

8TH CAMBRIDGE HERITAGE SEMINAR

Re-visioning the Nation: Cultural heritage and the politics of disaster

Scott Polar Research Institute - Saturday, 12 May 2007 - 9:00-18:00



Pieter Bruegel, the Elder. The Tower of Babel 1563
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

This year's seminar focuses on the uses and abuses of heritage by states and societies as they emerge from crisis situations. Societies emerging from a natural disaster, armed conflict or acute social and economic crisis share many needs regarding their cultural heritage: restoring the rule of law, integrating traumatic events into historical consciousness, negotiating memories, limiting illicit trade and looting. Some scholars have argued for a distinction between “life issues” and “quality of life issues,” suggesting that the former needs are more pressing in a post-crisis situation. But this dichotomy collapses under scrutiny: the values that inform the rebuilding of physical needs will also inform the reconstruction of other dimensions of civic life, such as the use of the recently traumatised past. In this light the post-crisis situation can be seen as a dialectic in which the newly formed (or fragmented) state offers a vision to its citizens of their identity and heritage, and the citizens accept it, reject it, or make a counter-offer in turn.

To register contact:

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For further information visit www.arch.cam.ac.uk/heritageseminar