

ПИСМЕН ПРИЕМЕН ИЗПИТ – ПРИМЕРНИ ТЕКСТОВЕ

АНГЛИЙСКИ КАТО ПЪРВИ ЕЗИК

Being a victim of theft might help the British Museum reflect on returning its loot

Martha Gill

The Observer, 2 September 2023

Western museums still tend to think of themselves as culturally open, their purpose to celebrate diversity and international understanding. But in recent years the liberally minded public have been turning against them, arguing that a number of their displayed items should be returned to their countries of origin. The conservative establishment, meanwhile, generally believes these objects should stay put.

This culture war reignited towards the end of August after a spate of thefts at the British Museum. Some 2,000 objects had reportedly been stolen over several years, leading to the resignation of its director and renewed calls from countries such as Nigeria, Greece and China for contested artefacts to be returned. After all, they say, the British Museum can no longer claim to be a safe repository for their treasures, one of its longest arguments for keeping them.

The British Museum lags behind other institutions when it comes to restitution. It has not, for example, returned its Benin bronzes, Nigerian sculptures looted at the end of the 19th century, and the centre of a long tug of war between the respective governments. Even so, its critics might be applying pressure in slightly the wrong place. The museum is constrained by the British Museum Act of 1963, which prevents it from permanently returning most objects. It is ultimately up to parliament to change the law.

And the law should change. Only one side of this war is backed by the facts: the arguments against restitution are crumbling into dust.

The idea, first, that western museums are the safest place to store the world's treasures has been disproved many times over. Museums were bombed during the Second World War, scores of objects have been sold off to private collectors, and others have been stolen. The British Museum's security, to say the least, has holes.

The oft-repeated argument that these objects are more accessible in busy western hubs doesn't stand up either. Why shouldn't Nigeria's cultural history be accessible in Nigeria – as well as the extra tourists this might encourage?

And returning the objects doesn't necessarily mean losing them altogether. A lot of the key people on the Nigerian side of the argument want some of the bronzes to be in London. They want ultimate ownership to be theirs, but they also want their culture to be displayed around the world – so they would be the ones sending them out on loans.

Scooters tell you off for reckless riding

Charles Bremner, Paris correspondent

The Times, July 29 2022

The electric scooters that have conquered Paris are being equipped with a device to stop the scourge of pavement riding, a practice that infuriates and has frequently injured pedestrians in the French capital.

Lime, the biggest of three companies that run the city's 5,000 self-service public e-scooters, has created a system that detects within a second that the scooter is illegally on a pavement. A voice tells the rider: "Please get off the pavement." If they ignore the request, the scooter slows to a snail's pace.

"Sidewalk detection", which is to be installed on all the Lime self-service scooters from the new year, is aimed at shaming the rider on to a cycle lane or roadway, its only legal path, because pedestrians also hear its message. A camera and artificial intelligence operate the device, which the San Francisco-based company says is the world's first of its kind.

Lime is also working on a device that will detect customers who have drunk too much and refuse to let them start the scooter. After a certain time of night, yet to be agreed with the local authorities, scooters will prompt customers to take a quick test that measures reaction time to deter drunk-riding.

Riders speeding along pavements, weaving among walkers, have added new stress to life in Paris and other cities since the vehicles were embraced by councils as a green "micro-mobility" innovation four years ago. Eight out of ten riders admit they sometimes use the pavement.

So far, safety campaigns and the introduction of new laws have not been effective enough in curbing the accident rate. In Paris, Lyons and Marseilles, a total of 22 people died in e-scooter accidents and 6,000 were injured last year. Antisocial scooter riding has persisted despite a crackdown last year by Paris mayor, Anne Hidalgo, limiting scooter speed to 6 mph in most areas and banning them from parks and gardens.

Lime's innovative devices are expected to facilitate responsible riding, reducing circumstances that can lead to conflict on sidewalks.