

Lecture by Dr Margarete van Ess in Essen, Germany

16 January 2004

Dr Margarete van Ess (German Oriental Institute) gave a lecture in the Ruhrland Museum in Essen on the looting of the museums and sites in Iraq. She said that although there were some 170,000 IM registration numbers, the total Iraq Museum holdings were probably in the region of 501,000 objects, bearing in mind that groups of objects (e.g. from one tomb, necklace etc) had frequently been assigned a single number, and objects from recent Iraqi excavations and from many of the foreign excavations preceding the First Gulf War had remained unregistered. She presented some interesting statistics: a season of excavation will recover some 20,000 sherds, 10,000 small-finds or fragments thereof, and only around 10 museum-quality objects; she used this to demonstrate the scale of the destruction of sites by indiscriminate looting in order to recover a handful of objects.

She also showed many looted objects that are appearing on websites such as Zurqieh Gifts and Novelties Co. LLC, PO Box 19867, Dubai.