

## ANGLAIS LVA

En vous appuyant uniquement sur les documents du dossier thématique qui vous est proposé, vous rédigerez une synthèse répondant à la question suivante :

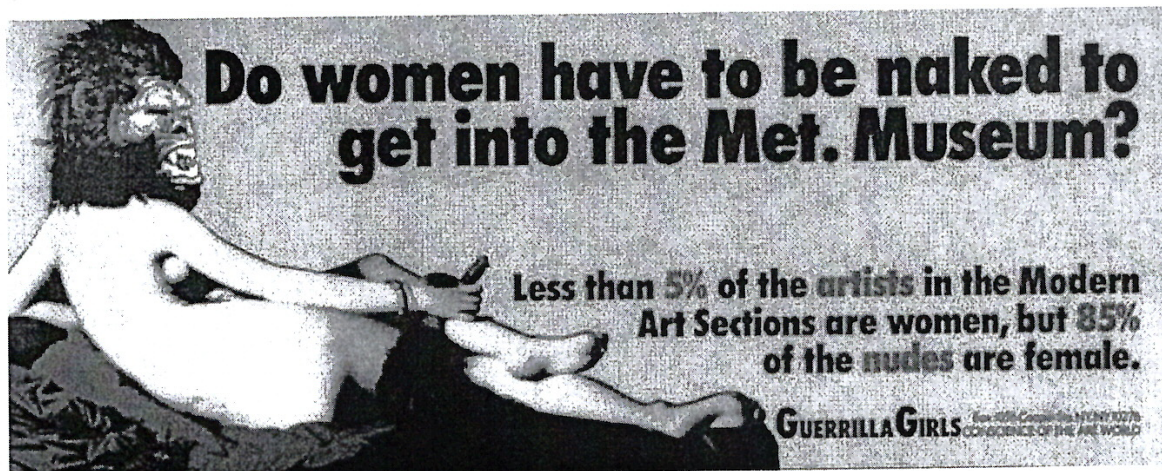
### ***Museums and imperialism: who owns culture?***

Votre synthèse comportera entre 450 et 500 mots et sera précédée d'un titre. Le nombre de mots rédigés devra être indiqué à la fin de votre copie.

#### Liste des documents:

- "Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?", Guerilla Girls, 1989
  - "Museums are hiding their imperial past – which is why my tours are needed", *The Guardian*, By Alice Procter, April 23, 2018
  - "British Museum is world's largest receiver of stolen goods", *The Guardian*, By Dalya Alberge, November 4, 2019
  - "Museums have duty to be political", *The Art Newspaper*, By Jilian Steinhauer, March 20th, 2018
  - National Civil Rights Museum, Freedom Award 2019
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**Document 1 – Do Women Have To Be Naked To Get Into the Met. Museum?, Guerilla Girls, 1989**



*\* Since their inception in 1984 the Guerrilla Girls have been working to expose sexual and racial discrimination in the art world, particularly in New York, and in the wider cultural arena.*

**Document 2 – Museums are hiding their imperial past – which is why my tours are needed**

*The Guardian, By Alice Procter, April 23, 2018*

*The Daily Mail doesn't like my Uncomfortable Art Tours, which focus on slavery and colonialism. But I'm not stopping them*

[...] In the past few days I've been written about in the Times and splashed across the pages of the Daily Mail. An MP has called my work "sensationalist". Apparently, applying modern understanding to the past is unscholarly, childish and disrespectful. When I started leading my Uncomfortable Art Tours around London museums last summer, the goal was to give an alternative view of imperialism, and look at the ways the British empire is represented by Tate Britain, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the National Gallery and others. I am not affiliated to the institutions I guide in, so I'm free to interrogate their histories in a way that staff often can't. We look at art commissioned by those on both sides of the abolitionist movement, unpack the subtle agendas in portraits, and examine the role of museums in creating hierarchies of "civilised" and "savage".

Most importantly, we talk. Being physically in a gallery, a space that privileges some experiences over others, and critiquing this, is a form of dissent. It's a way of opening up the debate about whose stories deserve to be told – and whose faces seen – when we talk about Britishness and nationhood. Museums are institutions of memory – they must stop pretending there's only one version of events, and be willing to own up to their role in shaping the way we see the past.

There is no such thing as neutrality or objectivity. Every label in a gallery was written by a person. Every object was placed, every room was designed. Those people are reflecting their backgrounds in the choices they make, consciously or not.

I make "Display It Like You Stole It" badges for people to wear on the tours. It's a slogan designed to push museums and visitors to rethink the politics of presentation in galleries. On most text panels there's little or no mention of how objects came to be there.



Euphemistic language of “acquisition” obscures the truth. I don’t believe most visitors to the British Museum’s Benin and South Pacific collections, for example, or the V&A’s Indian collections, come away understanding that these are largely the spoils of war.

Short of actually repatriating these objects – which I believe museums should do – they must at least be open about their histories.[....]

My tours, and projects like them, will continue until museums engage fully with their imperial legacies without needing to be prompted. I don’t know when that will happen, but it must.

### **Document 3 - British Museum is world's largest receiver of stolen goods**

*The Guardian*, By Dalya Alberge, November 4, 2019

*Geoffrey Robertson says it should ‘wash its hands of blood and return Elgin’s loot’*

The British Museum has been accused of exhibiting “pilfered cultural property”, by a leading human rights lawyer who is calling for European and US institutions to return treasures taken from “subjugated peoples” by “conquerors or colonial masters”.

Geoffrey Robertson QC said: “The trustees of the British Museum have become the world’s largest receivers of stolen property, and the great majority of their loot is not even on public display.”

He criticised the museum for allowing an unofficial “stolen goods tour”, “which stops at the Elgin marbles, Hoa Hakananai’a, the Benin bronzes and other pilfered cultural property”. The three items he mentioned are wanted by Greece, Easter Island and Nigeria respectively. [...]

He accused the museum of telling “a string of carefully-constructed lies and half- truths” about how the marbles “were ‘saved’ or ‘salvaged’ or ‘rescued’ by Lord Elgin, who came into possession of them lawfully.”

He criticised “encyclopaedic museums” such as the British Museum, the Louvre in Paris and the Metropolitan in New York that “lock up the precious legacy of other lands, stolen from their people by wars of aggression, theft and duplicity”.

Robertson’s views appear in his book, *Who Owns History? Elgin’s Loot and the Case for Returning Plundered Treasure*. [...]

Advocating the return of cultural property based on human rights law principles, Robertson observes that the French president, Emmanuel Macron has “galvanised the debate” by declaring that “African cultural heritage can no longer remain a prisoner of European museums”.

“Politicians may make more or less sincere apologies for the crimes of their former empires, but the only way now available to redress them is to return the spoils of the rape of Egypt and China and the destruction of African and Asian and South American societies,” he writes.

“We cannot right historical wrongs – but we can no longer, without shame, profit from them.”

[...] He accuses museum trustees and the government of passing the buck when it comes to answering requests for the return of cultural property. He also criticises the lack of diversity among trustees.

[...] “The British Museum acknowledges the difficult histories of some of its collections, including the contested means by which some collections have been acquired such as through military action and subsequent looting ... In the case of the Benin bronzes, the museum visited Benin City in 2018 to talk about plans for a new Royal Museum in Benin City and how the museum could help.”

#### **Document 4 – Museums have duty to be political**

*The Art Newspaper*, By Jilian Steinhauer, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018

*Activist curators and directors can make truly democratic spaces, but they need brave boards to support them*

The former director of the Queens Museum in New York, Laura Raicovich, was celebrated for her political outspokenness. “At Queens Museum, the Director Is as Political as the Art” read the headline of a New York Times profile last October. Less than four months later, Raicovich abruptly announced her resignation. [...] [It] seems clear that the board did not fully support her activism, including her closure of the museum on Donald Trump’s inauguration day, in step with calls for an “art strike” by prominent artists and critics, to hold a free protest sign-making event instead.

Raicovich strove to make the Queens Museum a truly progressive, community-orientated space. That is why her departure after only three years is worrisome. It represents the divide between those who think museums should refrain from being political and those who know that, from their foundation, they always have been.

Many of the West’s most beloved art museums began as private collections—a way for royal and rich families and institutions to represent their good taste, wealth and power. [...]

Natural history collections were more idiosyncratic, but similarly served as a showcase for their owners’ sophistication. Cabinets of curiosities presented natural specimens alongside man-made objects in an attempt to classify the world. This was inextricable from the ideology of colonialism, which placed Western society at the pinnacle of civilisation and viewed other lands, peoples and cultures as inferior, and hence exploitable.

Our present museums grew out of this privileged milieu. Largely white, wealthy people chose which objects to include, and continue to do so today as board and staff members. Recent surveys by New York’s Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York Times found that the employees and trustees of the city’s major arts institutions are overwhelmingly white. There is a reason why many people of colour still feel unwelcome in museums. It relates to the reason why museums so often display items from certain cultures—including Native American and African ones—as historical or ethnographic objects, rather than as works of art.

A recent grassroots T-shirt campaign summed it up: Museums are not neutral. [...] At a time when the status quo in the US is government-sanctioned racism and xenophobia, it is all the more urgent that museums acknowledge their political histories and adopt stances on contemporary issues.



There is no single right way to do this. Days after President Trump signed the travel ban last year, affecting people from mostly Muslim countries, curators at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) installed works by artists from some of the targeted countries in their galleries. It was an understated yet potent gesture of solidarity.

**Document 5 – National Civil Rights Museum, Freedom Award 2019**

NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS MUSEUM  
**FREEDOM**  
**AWARD**

 National Civil Rights Museum  
At the Smithsonian

OCTOBER 30, 2019  
[freedomaward.org](http://freedomaward.org)