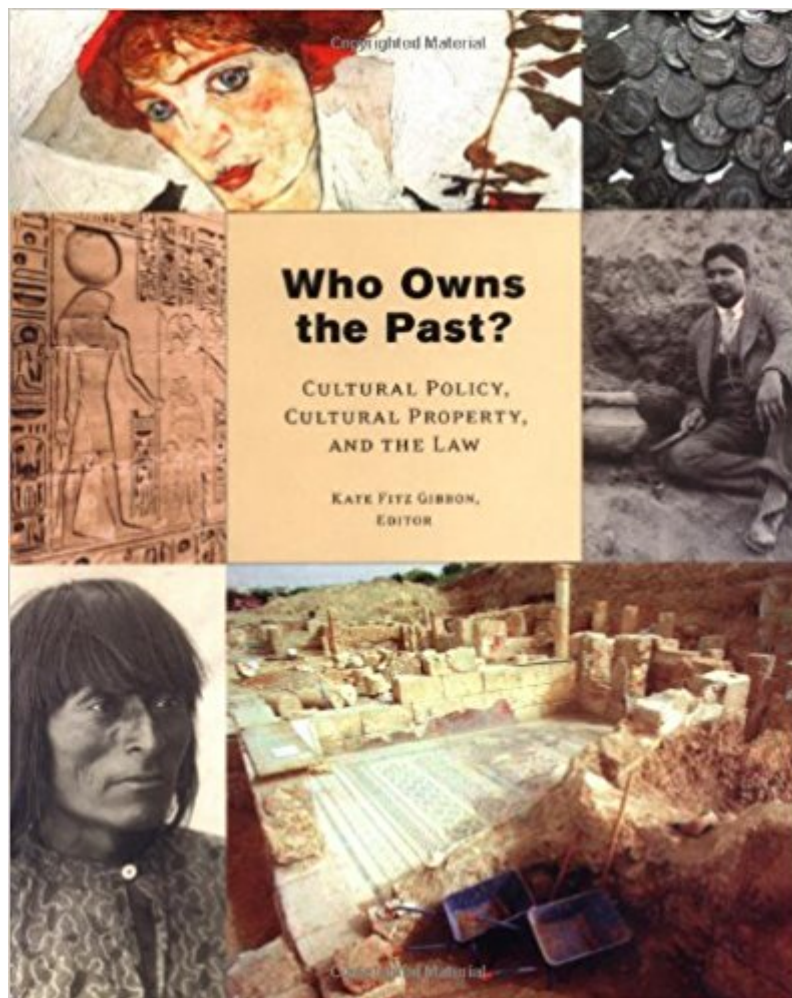


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# Who Owns The Past? Cultural Policy, Cultural Property, And The Law (The Public Life Of The Arts)



## Synopsis

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## Book Information

Series: The Public Life of the Arts

Hardcover: 384 pages

Publisher: Rutgers University Press (September 8, 2005)

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Average Customer Review: 3.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (3 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #646,570 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #145 in [Books > Law > Business > Property](#) #1650 in [Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Political Science > Public Policy](#) #2369 in [Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Anthropology](#)

## Customer Reviews

This book is touted as a "balanced" discussion of the subject matter. Not so. It is decidedly slanted towards the viewpoints of museums and collectors and shortchanges other viewpoints, including those of archaeologists and others determined to halt looting of cultural sites and the trade in illicit antiquities. One example of bias: While reading the chapter on the Portrait of Wally litigation, I was convinced that the author did not understand the legal process because so much of what of what he lamented actually made sense in terms of how a litigation progresses. Was I shocked to find that not only was the author a lawyer, but he was a lawyer for one of the parties in that lawsuit (notably the one who didn't win many of the court's rulings). How can you expect a balanced perspective from someone like that? He is entitled to his opinion, but he was a sore loser who twisted the description of the legal process in order to make his point. While I found it worthwhile to read these perspectives, I felt that I had been duped into buying this book on the premise that it actually represented many points of view.

Who Owns the Past is exactly what it purports to be, a compilation of views written by people with a wealth of knowledge and direct experience in the intricate world of cultural property preservation. The Review by Amy-D above is unfortunately an ideological polemic that belongs in a blog, not in a

review. Anyone who wishes to learn about the issue must study and evaluate the arguments presented by diverse and sometimes conflicting interests. This book presents a position that is certainly germane to the discussion and one that any rational thinker will be able to appreciate. It is insightful, intelligent and surprisingly inexpensive. I highly recommend it.

This book is not a multi-page lamentation on how various people are "oppressed" by the evil rich collectors who steal their culture for the sake of owning curios. This book is written from a very balanced perspective that takes into consideration the textural aspects of this issue, from both a cultural patrimony standpoint and one of the antiques trade. If you are looking for a book that will reaffirm your belief that the "evil rich collectors" are oppressing the poor ethnic peoples, this isn't it. If you are looking for a book that is blame-centric and seeks to demonize people who can afford to buy antiquities, this isn't it either. If you are looking for a cool-headed, honest assesment of the issue that takes into account all parties involved, you will be well served with this book.

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