

Art history students research endangered artifacts

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newwave@tulane.edu

Tulane University students enrolled in an introductory art history course have released a report providing background information on cultural artifacts at risk for trafficking or destruction in Yemen.

The 13 undergraduate student authors are taking Art Survey I: Prehistory through the Middle Ages, taught by Lily Filson, an adjunct professor of art history in the School of Liberal Arts. The students completed the report in response to an emergency "[red list](#)" published by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), which outlined a number of Yemeni cultural artifacts in danger of illicit trafficking during the ongoing Yemeni civil war.

The students' report, "Tulane Art History Students Take on ICOM's 'Emergency Red List of Cultural Objects at Risk, Yemen,'" provides a detailed contextual analysis and description of each individual artifact in an effort to showcase the cultural and historical value of each piece. The listed artifacts include stone statues to bronze busts and ancient incense burners.

"So much damage is being done to a history that we are only beginning to study," said Filson. "Studying these artifacts is just as important as studying the traditional art history we look at in textbooks about ancient Mesopotamia, ancient Egypt and ancient Greece. It's our shared human heritage.

"Tulane students are the only ones in the country in a basic art history survey class that are interacting with urgent issues in the field and writing their own original content," Filson added. "I hope they take away an expanded view of ancient art history and particularly an awareness of a vast and ancient art tradition that is not really taught in American universities."

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— Lily Filson