

# BLOUINARTINFO

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## Iraq Converts Saddam Hussein's Palace into Museum, New Biennial on the South Pole, and More

By Noelle Bodick



Former palace of Saddam Hussein in Basra, Iraq

- **Saddam Hussein's Palace Is Turning into a Museum:** The Iraqi government is converting Saddam Hussein's former palace in Basra into a museum – the first new museum in the country since the invasion in 2003. When it opens its doors in September, the four main halls will amass between 3,500 to 4,000 objects from Baghdad's Iraq Museum, from the ancient Sumer, Babylon, Assyria, and Islamic periods. The Basra government along with a UK charity called Friends of Basrah Museum – which collected money from mostly oil companies – are funding the venture, while the British Museum has pledged to provide free curatorial support.
- **New Biennial on the South Pole: Antarctic Biennale will launch next year, floating some 100 artists and scientists around on the Akademik Ioffe ship to temporarily install works across the icy continent. Alexander Ponomarev, the artist commissioner of the event, promises that the artworks and landings, which will all be filmed, will “cause no hazard to the environment.**
- **Townhouse Gallery Demolished:** Armed police oversaw laborers demolishing the building housing Townhouse Gallery in Cairo, following its collapse last Wednesday, and months after the government closed the gallery for “administrative irregularities.” Yesterday, at least 30 police watched as a dozen workers gutted the building with “picks and shovels and their bare hands,” according to an eyewitness. This demolition has been carried out against the order of the deputy governor of Cairo, who on Sunday said to delay the destruction in order to figure out why the building collapsed.

- Bill Proposes To Remove Obstacles for Heirs Seeking Nazi-Looted Art: A bipartisan bill to ease the process for restituting Holocaust-era art was introduced to Congress last week. The Holocaust Expropriated Art Recovery (HEAR) Act would elongate the duration for heirs to seek the recovery of work, and counts among its sponsors Texas Republican Senator Ted Cruz. Another supporter, Democratic New York Senator Chuck Schumer, said: “[V]ictims are still identifying possessions that have been missing all these years. When a family discovers a piece of art that was stolen by the Nazis, they deserve their day in court. This legislation helps provide these families their day in court, ensuring that the heirs of Holocaust victims are given the opportunity to bring their art back home.”
- Robert Storr Awarded Insignia of Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters: Robert Storr, the critic, scholar, artist, and outgoing dean of Yale University School of Art, will be awarded the insignia of Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters by the French Ambassador to the United States on April 17.
- Theaster Gates has won Germany’s Kurt Schwitters Prize.
- A lost Caravaggio painting might have been found in an attic in southern France.
- Coachella Festival announces art lineup.