot of Ancona bear out with an analysis of both artifacts? When considered together, do they both appear to be of the same era? In reviewing the clothing of the couple from the candelabrum and representation of a narrative, does this tell us anything about the relationship of citizens in Etruria (Taylor 275) vis-à-vis Rome or Greece? The ability for a historian to study the bronze vessel and the candelabrum together might yield social context to the pieces that is unidentifiable when each is studied in isolation.

The figures from the Menil flat dish can be compared to a rim fragment from a large terracotta vessel owned by the Metropolitan Museum. Black glaze pottery would sometimes emulate metalwork. These nudes may tell the story of Endymion, the hunter in perpetual sleep who was promised immortality. Endymion's portrayal would be appropriate for a funerary object.

Drifting Object Histories – Container (Pyxis) with Dove

One of the earlier purchases of the de Menils is a diminutive marble container (pyxis) with a sculpted dove (Figure 3.3). It is an ecru color and is approximately 3" in diameter and 3" high. It could have been made as an individual item for cosmetics or created as a funerary object. The small size makes it personal and easy to hold. The container had been identified both as "provenance unknown" and "reputedly found on

Figure 3.3 Container (Pyxis) with Dove, 2700–2300 BCE. Early Cycladic II; Greece, Cyclades Islands. Marble, 3 1/8 × 3 3/8 × 3 3/8 inches (7.9 × 8.6 × 8.6 cm). The Menil Collection, Houston. Photo by Hickey-Robertson.

Naxos" in different exhibits (Chippindale and Gill "Material and Intellectual" 621) prior to its purchase by the de Menils. These two different stories lead one to be wary of the historical accuracy stated by previous owners. When researching an object, it is prudent to reverify information from auction or dealer histories.

Fabricated items – Achaemenian Incense Burner

The emotional engagement of collecting can make some buyers – even the highly-educated de Menils – want to believe a piece is authentic. An example is the bronze Achaemenian style incense burner (Figure 3.4) sold to the de Menils in 1973. Although the structure is possibly composed of real artifacts, fully assembled it becomes an Achaemenian Frankenstein. Its flamboyant design and hodgepodge nature of assembly lead experts to believe that it is fake (Muscarella 71). Again, students of history miss the opportunity to learn about what part of this pastiche is original.

Figure 3.4 Incense Burner, 6th–4th century BCE. Achaemenid Period; Iran. Copper alloy, 14 1/2 × 11 3/8 × 4 3/8 inches (36.8 × 28.9 × 11.1 cm). The Menil Collection, Houston. Photo by Hickey-Robertson.

Orphaned Items –Votive Standard or Pin with Figures and Animals

When referring to object biography, researchers often give objects familial attributes such as orphans. The comparison is apt; for if you do not know from whence you came, how can you begin to identify yourself. The types of questions that could be answered by knowing the findspot are numerous. An orphaned item is a singular object which has no record of the place where it was found. The pin stands approximately 7 inches high, with an open framework design that is 2 ¾ by 1 1/8 inches. It is made of a copper alloy. Knowing the findspot could allow historians to discern how far this votive pin traveled from its production site through metallurgical analysis. Location of the find may indicate the social circumstances of its use.

Figure 3.5 Standard or Pin Depicting Figures and Animals, 10th – 7th century BCE. Iron Age; Iran. Copper alloy, 7 1/8 × 2 3/4 × 1 1/8 inches (18.1 × 7 × 2.9 cm). The Menil Collection, Houston, Gift of J.J. Klejman. Photo by Hickey-Robertson.

The scene is symmetrical and depicts a human form in the center holding two animals. The theme, the Master of Animals, dates back to the mid-fourth millennium BCE (Counts and Arnold 13). The pin is thought to be from the Luristan region of Iran, based on style. Associated objects might explain if the Master of Animal's theme is prevalent in the Luristan culture. Contextual evidence could provide information about the religious life or burial rites in Ancient Iran.

Not all archeologists view provenance as important. Sir John Boardman strongly believed that by merely studying an ancient pot he could deduce the item's findspot and relevance (Boardman 11). However, intellectual rigor is lost when one makes assumptions. An example that disproves Boardman's theory is the funerary stele from the Shelby White collection. The top half, based on style, was attributed to western Anatolia. The bottom half was later found in Greece, grounding the stele miles away (Gill 239).

These pieces represent just some of the ways that issues with provenance manifest themselves. Other provenance-related issues for museums and collectors, in general, may include fake items, pieces that are heavily reconstructed or artwork that has been updated to appear older than it is.

CHAPTER IV:
COLLECTORS AND THE DE MENILS

In order to unpack how, throughout the nation, we are left with so many museum objects of questionable history, let us look at both historical motivations for collectors and the atmosphere of collecting in the latter half of the 20th century. What are we to make of this disconnect between the civic-minded de Menils and the difficult realities of looted art? Ricardo Elia asserts "I have often wondered why the great collectors, most of whom are highly educated and socially prominent people, are so willing to publicly engage in an activity that is widely known to be mired in criminality, corruption, and sleaziness" (Renfrew 17). The de Menils had lofty goals, making it hard to reconcile these two sides of the story. Reviewing the motives of antiquities collectors may help us explore this divide.

Identification and Social Status

Humankind has used affiliation with Greek art to boost their status as early as 323 BCE, when Romans took Greek statues as trophies of war and paraded them through the streets (Thompson 8). This trend continues much later with one of the first people to collect antiquities outside of Italy, Thomas Howard, the Earl of Arundel. In 16th century England, he set the tone for future collectors by using his private collection as a display of power and wealth (27). In the 18th century the Grand Tour was the sign of a well-educated gentleman. Surrounding oneself with classical items was a way to project a real or imagined link to a prestigious past. The objects which are so closely affiliated with the great writings of Greece and Rome denote someone in touch with classical ideals such as democracy.

John and Dominique de Menil did not lack status or identification. Rather, it may have been the identity of the city of Houston that de Menils wanted to shape. The family had multiple residences worldwide, but they considered Houston home. The population of Houston was 385,000 at the beginning of the 1940's. Relative to Paris and New York, Houston was ranked 21st among urban centers in the United States, behind Indianapolis and Kansas City (Census). Dominique de Menil saw Houston on par with some of the lesser cities in Europe. She explains:

> I would never have started collecting so much if I had not moved to Houston …Houston was a provincial, dormant place, much like Strasbourg, Basel, Alsace. There were no galleries to speak of, no dealers worth the name and the museum – that is why I started buying: that is why I developed the physical need to acquire. (Browning 192)

There were no major theater companies nor opera. The Museum of Fine Arts, established in 1924, did not have a collection of modern art. It was hardly the cosmopolitan milieu to which the family was accustomed.

Living in multiple cities, they would have naturally compared New York and Houston. In New York, they surely would have been aware of exhibits at major museums. The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met) launched an exhibit *Ancient Art from New York Private Collections* in 1959. This may have inspired the de Menils to host a similar exhibit in Texas in 1970. The show *Ten Centuries that Shaped the West: Greek and Roman Art in Private Texas Collections* burrowed pieces from private and museum collections. It was comprised of antiquities from the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, the Menil Foundation and several private collectors, among them Mr. Gilbert Denman, Jr. of San Antonio (Hoffmann XXIII). The de Menils accumulated pieces at a highly accelerated rate specifically for *Ten Centuries*, purchasing pieces right up to the opening of the exhibit (Van Dyke "Losing One's Head" 131). The show was met with positive acclaim by *Apollo*, an international magazine for collectors based in London (Sieveking 91).

Passion

Collectors talk about the passion that drives them to collect. John de Menil explained "art is intoxicating. It is not a rarefied nicety; it's hard liquor" (Shkapich and de Menil 140). For some, the thrill of the hunt and excitement of new discoveries may fulfill a deep-seated need. Unlike some collectors, the de Menils had a spiritual affinity for collecting. Mrs. de Menil felt that in France, citizens were allowed to enjoy the great cathedrals and works of art for free; she wanted to create such an outlet for the citizens of Houston. She felt this was a basic human tenet. Inspiration also came from their spiritual mentor, Father Alan Couturier. He introduced the couple to a divine way of looking at art that became profoundly ingrained (Smart 22). Having the means to purchase items, they felt perhaps a moral obligation to purchase artwork as a means of improving the human condition.

When the Menils began investing in art, the city was quite different. Today the Menil Collection is located in a 30-acre neighborhood with multiple collections under its umbrella: the Main Building, the Cy Twombly and Dan Flavin galleries, the Rothko Chapel, Byzantine Fresco Chapel and the newly opened Menil Drawing Institute. The de Menils' collecting perhaps contributed to the growth of Houston's museum and arts presence more broadly. Today, the Houston Museum District is made up of 19 museums, offering visitors and residents ways to explore, visit and connect with the city (HMDA).

Tactile Engagement

If looting is driven by buying and collecting, an analysis of why people collect may address the heart of the matter. The sense of touch can be an important motivation for collectors (Thompson 180). Being able to hold and feel the weight of an object may make one feel closer to an idealized past. Close engagement with an object is something not traditionally allowed in museums. The de Menils as collectors valued this close engagement. They saw it as a way to facilitate educational experiences. Mrs. de Menil taught an art history class at the University of Saint Thomas in early 1960’s and surprisingly pulled a Cycladic figure out of her purse and passed it around the class (Middleton 416).

Social Network

Another facet of collecting behavior is the social framework. To purchase and ship a 6’ tall antique bronze statue is not a solitary adventure. Thompson elaborates “the mere logistics of locating, purchasing and transporting heavy and fragile antiquities means that very few individuals have succeeded in acquiring antiquities without connections… ” (Thompson 111). A collector in a sense must collect the right people to achieve their goals. J. Paul Getty saw his collection as a means to communicate with the general public and elevate the world view (129). For collectors driven by passion, often their purchases are a way of becoming closer to their families and friends. The de Menils spent time researching their artwork and corresponding with dealers – sometimes writing the same dealer three or four letters a day. Though Dominique was the one purchasing most of the classical artworks, John was meticulous in recording the purchases in his study at their home on San Felipe (Van Dyke "Losing One's Head" 131).

Museums today are cognizant of the need for a social experience. One of Thompson’s suggestions is to ask collectors to sponsor archeological excavations so they can be actively part of unearthing an object (Thompson 181). This would have a two-fold advantage: collectors could see the gains of a well-planned excavation and all the information it engenders. Collectors would also have a unique experience, something current society may value more than the physical. By addressing the root of collectors’ needs, it may alleviate the demand that fuels looting and destruction.

CHAPTER V:

SOCIAL FRAMEWORK – ART DEALERS

While the de Menils were collecting in the 1960's, the issue of provenance was rarely discussed. Although the guidelines for buying antiquities were evolving, these changes may not have been on their radar. Their social network of art dealers may have amplified the idea that UNESCO did not matter or apply to them. One of the dealers they relied upon heavily was J.J. Klejman.

Art dealer J. J. Klejman was decidedly influential in the formation of the Menil Collection. With his shop in close proximity to the de Menil's New York apartment, he sold them a large number of both African items and antiquities (Van Dyke "Menil Collection" 42). However, this relationship proves problematic with regard to present-day research. Klejman's records are no longer available and provenance was either overlooked or embellished on his bill of sale. One comes to an impasse when scrutinizing the biography of items sold from his establishment.

J.J. Klejman

John J. Klejman was born in Poland in 1906 (Klejman "Oral History"). He grew up in Warsaw in a large Jewish family. As a young man, Klejman attended the Sorbonne in Paris where he developed an interest in African Art, an emerging style influential with modern artists of the time (Van Dyke "Menil Collection" 41). Before World War II, he had an antique store in Warsaw selling European decorative arts. The majority of Klejman's family perished in the Holocaust. His pre-war connections with diplomats as customers in his gallery helped him both in storing valuable antiques during the war and securing visas for his family out of the country.

Klejman was a master of re-invention (Figure 5.1). In 1950 he arrived in New York, 44 years old, speaking no English. His pre-teen daughter, Susanne, spoke English and would translate for him. His first gallery was on 8 West 56th Street. With very little money, he initially bought African art due to its affordability. Through a fortuitous connection at his daughter's school, Klejman was introduced to Nelson Rockefeller and from there his business escalated. The gallery moved to Madison Avenue in what was then Parke-Bernet building, across from the Carlyle Hotel. In addition to the de Menils, his clients grew to include John and Robert Kennedy, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, major New York architects, actors, artists and museums nationwide (Klejman "Notes on Interview").

Figure 5.1 John and Halina Klejman (Lewandowski-Lois)
"Merchant of the Gods" 1970 by Rosemary Lewandowski-Lois Oil on canvas, 72" x 60".

Formation of Trust

The de Menils and the Klejmans were all Europeans displaced by the circumstances of World War II. Klejman and his wife were approximately the same age as the de Menils and were both cosmopolitan, having traveled the major cities of Europe collecting antiques. He understood the European pre-war art market and recast his business in the economically booming art world of post-war New York. In an article from the *New York Times* in 1967, John Canaday claims “on the basis of the ratio of its floor area to the quality of the objects exhibited there, the finest single gallery in or out of a museum in New York must be the J.J. Klejman window”("Display" 18). His was a shop in the mode of the European antiquaire, with a diverse selection of objects and several specializations (Klejman "Notes on Interview"). During this decade, Klejman Fine Arts was prosperous.

Shared Experience

The commonality of being refugees in post war New York may have sparked an inherent confidence between the de Menils and Klejman. Their correspondence reflects a friendly relationship. They trusted him so much as to ask his advice on pieces outside his own gallery. Klejman became a revered advisor in the areas of African art and antiquities. Between 1957 and 1974 the de Menils purchased over 500 items from his gallery. He also made many gifts to the de Menils for their collection.

Susanne Klejman worked in the gallery after school, on weekends and over the summer. She recounts “the collectors in the 50’s and 60’s were a different breed – it wasn’t about social acceptance” (Klejman "Notes on Interview"). In the 1960’s collectors were well-versed in their research. As the field transitioned into the 1970’s more people were interested in art as an investment and buying for status. Klejman had

18th century decorative pieces at home but did not collect antiquities. He was afraid his clients would think he was saving the best for himself.

Collecting in the 1960's

In the atmosphere of collecting during the 1960's there was little mention of provenance in antiquity sales. Former director of the Metropolitan Museum Thomas Hoving admits in his memoir "as a curator I bought works that today would be impossible under the UNESCO Treaty forbidding the acquisition of pieces with no solid pedigree. I hardly gave a thought to provenance or national laws against exportation" (Hoving). This generally reflects the attitude of fifty to sixty years ago: that provenance was not even a consideration.

Klejman's bills of sale were carefully crafted. Former Menil curator Kristina Van Dyke states "his invoices are like works of art in themselves" (Van Dyke "Menil Collection" 42). Each invoice was signed by Klejman with flair. Two original copies were provided on the best paper. The letterhead, with its Madison Avenue address and the affirmation in capital letters GUARANTEED GENUINE, exuded confidence. The information was offered in such a way that one did not doubt its veracity. The skill of Klejman's presentation attests to his insights into the collector's psyche and his ability as a salesperson. The de Menils were educated buyers but at a some point a seduction materializes between collector and seller.

The one hope of further research with regard to Klejman's sales are cases in which he lists a previous owner or collection. For example, he mentions the collection of George Ortiz, the de Clerq collection and the Spencer Churchill collection. Moving away from Klejman as an incomplete source, there may be vital data to discover in researching known private collections. Older collections could have published histories.

Sales to Museums that Were Later Repatriated

Although Klejman sometimes provided a history of ownership on his bill of sale, it was not always correct. In the instance of a Syrian mosaic in 1971 sold to the Newark Museum, Klejman said the mosaic had come from a private collector (Shirey 16). It came to light that the mosaic had been cut out of an archeological site at Apamea, Syria and was blatantly illegal. In 1974, after a Belgian archeological team convinced the museum the mosaic had been stolen, it was repatriated to Syria with the involvement of Henry Kissinger. The museum director, Samuel Miller, explains “we bought it in good faith, and I believe that Mr. Klejman sold it in good faith, but we made a mistake. We didn’t get a written provenance” (16). It may never be known if Klejman knew the mosaic was smuggled or not.

Klejman Fine Arts was also famously connected to the Lydian Hoard, which was sold to the Metropolitan Museum in the late 1960’s (Waxman 147). The Lydian Hoard was made up of over 300 finely wrought artifacts from 5th century BCE. It included gold and silver serving ware, jewelry and coins. A silver pitcher was the showpiece of the collection. It had a handle with a figure of a boy holding two lions by the tail. The Metropolitan kept the pieces in storage for many years. It was only after they were put on display that Turkish journalist Őzgen Acar investigated and found they had been looted from a tumulus, or burial mound, near Usak in 1965. From there, the pieces were sold to illicit Turkish dealer Ali Bayirlar, who in turn sold it to Klejman and George Zacos (Waxman 148). In 1987, a lawsuit was filed by the government of Turkey versus the Metropolitan Museum for repatriation of stolen goods. In 1993, on the brink of a trial, the New York museum agreed to repatriation.

This landmark case manifested a change in American collecting. It was the first time a major museum admitted to buying antiquities whose provenance they knew at the time was in doubt. It was also one of the most publicized instances of an internationally reputable museum returning items to their country of origin. Interviewed by the New York Times in 1973, Klejman said the sale had happened before the 1970 UNESCO convention and at that time it was not against the law to sell unprovenanced pieces (Canaday "Met" 24). Klejman was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in the 1970s. The Fine Arts gallery closed in 1974. After the close of the gallery, his sales records were destroyed (Klejman "Notes on Interview").

Nicolas Koutoulakis

The de Menils bought from at least two dealers who sold items to other museums that were later repatriated to their source countries. Klejman is one, the other is art dealer Nicolas Koutoulakis. The Italian Art Squad in Rome found Koutoulakis' name on an criminal organizational chart of Giacomo Medici alongside other international sellers and buyers (Watson and Todeschini 16). In 1995, police discovered over 3,800 looted items at Medici's storeroom in Geneva Freeport, Switzerland along with 4,000 photos of plundered artifacts that had been sold.

The breadth of Giacomo Medici's criminal organization created multiple layers between the original tombaroli (professional tomb robbers) and European or American buyers. The organizational chart (336) even shows museums and collectors at the top, along with art dealer Robert Hecht. The diagram demonstrates the number of people potentially involved. From this standpoint it is easy to see how collectors, such as the de Menils, were at a remove from the notion of purchasing stolen goods. Collectors only saw a high-class gallery, not the seamier side of the trade.

Where collectors are concerned, purchasing decisions may not follow logic. Buying decisions can be highly emotional. The de Menils relied on a social framework of dealers with whom they felt the most at ease. A perfect storm created the morass of provenance gaps in the collection today: the substantial reliance on a handful of dealers, an atmosphere that did not discuss provenance and a passion to collect.

CHAPTER VI:
WAYS FORWARD FOR MUSEUMS TODAY

If roughly 85% of antiquities in museums are lacking appropriate ownership histories (Chippindale and Gill "Material Consequences" 476), what are the best practices for exhibiting and researching antiquities in existing collections? This section presents possible ways toward progress.

Education

Museum Studies in Contemporary Perspective

Museums need professionals trained in the problems created by lack of provenance. Education at the university level is one way to advance by offering either classes in provenance research as part of Museum Studies programs or even specific graduate degree plans on provenance research. Since many museums in the United States are facing this issue there needs to be a financial and intellectual investment in future programs and scholars to address it. A cursory search brings up only three graduate programs specifically focusing on provenance: at University of Oxford, University College London and at the University of Glasgow (Costello). As more students are educated in provenance issues there will be a new generation of specialists to discover unthought of solutions.

Teaching Materials

Another way in which academia can be a change agent is through teaching materials. Art history textbooks have habitually used what authors consider the best illustrations of style, regardless of an object's provenience, or findspot. The problem this creates is an academic culture insensitive to the full information that provenience can provide. When sources use unprovenienced examples and treat them the same as those with provenience, this choice elides the issue of context entirely. Authors may argue that the most appropriate examples to illustrate a text would be dramatically limited if they were to only choose grounded objects. A way forward may be to specifically mention in the text if an object lacks a findspot. One could include information that is missing or perhaps the object's modern history.

Interdisciplinary Engagement and Museum Studies

Universities could also contribute through an inter-disciplinary approach. Technology that has previously not been applied to the arts could be harnessed. Facial recognition technology, common in other applications, could be transitioned to 3-D object recognition. This might be a worthwhile project for programs in Digital Humanities. The fields of History, Geography, Anthropology and Political Science all touch on movements of people as well as objects. The path of these objects' recent collecting activity could be mapped to the movement of hegemonic power of the world. New interdisciplinary connections may lead to innovative ideas for change.

Approaches in Research Methods

Provenance research from World War II suggests an economy of scale. It is more efficient to group objects together (by dealer or collector) to learn about their life paths as a group, versus individually. In lieu of researchers spending time looking at art and antiquities objects item by item, more information might be garnered by looking in depth at old collections or dealer records. Rewards of time spent could be increased multifold. One of the largest institutions working on World War II research is the J. Paul Getty Museum (Saunders et al. 1). The antiquities collection at the Getty contains 46,868 objects, if one includes single sherds, coins, and mosaic tiles. Since many objects came to the museum in block acquisitions, staff have focused on vendors or donors to analyze larger groups first. At the Collaborative Futures Conference (Rice University "Collaborative Futures"), Nicole Budrovich outlined methods of research by using paper trails previously undiscovered (2), direct observation of objects and associated marks, review of auction catalogues and a robust suspicion of stated histories.

Exhibition Design

New Types of Exhibits

Exhibition design is an avenue, which may raise public awareness. The Krannert Art Museum at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has an innovative approach to making provenance the main focus of an exhibit (Karrels). Its current exhibit is entitled *Provenance: A Forensic History of Art,* designed by doctoral student Nancy Karrels. The exhibit showcases six works of art. Each is accompanied by a visual trail of their not so distant past, for example, genealogy charts, bills of sale, and explanation of gallery stamps. What engages the viewer are the unraveling stories surrounding pieces, showing a behind-the-scenes look at how one might dive deep into an artwork's past. The popularity of the public television show *Antiques Roadshow* attests to viewer engagement as people tell their stories about relationships with objects. The exhibit at the Krannert was so well received by the public that it has been extended another six months.

There is no reason a similar presentation could not be done with works from ancient civilizations. Admittedly, with antiquities there are a small percent that we could trace back to their creation. But even the lapses of information can be telling. By engaging the audience in this way, viewers are given the dignity to make choices about how much they want to see and to realize the difference in presentation.

Labeling

Labeling of exhibits could be enlivened by using Quick Response (QR) code technology. One could scan a QR code on a label for more information with a smart phone (Pérez-Sanagustín et al. 73). Viewers could choose to either solely appreciate the aesthetics of a visit or to delve deeper with the use of technology. Virtual reality technology could augment exhibits with virtual "loans" of objects to complement real holdings. Using technology can allow the visitor a choice as to what kind of experience they want to take away from the museum.

Transparency is the key to moving forward with object collections. Museums that have lost credibility with the public through repatriation have a chance to regain the public's trust. The Museum of Fine Arts Boston is the first in the country to have a named curator in charge of provenance, Victoria Reed, Ph.D. Appointed in 2003, Reed is responsible for research of all items in this comprehensive collection. She studies acquisitions and loans across departments and is responsible for creating related policy (AIA). Reed also has brought comprehensive biographies to the museum website (Figure 6.1), along with extended histories on labels at the museum called "Art with a Past."

PROVENANCE

According to W. Fröhner, La Collection Tyszkiewicz (1897), p. 40: found in Thebes and sent to M. Hoffmann toward the end of 1894; by 1897: Count Michel Tyszkiewicz Collection; 1898: auction of the M. Tyszkiewicz Collection, Hotel des Commissaires-Priseurs, 9 rue Drouot, Paris, June 8-10, lot 133 (trouvée à Thèbes); by 1903: with Edward Perry Warren; purchased by MFA from Edward Perry Warren, March 1903

CREDIT LINE

Francis Bartlett Donation of 1900

Figure 6.1 Sample of Provenance History from Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA).

CHAPTER VII:
CONCLUSION

In the 19th century, collecting classical artwork and artifacts was de rigeur for modern nations. Accumulating antiquities became a declaration of authority for nationhood – at the expense of lesser countries (Findlen 32). The recognition of object biography for antiquities is part of present-day politics, whether we acknowledge it or not. Up until recently, museums have been entrenched in colonial presentation in a post-colonial world. Attitudes of museums have been slow to change. Pieces with and without provenance have been labeled and treated the same way, misleading the public (La Follette "Impact" 86). In 2020 it will be fifty years since the UNESCO convention was created. It is time to bring collections in line with the original spirit of the agreement. The emphasis placed on aesthetics has overridden object histories.

Finding solutions is part of taking responsibility for the part we play and have played in current museum acquisitions and management. Holding onto old modes of engagement is no longer a practical strategy for present day. It speaks to a colonial view of the past and a reluctance to yield old power structures to new future agreements.

John and Dominique de Menil did not leave instructions for a "static" museum environment like the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. She and her husband left it deliberately open to interpretation. Louisa Sarofim called the arrangement "progressive and visionary, so their legacy should not be locked, unchanging, into a past moment, but instead should remain vital and future oriented" (Smart 185). Like their life-long occupation for equal rights for people, I think they would wholly endorse the view of equal rights for objects – that the past does not just belong to those with power and privilege.

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APPENDIX A:
SUMMARY OF INTERNSHIP AT THE MENIL

The affiliation between the University of Houston-Clear Lake and the Menil Collection allowed me to spend a full semester as a graduate intern. From January to May 2018, I worked one day a week in the archives of the Menil Collection, resulting in 100 hours of time onsite. My main research was relating archival records to the object files, specifically regarding the 1970 exhibit of antiquities *Ten Centuries That Shaped the West: Greek and Roman Art in Texas Collections*. Archival research is slow, methodical work. This study resulted in a more comprehensive database of archival information related to the antiquities gallery for use of future scholars. The Library and the archival records are usually available by appointment only for the purpose of scholarly research. I was additionally able to provide support with labeling information for the reinstallation of the gallery while the museum was undergoing renovation (Figure 8.1).

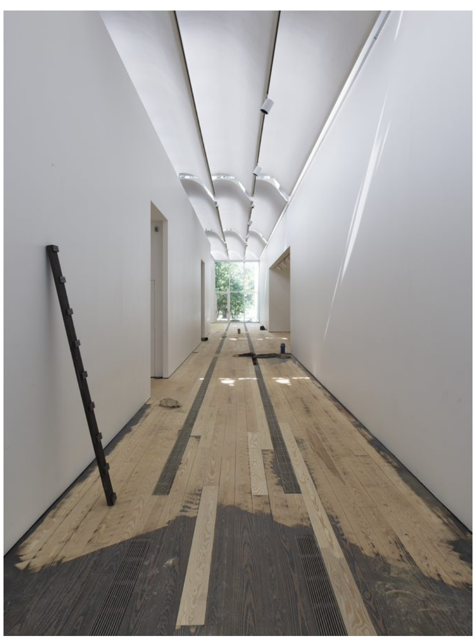

Figure 8.1 Renovation. The Menil Collection, Houston.

This past year the Menil Collection has been closed eight months for renovations, including re-varnishing the pine floors. Since the floor staining involved moving wall partitions, it was decided that this was an opportunity to re-envision the galleries' design. The Antiquities gallery has not been touched since Dominique de Menil originally planned and executed her vision for it in 1987. As Director Rebecca Rabinow states, this is a "lifetime opportunity for the museum's curators to start from scratch and reimagine the familiar installations" (Glentzer). Several items that have been in storage and never on view in Houston are now on display (Figure 8.2).

I attended the Provenance Webinar series through the Menil Collection in June 2018 sponsored by the Association of Art Museum Curators.

Figure 8.2 Paul Davis reinstalling gallery. The Menil Collection, Houston. Photo by M. White.