

**INCLUDING
WHAT'S ON**



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SPECULATING
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IS INVESTING
BUYING
RISE AGAIN

Archaeology Damage feared to

LONDON. From Greek and Roman shipwrecks to 20th-century warships; from ancient streets with intact buildings and mosaics, the Mediterranean is a subaqueous treasure trove. So BP's plans to drill exploratory oil wells off Libya has raised serious concerns among archaeologists, historians and heritage preservation organisations.

The global energy giant says that it will begin the \$900m project to drill five exploratory wells in the Gulf of Sirte "before the end of this year" despite the fact that the cause of the blowout of its Macondo well in the Gulf of Mexico has yet to be determined. The Libyan wells will be 200 metres deeper than the Macondo.

"An oil spill off the coast of Libya would be a complete disaster," said Claude Sintès, the director of the subaquatic team of the French archaeological mission to Libya and director of the Museum of Ancient Arts, France. According to Sintès, there are two archaeologically rich areas along the Libyan coast—Cyrenaica and Tripolitania. Within Cyrenaica lies Apollonia, an ancient harbour submerged five metres under the water. "It's a complete town under the sea with streets, walls and houses. Slow tectonic movement caused it to sink," said Sintès.

Tripolitania, which extends from Tripoli to the Tunisian border, includes two important ancient sites on the shore: Leptis Magna, a once powerful Roman city and harbour, and Sabratha, which has the remains of a theatre and a Roman bath with spectacular mosaics. Both are UNESCO World Heritage sites.

James Delgado, the president of the Institute of Nautical Archaeology at Texas A&M University, said: "There is a complete record of thousands of years of history on the bottom of the Mediterranean." Both Sintès and Delgado said they expect significant finds off the coast of Libya.

Archaeologists fear the

United States New Orleans artists react to BP spill Gulf Aid charity benefits from same spirit that responded to Hurricane Katrina

NEW YORK. Louisiana was still recovering from the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, when it was hit by another massive ecological disaster this year with the Deepwater Horizon offshore oil well spill in the Gulf of Mexico (see p1). And as they did with Katrina, the region's artists have responded to the crisis through art, many incorporating the very oil washing up on beaches in their works. This summer, Dan Cameron, director of 'New Orleans' Prospect Biennial, sent out an open letter discussing the crucial role the city's artists have played during the oil spill. Speaking to *The Art Newspaper*, Cameron said that New Orleans artists

were in a way prescient of the disaster, and had been creating works concerned with the fragile ecology of the Gulf and the potentially devastating consequences of the oil industry years before the spill. While he worries that there may be "a bit of an exodus" from the area, especially among the fishing community,



Steve Breen uses oil from the spill in his cartoons

which has been hardest hit, he sees artists as a key element in recovery. "The arts community [was central] to the revitalisation of the city post-Katrina. It is clear now more than ever, that the economic future of the city is closely tied to its image as a hotbed of creativity," he wrote in his letter. One of the first members of

the local arts community to respond to the crisis was artist turned dealer Jonathan Ferrara, who organised a commercial exhibition to benefit the Gulf Aid charity. Ferrara approached local artists and asked them to create limited edition prints in response to the spill. "As with Katrina, people's reactions were, 'Oh my

God, I can't believe this has happened.' And then two or three months later people start coming out with works. It takes a while to digest the tragedy... There's no way you could live through a crisis of this nature and not have it become fodder for your art." The exhibition, held throughout July, raised around \$23,000 for the relief effort.

Pulitzer prize-winning political cartoonist Steve Breen of the *San Diego Union-Tribune* also felt compelled to create work in response to the spill, so he flew down to the Gulf to collect tar balls and used them to create new drawings. Though he was worried he wouldn't be able to find any washed up oil, he says he discovered that "the beaches were worse than I thought. They're normally long and white and pristine, and now you have these tar patties everywhere."

Breen took some of the oil home and, after some experimentation, was able to achieve a workable medium by mixing it with gasoline. His drawings depict oil slicked birds and sea life and the Statue of Liberty holding leaky barrels of oil instead of her usual torch and tablet. He says he has discussed showing the original drawings in the Mobile Museum of Art in Alabama to keep the disaster at the front of the public's mind. "Even though the well has been capped, the oil is still out there floating in blobs and settling on the seafloor. Plus, I'm not sure that a lot of the problems that lead to the spill—the corner cutting—have been addressed. There's still work to be done and I hope the cartoons help people realise that." Helen Stollas

The lakeside palace would have just under 1,000 square metres of display space on the ground floor, with two main



Ever been disappointed by that dim, yellowish picture by Leonardo in the Louvre? When the museum decided in 1998 that it was too risky to clean the *Mona Lisa*, we got Nicola Laboratoro in Italy to do a digital clean for us. Now the National Gallery in London is showing us the true colours of the *Virgin of the Rocks* (see p25), so here, once again, is the world's most famous painting—as it could be



government Basra museum

galleries devoted to the Basra region and Sumeria. Smaller rooms would display antiquities from Babylon and Ashur. The palace, which is decorated in a North African style, has survived the post-2003 unrest in relatively good condition.

The latest estimate suggests that the costs of converting the palace into a museum would be about \$5m, which is being



Hussein's Basra palace

sought abroad (on the grounds that the Iraqi authorities will take responsibility for running costs). The British Museum is encouraging international support, and has also provided training for Iraqi staff, including Qahtan.

Basra was the British military's headquarters after the 2003 occupation, and shortly before its troops departed last year, the army undertook a survey of the former palace. Initially it was expected that funds might be available for the new museum. But now that the new UK coalition government has embarked on massive spending cuts, financial support for the Basra Museum is extremely unlikely.

John Curtis, the keeper of the

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Grant irregularity at Arts Council England

"Illegal" grant to trustee reveals slack procedures

LONDON. The Arts Council has given an "illegal" grant to one of its trustees. Novelist Diran Adebayo received £10,165 to help him write his third book. A Charity Commission inquiry found that proper procedures had not been followed by either side, and the grant was unauthorised. Although Arts Council England (ACE), Britain's fourth largest charity, asked Adebayo to repay the money, he has not done so.

Adebayo's refusal to accept the decision of the council board raises the question of whether he can continue as a trustee. He may be considering resignation. If not, culture secretary Jeremy Hunt might have to sack him. Unless the grant is repaid, the council may also institute legal proceedings.

There is a further problem, since our inquiries reveal that the council has failed to keep a

proper register of interests of its trustees.

On 16 July the Charity Commission issued a report on the council, about a trustee who had received a grant. Neither the commission nor the council would name him, but we identified him as Diran Adebayo. He has published two novels, *Some Kind of Black* and *My Once Upon a Time*. Adebayo was appointed a council trustee in

October 2004, with his term extended in 2008 to run until 19 October this year.

On 13 May 2008 Adebayo was awarded a £10,165 "Grant for the Arts", towards the writing of his third novel *The Ballad of Dizzy and Miss P* (which is likely to be published next year). "Grants for the Arts" are funded with National Lottery proceeds and administered by the council. Charities operating under a

Royal Charter need authorisation from the Charity Commission to give grants to their own trustees. Permission was not sought, since the matter was not raised by Adebayo or the council.

Adebayo failed to mention his trustee position in his grant application, although he did record it in the accompanying CV. Adebayo told us that he "acted in good faith", as the Charity

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