

Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics

Volume 8, 2016

Edited by Fabian Dorsch and Dan-Eugen Ratiu

Published by the European Society for Aesthetics



Proceedings of the European Society of Aesthetics

Founded in 2009 by Fabian Dorsch

Internet: <http://proceedings.eurosa.org>

Email: proceedings@eurosa.org

ISSN: 1664 – 5278

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Statecraft: Vandalism and Iconoclasm in the Digital Age

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ABSTRACT. Not only is vandalism increasingly subject to digital documentation, but the aesthetic nature of vandalism itself is different as a result of the digital. No longer is vandalism a local destructive act, it has become an act performed primarily for broadcast to global markets. This paper uses the example of Islamic State (IS) iconoclasm to explore the way in which digital media is strategically used by vandals and considers the responses of the heritage industry to respond to such destruction.

It illustrates how the deliberate digital documentation and subsequent global broadcasting of the destruction of cultural heritage by Islamic State forms an aesthetic strategy of a nascent state and not simply blind iconoclasm but vandalism in the service of state formation.

Yet, just as digital documentation fans vandalism it undermines its potency, eliminating the possibility of complete destruction. By considering recent attempts to restore destroyed artefacts via 3D printing this paper connects vandalism and the idolatry of preservation within the larger plot of the iconoclast economy. In doing so it connects fantasies of aniconism and iconodilism. To combat the extremism of both positions this paper proposes an attitude to destruction, inspired by Japanese *kintsugi*, which simultaneously recognises the fragility and the resilience of artefacts.

I. Preface: The New Arch

...iconoclash... is when one does not know, one hesitates, one is troubled by an action for which there is no way to know without further inquiry, whether it is destructive or constructive. (Latour, 2002, p. 14)

This year the Institute of Digital Archaeology¹ as part of the Million Image Database Project, constructed a monumental 3D robot-made in Carrara,

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¹ The Institute is “A joint venture between Harvard University, the University of Oxford and the government of the United Arab Emirates.” See

Italy; 12 ton, 6.1 metre high, Egyptian marble reconstruction of Palmyra's (Tadmur) recently destroyed by IS 1,800 year old Arch of Triumph (also known as the Arch of Septimius Severus).² This "reconstruction" was presented at London's Trafalgar Square from April 19th to 21st (World Heritage Week).

After visits to New York (19th - 23rd September, 2016) and Dubai (late 2016), this new arch is planned to be installed at Palmyra as a memorial to the murdered archaeologist Khaled al-Assad.

While some have seen this project as an attempt to copy a lost original and as a result a prime example of the Benjaminian loss of aura and authenticity, I do not see an analysis of what goes wrong between the original and the copy as being particularly philosophically productive in this case. The destroyed arch is clearly irreplaceable. Equally, to invoke Baudrillard to describe this facsimile so clearly trading on claims of verisimilitude as a Disneyfied folly is not quite correct.

Instead I deny that this new arch constitutes an exact copy *per se*. Its smaller scale (the original is 15 meters) and purpose mark it out as something much more explicitly commercially connected, politically instrumentalised and aesthetically complicated; a souvenir. This souvenir ought not to be considered a rescued treasure from an IS iconoclast bonfire of the vanities nor a potent text to be stored in a digital *Giftschrank* (poison cabinet).

Instead, this example of "iconoclasb" and IS vandalism itself is, I will argue, best conceived within the international trade network and languages of duty and legitimacy that symbolically accompanies state building.

Palmyra is strategic not only for its nearby phosphate mines but its symbolic value. This new monument is testament to Palmyra's location on the World Heritage Site list as a site "standing at the crossroads of several civilizations, [which] married Graeco-Roman techniques with local tradi-

<http://digitalarchaeology.org.uk/>. This project is one of many. In addition to the Million Image Database Project, a French company; ICOMEN, and the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) are also archiving images of Syrian heritage sites and objects with a view to their future digital printing. The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative <http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/> also documents destruction of antiquities and sites in Syria and Iraq.

² The reconstruction is estimated to have cost in the region of £100,000.

tions and Persian influences.” (UNESCO, 1980) This atelic list is imperial in the scale of its attempt to capture the world’s key cultural and natural locations. Beyond the goals of preservation and protection it claims for “mankind” a global heritage under specific criteria of “outstanding value.” This categorising generates a global canon of “holy” sites demanding our devotion. As such listed sites are elevated to the status of global icons and such valorisation, iconodilism³ even, must be understood as fuelling the drive to loot and destroy.

Furthermore this ranking and listing activity is intrinsic to the use of such locations. No longer are such sites of solely local concern. Listing promotes the veneration of sites as outstanding global tourist and pilgrimage destinations and can radically transform the ecology and economic environment surrounding the location. As such Palmyra’s location on this list of tourist imperialism must also be seen within the context of the legacies of western looting of non-western sites. The appeal of such sites is obvious. Ruins are evocative. Nothing becomes the icon than the manner of its defacement. The ruin suggests the passage of empire and the controlling of ruins is a clear demonstration of power.

Accordingly the response of the Institute of Digital Archaeology is better understood in terms of the Western framing of what Jay Winter has called “sites of memory, sites of mourning” (2014). Winter identifies a culture of commemoration that consecrated specific sites and artefacts after the Second World War in the service of aesthetic redemption to offer a “collective remembrance.” Palmyra’s location on the World Heritage Site list is confirmation of such consecration.

2. Looting and Broadcasting Vandalism

*All ancient towers will one day crumble into the sea Defaced by armies
Intent on rendering obsolete* (Sparklehorse & Dangermouse, 2010)

The Million Image Database Project is but one attempt to respond digitally to the digital broadcasting of IS vandalism. Another response is the project <http://www.newpalmyra.org/> which seeks to collect “data from international partners”, analyze it, create a “reconstruction of Palmyra in

³ For a history of iconoclasm and iconodilism see Besançon (2000).

virtual space, and sharing the models and data in the public domain.” The new arch is an aesthetic response to IS within the global war between IS and its enemies⁴. It is not an isolated example. Rather it is a sign of a growing trend. Other aesthetic responses include: The *Palmyra Photogrammetry Project* which uses tourist photos to make 3D models of Palmyra, an associated app (arck-project.com) allows users to access a 3D rendering Palmyra Castle, Morehshin Allahyari’s ongoing series *Material Speculation: ISIS*; “a 3D modelling and 3D printing project focused on the reconstruction of [...] artifacts [...] destroyed by ISIS”, the UNHCR supported project of Syrian Refugees to recreate destroyed monuments in the Za’atari refugee camp, Jordan, and Kanishk Tharoor and Maryam Maruf’s virtual and anecdotal *Museum of Lost Objects*.⁵ The most recent example is the UNESCO sponsored exhibition; *Rising from Destruction: Ebla, Nimrud, Palmyra* currently on show at the Colosseum in Rome. This exhibition contains full scale 3D printed replicas of artefacts damaged or destroyed by IS including the “Winged human-headed bull” from Nimrud in Iraq, part of the state archives hall from the ancient Syrian kingdom of Ebla, and half of the roof of the Palmyra’s Temple of Bel.

The new arch is testament not only to the tradition of commemoration but also to Islamic State’s looting and digital broadcasting of vandalism⁶ and *equally naive hopes* that artefacts can be erased and that robots will preserve what is being destroyed. From this perspective irreplaceability is simultaneously elevated to being the mark of the valuable and undermined by drive to employ new technologies to reproduce and restore. Like it or not, IS are akin to those hunters who fund conservation. Their violence indirectly ensures that the icons they deface are often less likely to go extinct.

⁴ This global war should be seen as a development of the regional civil war in the Middle East, namely; IS is a product of a Sunni response to Shiite political control of Iraq amongst, economic instability, religious ideology amongst other things. This paper will not focus on such factors but rather be limited to the global broadcasting of vandalism.

⁵ Other examples include Aliaa Magda Elmahdy and Femen’s photo from 2014, Mimsy’s work showing Sylvania Families terrorised by IS that was banned from the *Passion for Freedom* exhibition at London’s Mall Galleries in 2015.

⁶ It is worth noting that IS are not alone in the destruction and looting of monuments in the region. The Syrian Army, Kurdish forces and Western forces are all guilty in the current conflict. However in each of these cases the deliberate digital broadcasting of destruction has not been a concerted strategy.

The digital documentation and broadcasting of iconoclasm eliminates the possibility of iconoclasm per se, let alone aniconism.⁷ Conversely, this account of the ambiguity of iconoclasm acknowledges that the attempts of iconophiles to restore are equally bound to damage.

Destructive vandalism and looting is but the most extreme instrumentalisation of Palmyra. With the actions of IS the most flagrant example. Palmyra demonstrates the constant political rewriting of history and historical sites. In claiming to preserve in the name of “common heritage” a token of shared “global” value these 3D approaches are exemplary of the aesthetics and politics of state sponsored vandalism and iconoclasm in the digital age. Michael Press has argued that Palmyra has been looted both physically and ideologically ever since it was “rediscovered” by the West in 1691. Not only have its artefacts filled western museums but it has been seen as central to European history and inheritance. It is in this context that UNESCO and Russian plans to restore the now recaptured ruins of Palmyra must be seen. These plans certainly threaten to (re-)construct a Disneyfied site in the name of legitimacy. The first broadcast in this project was the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra of St. Petersburg performance of pieces by Johann Sebastian Bach, Sergei Prokofiev and Rodion Shchedrin at Palmyra broadcast live by RT. In the face of the drive to *restore*, writers such as Johnathan Jones (2016) argue that the rebuilding of Palmyra and other “destroyed” sites is illegitimate and only sensitive *preservation* is appropriate.

Such examples demonstrate why it is helpful to think of the actors in around Palmyra in 2016 as each exploiting through digital imagery the artefacts and sites involved to bolster the legitimacy of their projects of statecraft. Both projects (destruction and preservation) I argue are caught in mutually dependent fantasies and counter fantasies. The strategic goal of state legitimacy is, I believe, a key explanation for why IS compromise their vandalism when dividing representation and documentation. It is also a key reason for some of the opponents of IS denial of destruction that hopes to undo the looting and iconoclasm of IS. Collectors may seek to protect the heritage of the middle east but such activity is comprom-

⁷ Aniconism is the *absence* of material representation, whereas iconoclasm is the *destruction* of material representation.

ised to the degree that it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate it from colonialism.

My scepticism regarding both projects should not be read as an attempt to equate the world heritage industry with IS. Rather it is a suspicion of the claims of both of uncompromising purity in iconoclasm/aniconism and restoration. That aniconism is possible, especially given the digital documentation and broadcasting of iconoclasm, is a dubious conceit. Likewise that sites and artefacts can be restored as some may imagine given the example of the Institute of Digital Archaeology's new arch is also unconvincing. All artefacts (including digital), and sites are inevitably doomed. Instead it is more accurate, in this context, to understand iconoclasm and restoration alike as transformation and re-use, if not even image creation itself and preservation as renovation.

Palmyra 2016	Action	Fantasy	Reality
<i>Islamic State</i>	"Vandalism" "Looting" Promotion	Iconoclasm Aniconism	Destruction Transformation Perpetuation
<i>The World Heritage Industry</i>	"Preservation" "Conservation" "Safeguarding"	Restoration Iconodilism	Renovation Gentrification Re-use

Both parties exist within the larger plot of the iconoclast economy. From the world heritage perspective the endangered (irreplaceable) site has a magnetic appeal while IS understandably can interpret such tourist valorisation as idolatry, idolatry of preservation. Here we can see a current *iconoclash*: one person's idol is another's icon. Contemporary iconodilism deploys the figure of the tourist as the modern day iconodule and the jihadi as iconoclast. Iconoclasts and conservationists alike require the exchange of endangered icons. In this tempered understanding there an intervoven resilience and vulnerability to sites such as Palmyra. They persist despite and because of their defacement.

Where the then Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, speaking at the unveiling of the new arch explained that "Antiquities like this belong to all mankind and it is imperative that we all strive to safeguard our common

heritage” (Glum, 2016) we would do well to recall Bob Dylan’s 1965 ‘Tombstone Blues’:

The sweet pretty things are in bed now of course
 The city fathers they’re trying to endorse
 The reincarnation of Paul Revere’s horse
 But the town has no need to be nervous
 [...]
 I’m in the streets
 With the tombstone blues

The new arch cannot reincarnate or replace what has been destroyed. It can at best memorialise via *mimesis*.

In both cases (iconoclasm and restoration) the ruin remains functional not simply for symbolic reasons. Through tourism and looting the ruin is a valuable economic resource. To the long history of appropriation of Palmyra (from western plundering to Sunni iconoclasm) we can now add digital means to that history. Accordingly I will outline how digital media has strategically been used by vandals.

As a result of this digital consciousness I argue that, not only is vandalism increasingly subject to digital documentation, but the aesthetic nature of vandalism itself is different as a result of the digital. No longer is it a local destructive act, it has become an act performed primarily for broadcast to global markets. (In the case of IS vandalism is a way of marketing a *de facto* state.) Digital space is a domain of economics, the artworld and nation building. In this space, vandalism has been employed as a transnational brand.

In the case of IS the deliberate digital documentation and subsequent broadcasting of the destruction of cultural heritage forms an aesthetic strategy of a nascent state and not simply blind iconoclasm, but vandalism in the service of state formation.

Before I go any further I should clarify my use of the term vandalism. This is a dangerous term to use, as beyond the connotations of destruction there is much dispute about what should be judged vandalism. Where one judges an act vandalism another may see art. When Homer Simpson floods Springfield as an art project Bart Simpson asks: “Are you sure this is art, not vandalism?” Homer replies: “That’s for the courts to decide, son.”

(Jean, 1999) Likewise, Alex Comfort's *The Joy of Sex*, declares that "shaving armpits is ignorant vandalism" (1974, pp. 71-3). Just as Gloria Leonard distinguished pornography from erotica in terms of lighting, vandalism is in the category of ambiguous moral and aesthetic crimes.

Acknowledging the loaded nature of the term vandalism, I believe that it must be understood in a variety of different ways: aesthetic, historical and legal. Vandalism is not an act⁸ simply of curious experimentation and breaching restricted access. It is a productive and aesthetically valuable act that involves deauthoring, reauthoring and destruction. As such I distinguish it from iconoclasm which seeks simply to deface images. It can thus be seen, for example, that the broadcasting and perpetuations of images by IS render their actions closer to vandalism than iconoclasm.

The trade of artefacts touched by vandalism (in this case so-called "blood antiquities"), I argue, is inseparable from their digital documentation. In short: no buyers, no looters. This trade marries both the production and consumption of these images. Furthermore in the case of IS iconoclasm and looting it broadens complicity to a global audience.

Digital display does more than simply advertise the work in question, the context of documentation can add value to the work. This can be seen in a perverse way in the recent example of IS. Even prior to broadcasting, the defacement of icons valorises and empowers the object or site. Where a stated aim of IS is the obliteration of particular sites and objects of cultural heritage, the simultaneous documentation not only makes the few surviving works more precious, but also gives the "destroyed" work digital "immortality". IS should thus be seen to engage with digital space on economic and art institutional terms.

We can now see a combination of three activities; vandalism, digital documentation and commercial exchange. In the case of Islamic State's vandalism of heritage sites and artefacts this combination of activities is also present and serves to legitimate certain vandals as jihadi and groups as sovereign. IS could not have created their world without employing the digital. This space is new and it changes the terms of cultural production, acceptance and destruction, even desecration. As many of the projects

⁸ Vandalism can of course also take the form of inaction. Planned obsolescence, neglect, censorship and avoidance can all mark a vandalistic impulse.

mentioned above demonstrate, the digital documentation of these irreplaceable destroyed sites ensures some degree of ongoing reproduction.

There is an ideological logic to the idol smashing of Islamic State. From one perspective it can be seen as uncivilised cultural vandalism. From another perspective it is that oldest of aesthetic revolutions. Just as the state must be reborn so too must the art contained therein. Here one could cite the original Vandals, the dissolution of the churches during the Reformation, the French and Russian revolutionaries etc. In fact it is doubtful that any state born in revolution has been free from the tumult of aesthetic revolution manifest in vandalism. However IS also demonstrates that the ideological and theological logic is superseded by political and economic logic.

The digital broadcasting of these acts of vandalism is part of the IS declared “cyber war” on the USA. Acts of extremism make great publicity. YouTube videos are a way to prove to your sponsors that work has been undertaken. Digital sophistication is essential for the vandal in 2016. Such global digital broadcast understands that the audience is not only the local. It is the global market. The internet marks “the further decline of traditional geographic communities.” (Long & Hopkins, 2015, p. 171) We can see this in the transnational graffiti and jihad of the artworld and Islamic State. This transnational broadcasting reveals something crucial about IS. Islamic State makes more sense when you include a digital dimension and not just standard territorial criteria. Vandalism and nationhood now make more sense when one considers online activity than on the standard map. IS is a digital state.

Beyond the ideological and revolutionary logic the economic logic enabled by the global digital realm that is perhaps unique to Islamic State. From a digital perspective (I hesitate to label this ‘western’) these images are caught in a dialectic that yearns for conservation, under the name world heritage, and the hope of a future technology that will reconstruct what has been destroyed. From the perspective of Islamic State these images are ironically and cynically great idealistic monuments that serve to fund the apparatus of a nascent state. Islamic State is a state that fears the past but not enough to not sell it. The authenticity of the stone is treating and therefore attacked, but, and this is the crucial point; there remains a certain authenticity in film. Stone’s authenticity derives from memory. These

videos do not have the memory of stone but they present an undeniability that cannot be easily erased or forgotten.

Islamic State is a state, not a “so-called state”. A terrifying and radical type of state, a digital state, but a state nonetheless⁹. This claim does not mean that IS is *not* a failed state with a bleak and short future. It may lack *de jure* authority but it holds *de facto* rule over a significant territory. As such it meets the criteria set by the Montevideo convention.¹⁰ Its leader is Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Like other states it is branded, in fact like other states it is a myth manifest as a transnational brand; the flag, the weaponry and of course Toyota! It is huge in geographical scale, organised and financially self-sufficient. Central to its economic model is the selling of culture via digital means. IS has been labelled “The Digital Caliphate” by Abdel Bari Atwan. Reflecting on IS digital management of savagery he states that “The internet has given Islamic State opportunities that its predecessors neither fully exploited or understood. By clever use of social media and digital film making, it has eclipsed the counterweight mainstream media...” (Atwan, 2015, p. 218) It is a state that feeds off this parallel world.

Furthermore, there is a tension between destruction and looting in the case of IS. The overwhelming majority of artefacts and sites are looted instead of destroyed. IS are not the first or only looters in the region but their looting of culture of cultural artefacts is undertaken on an organised, institutional and industrial scale¹¹. The permit system ensures that the diggers pay a 20%-80% *khums* tax. This is a windfall tax on profits from antiquities digging. Receipt books have been recovered from Abu Sayyaf’s compound recording the payment of *khums* and auctions take place in Raqqa, Syria¹².

Atwan is not alone in arguing that Islamic State’s success is grounded

⁹ It is for this reason that I use the name Islamic State and not the following; ISIL, “so-called” Islamic State, Daesh etc.

¹⁰ See the *Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States*. This was a treaty signed at Montevideo, Uruguay, on December 26, 1933, that defined a “...state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states.”

¹¹ For a history of the industrialisation of iconoclasm in Europe in the 20th century see Noyes (2013). IS mark a return to the “total iconoclasm” described by Noyes.

¹² See Taub (2015).

in its “digital expertise,” particularly of social media. Islamic State proudly boasts as much. The digital marketing of the state ranges from threats to commit atrocities to the recent publication of e-book tourist guides. For example, *A Brief Guide to Islamic State* by British jihadist Abu Rumaysah al Britani provides chapters entitled “food”, “weather”, “transport”, “technology”, “people”, “education” and “capitalism is dead”. Specifically on technology it explains:

The Islamic State’s deft use of media and hi-tech weaponry to further its aims also shows that Islam is not an enemy to modern technology, and in many ways it has propelled the Caliphate brand into something that is stylish and cool. [...]

Inside the Islamic State you will have access to the usual gizmos such as laptops, tablets, mobile phones, and of course the internet. Keep in mind that mobile networks are still in the making, but apps such as Skype, Kik, WhatsApp and Telegram, to name but a few, are great alternatives. [...]

If you thought London or New York was cosmopolitan then wait until you step foot in the Islamic State, because it screams diversity. (Abu Rumaysah al Britani, 2015, pp. 28-30)

The savvy use of media by IS is evident in the timing and delivery of their broadcasts of images of vandalism. A well-worn pattern is followed to maintain maximum media exposure. Captured sites are not immediately destroyed. Instead they are, cleared and prepared. This allows for coordinated looting, advertising and the growth of international outrage. Only then does iconoclasm begin.

Cultural artefacts are the second largest source of revenue for IS after oil. Compared to oil however, artefacts easier to loot (Hartnell and Wahab, 2015). Like oil, digital images of cultural artefacts have an ability to function as currency. In addition to being units of account, a medium of exchange, a store of value and a standard of deferred payment they can advertise goods for sale and disseminate a world view. World heritage is stored credit and the gold standard is the UNESCO inscribed list. As the malaise that Islamic State seeks to combat is seen as global, icons of global significance are obvious targets. We may describe the destruction of Nimrud, Khorsabad, Hatra, and the use of power drills in Nineveh Museum

in Mosul as “war crimes” but for IS they are acts “cultural cleansing” that promote and finance the state. “Looting antiquities fits well with [IS’s] belief that it has to ‘cleanse’ ‘pagan’ relics such as shrines and tombs. But it destroys them only after having removed everything of value from them; these are then considered spoils of war and a legitimate asset.” (Atwan, 2015, p. 147)¹³ The selling of these artefacts not only undermines the strict claimed ideology of Islamic State but also makes other states complicit in the dismantling and destruction of the cultural heritage of the Middle East. No doubt the cultural identity of the region is shattered in an attempt to construct a so-called “global caliphate”.

While images of destruction dominate western media, most artefacts are sold, not destroyed and those that destroyed simply increase the price for those that remain. IS seeks to destroy a certain cultural capital, yet selling that capital is a failed way to absolutely destroy it. In practice the policy of destroying the immovable and looting and smuggling the movable pieces, is not unique in the history of iconoclasm. Vandalism, no matter how ideological is *ceaselessly commercially compromised*. The selling of these artefacts not only undermines the strict claimed ideology of Islamic State but also makes other states complicit in the dismantling and destruction of the cultural heritage of the Middle East. The ideologies of iconoclasm and iconodilism each seek to legitimise a form of pure interaction with sites and artefacts. The practice, which seeks to conquer and harness the power of the image, in reality serves to demonstrate the compromised messiness of such interaction. This compromise is visible when we consider the profits from the extremist’s digital exchange. Who makes money from digital exchange? Search engines such as Google profit for example from searches on Islamic State vandalism.

Islamic State’s vandalism can perhaps be described as a considered art-world strategy. As part of this strategy Islamic State are not immune from even the exchange of merchandise (I have yet to find iconoclast themed merchandise however). It is perhaps not surprising that in this context *Hyperallergic.com’s* 2016 April’s Fool; ‘ISIS to Exhibit Floating Pavilion of

¹³ Atwan continues: “The current terrorist art and antiquities market is dictated by two factors: (1) can an item be transported to a location where a buyer exists for it, and (2) can the artwork be passed off as legitimate once it arrives.” (p. 147)

Art Destruction at Venice Biennale', was so convincing¹⁴.

Islamic State constitutes an aesthetic revolution and the challenge is to continue aesthetic engagement beyond the confines of the IS branded revolution. Unlike earlier examples of the destruction of idols the digital documentation and dissemination of Islamic State's iconoclasm ensures that, while an exact reassembly of Palmyra and other sites is impossible, there is plenty of fuel to continue.

While digital space embraces and enables economic and artworld activity, a key difference with digital space as an economic and art institutional space, as opposed to traditional types of vandalism, is that it resists the obliteration, destruction and erasure vital to vandalism. There is no such thing as rarity online.¹⁵ Islamic State's vandalism serves to valorise surviving artefacts. Digital currency at its most basic level is the jpg and the avi file. 'Pics or it didn't happen!' is the millennial slogan. The vandalism of incremental erosion (neglect, as opposed to symbolic vandalism) is more difficult to digitally capture to be a tradable commodity. IS are video artists whose work serves to strip heritage sites of their luxury status. IS iconoclasm is increasingly a mundane product. We can barely *pay* attention any more.

I earlier called Islamic State vandalism a considered artworld strategy. While this is the case in regard to digital broadcasting and commercial exchange there are some unintended consequences to this vandalism. Given that their images will mutate and grow to be icons, Islamic State vandalism could be also considered *curious conservation*. The vandalism of Islamic State is a sort of reverse gentrification. It is a removing of sites precisely because they are of tourist interest. Hacking and looting are again ambiguous terms and Islamic State vandalism is in its own way a form of radical contemporary curation. We can come to regard IS as trolling or accidental librarians and the forces that wish to preserve and restore as feeding destruction.

When we can consider iconoclasm as conservation and vice versa it is more important to consider the implications for our understanding of

¹⁴ See <http://hyperallergic.com/195279/isis-to-exhibit-floating-pavilion-of-art-destruction-at-venice-biennale/>.

¹⁵ This is not to claim that archiving the digital is an easy, permanent, uncomplicated, or fixed activity. There is a slippage that occurs over time.

vandalism.

3. Conclusion: State Vandalism and *Kintsugi* Renovation

*There will come a time gigantic
Waves will crush the junk that I have saved
When the moon explodes or floats away
I'll lose the souvenirs I made
La la la (Sparklehorse, 1998)*

In the study of vandalism it is useful to turn to Stanley Cohen's seminal 1973 typology. Cohen outlined six typologies in terms of motivation. These are:

1. Acquisitive vandalism (vandalism motivated by acquiring money or assets, looting and petty theft).
2. Ideological vandalism (vandalism in support of a cause).
3. Tactical vandalism (to advance a goal beyond money making).
4. Vindictive vandalism (revenge).
5. Play vandalism. (In the study of hacking this is called "drift".)
6. Malicious vandalism (vandalism motivated by a hatred or pleasure in destruction).
7. Peer pressure vandalism (has also been added to this list by Williams, 2004).

David Freedberg (1985) has also identified a variety of motivations for iconoclasm. His list includes; publicity, the fear of the image, the view that too much wealth is invested in the object and a desire to highlight injustice.

What I have outlined is a new type, or even sub-type of tactical vandalism: state vandalism. This encompasses many of Cohen's types and the motivations identified by Freedberg but in the case of Islamic State and other actors in 2016 it needs to be understood as directed digital communication.

While digital documentation and broadcasting may seem antithetical to the spirit of radical Islam, the digital offers the vandal the freedom to be a darling of the artworld, a jihadi, art dealer etc.. The counterintuitive

dissemination of images by IS reveals a self-defeating paradox at the heart of their strategy. In splitting the idol and the image they refuse to see the scope for future idolatry/iconoclasm in their digital creations. Furthermore, the globalised conservation industry as seen in the UNESCO World Heritage Site initiative stands somewhat implicated in fuelling iconoclasm

A reconsideration of the global conservation practice and assessing the use of “boots on the ground” response to Islamic State is beyond the scope of this paper. Equally the “electronic counter-jihad” being fought by Anonymous and Western states has hitherto proven limited. It is clear that the Stolen Works of Art Database, a “red list” with information on more than 1,300 items removed from museums and sites in Syria has not been enough and that the proposal of Philippe-Joseph Salazar to open dialogue with IS is not being countenanced. Nonetheless, given that the success of IS derives from its ability to demonstrate its deeds and actions it follows that to be defeated it must be tackled on these grounds.

As I have shown in my writings on *Pasquino*¹⁶, an ancient statue recovered in medieval Rome and still subject to vibrant, I would say vandalistic, interaction the destruction and defacing of artworks is not the end of art. Likewise, souvenirs such as the new arch ought to be considered for their rich aesthetic potential and should not be discarded as simply inauthentic.

Nonetheless it is worth remembering that all positions on the spectrum from destruction to preservation to restoration are but different types of political instrumentalisation and icon cultivation. The new arch demonstrates the complicated politics that the restoration of antiquities even as a souvenir presents where iconoclasm and restoration alike, each claim transnational and global heritage and validity via digital means and each serve to transform artworks and heritage sites.

From shattered fragments new ways of aesthetic experience and engagement are still possible. Here I am inspired by the practice of *kintsugi* (golden joinery) from Japanese aesthetics. This is where damaged artefacts are repaired using gold. The appeal of *kintsugi* is obvious. It permits a position that can overcome the paradoxes of replacing the irreplaceable and does not follow the fantasies of manmade aniconism and restoration

¹⁶ See Vaughan (2015).

that revel in uncompromising purity. Furthermore it does so in a way that values the iconoclast history of the piece in question. This honouring must now be considered part of the contemporary duty of the museum and other cultural institutions in their treatment of such souvenirs, memorials and commemorations. Where possible 3D replicas have a role to play.

This *kintsugi* challenge I venture is one way to approach the aesthetic challenge of iconoclasm in the age of the digital. By not trying to replace lost and irreplaceable artefacts of the precious records of antiquity, *kintsugi* instead records, mends and acknowledges the scars through deeds and actions. Souvenirs can help where cultural heritage has been shattered.

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