UNIWERSYTET ŚLĄSKI
W KATOWICACH

Art Vandalism

dr Olivia Rybak-Karkosz

University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland

1. Introduction.
2. Types of destruction and damage of art.
3. Motivations of individual vandals.
4. Serial art vandal.
5. The most often attacked works of art.
6. Possibilities of using criminalistic methods to protect monuments from vandalism.
7. Conclusion.

Introduction

- One of the oldest and most harmful threat to works of art.
- Initially it was inextricable with conquests, wars and other conflicts.
- Most often it is a part of looting art - the more valuable art is stolen and the rest - destroyed.

Typical forms of destruction and damage of art:

1. ideological vandalism
2. terrorism
3. individual vandalism
4. vandalism as side effect (to theft)

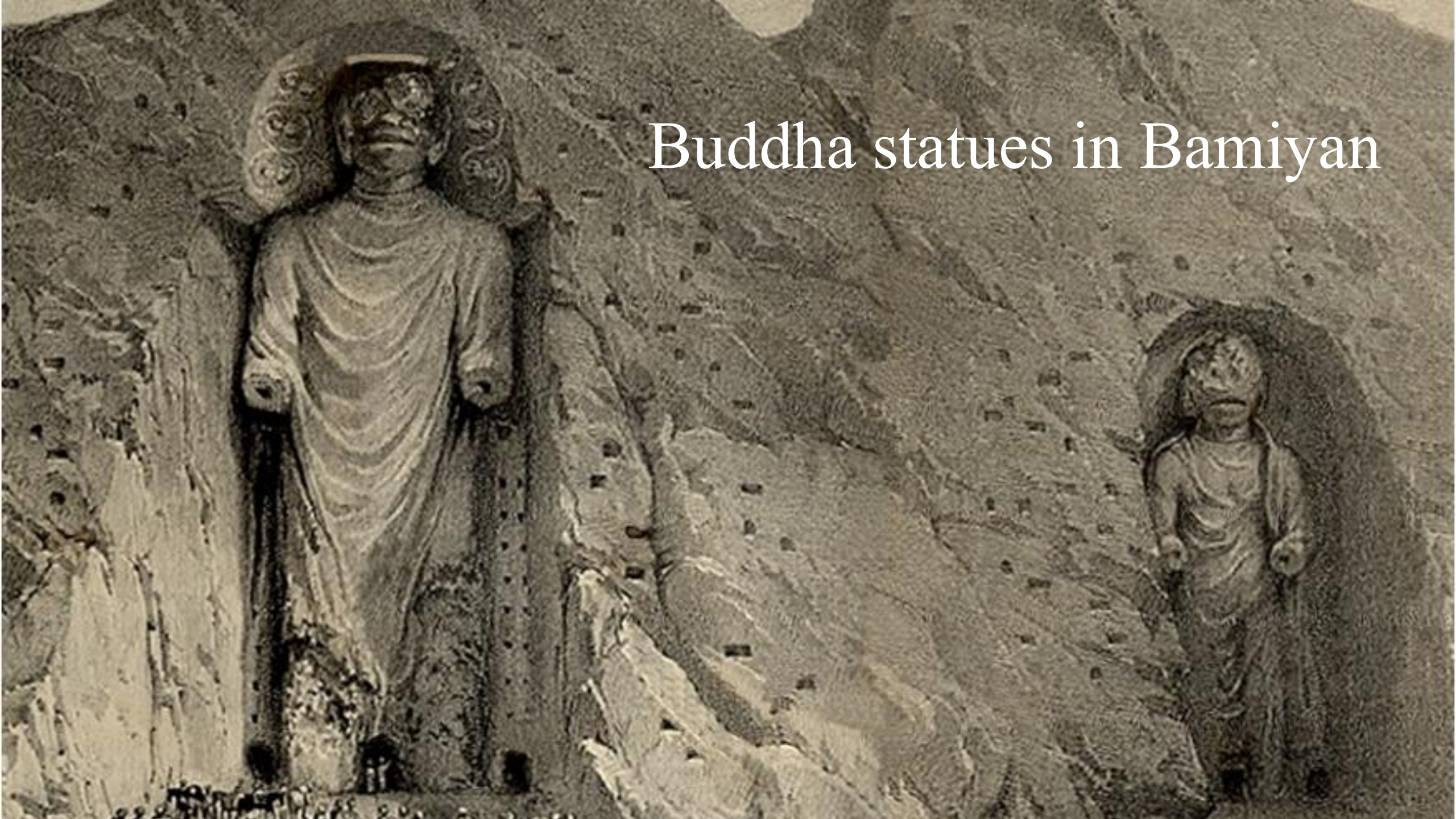
Atypical forms of vandalism:

1. ecological
2. graffiti
3. extravagant
4. archaeological sites

Ideological vandalism

Bombing of Dubrovnik

Figure 3. Diagram of Dubrovnik's Old City. Each black dot represents a direct hit by artillary. Solid black sections represent totally gutted buildings. Adapted from an illustration by the Institute for the Protection of the Cultural Monuments and Natural Environment of Dubrovnik.


Buddha statues in Bamiyan

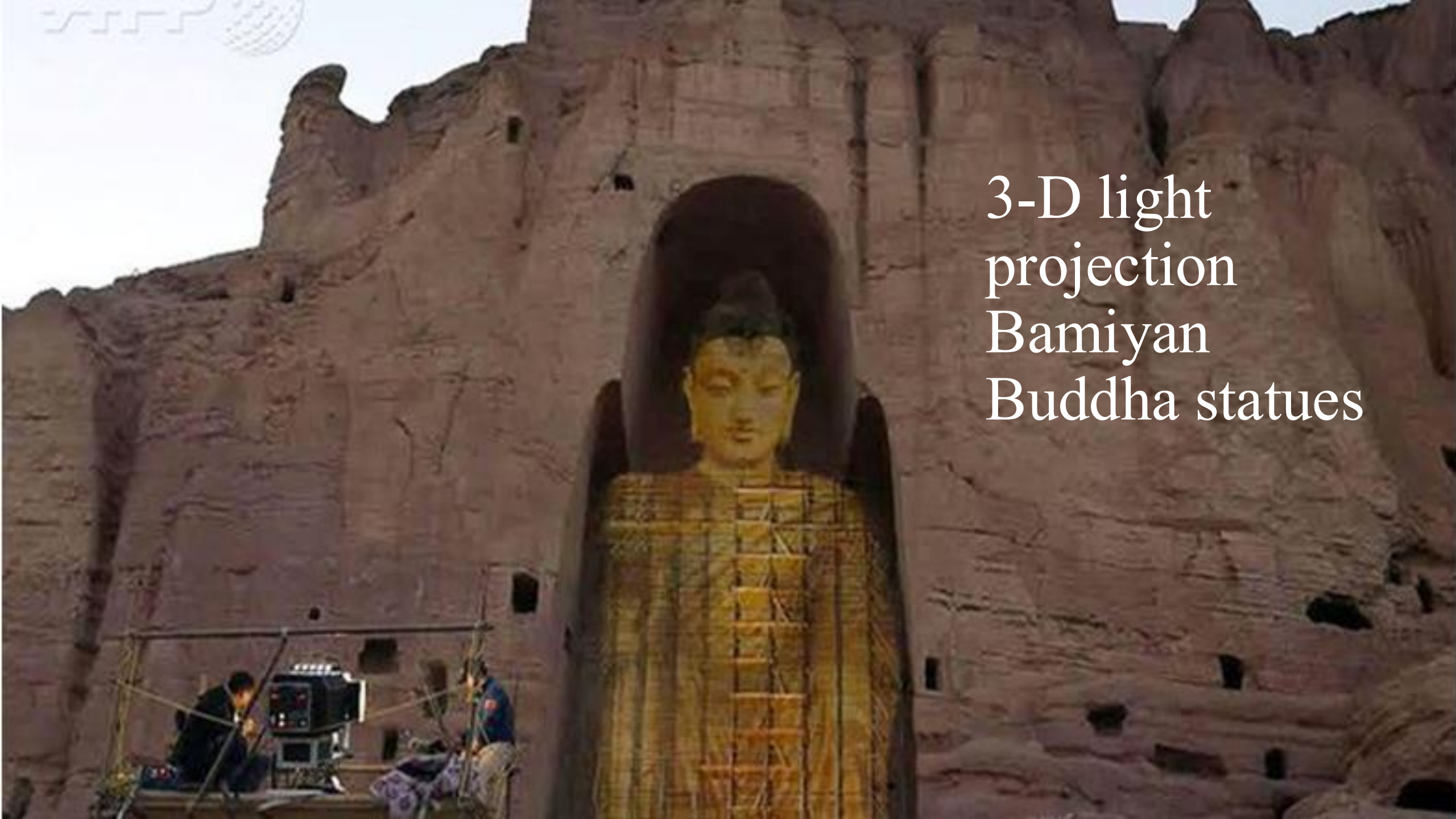
Buddha statues in Bamiyan

With the rise of Taliban power in Afghanistan in 2001 their regime announced its decision to put into practice its new form of symbolic politics consisting of the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage respresenting religious and spiritual tradition different from Islam.

Unlike traditional war damage to cultural heritage which affects the enemy's property, the demolition of the Buddhas of Bamiyan concerns heritage that belonged to the Afghan Nation.

They were located in its territory and belonged to its ancient pre-Islamic past.

AP


3-D light
projection
Bamiyan
Buddha statues

© Maria Prymachenko, Ukraiński byk, 1977 | Źródło: Wikipedia

Typical forms of destruction and damage of art:

1. ideological vandalism
2. terrorism
3. individual vandalism
4. vandalism as side effect (to theft)

Atypical forms of vandalism:

1. ecological
2. graffiti
3. extravagant
4. archaeological sites

Terrorism

- It's a specific form of destruction and damage towards heritage or cultural goods.
- It can be either directed towards monuments and works of art they are the target and are deliberately destroyed or are accidental casualty.
- Cultural good are symbols, bond of nation and its identity. And that's why they are sometimes terrorists targets.

Damaged paintings from Uffizzi bombing

Typical forms of destruction and damage of art:

1. ideological vandalism
2. terrorism
3. individual vandalism
4. vandalism as side effect (to theft)

Atypical forms of vandalism:

1. ecological
2. graffiti
3. extravagant
4. archaeological sites

3. individual vandalism

- A big threat to art works conducted in museum, galleries etc.
- Sometimes damage consists of leaving a minor scratch, a stuck chewing gum, a pencil mark and so on, and usually escapes publicity.
- Different motivations push the perpetreators to do such act and different tools are used.

Motivations of individual vandals

A. artistic:

- vandalism as part of performance act
- ignorance
- manifesto

B. mental disorder

C. ideological:

- political
- religious
- ecology

D. malicious destruction

E. other

Marcel Duchamp – Fountain, 1917

Motivations of individual vandals

A. artistic:

- vandalism as part of performance act
- ignorance
- manifesto

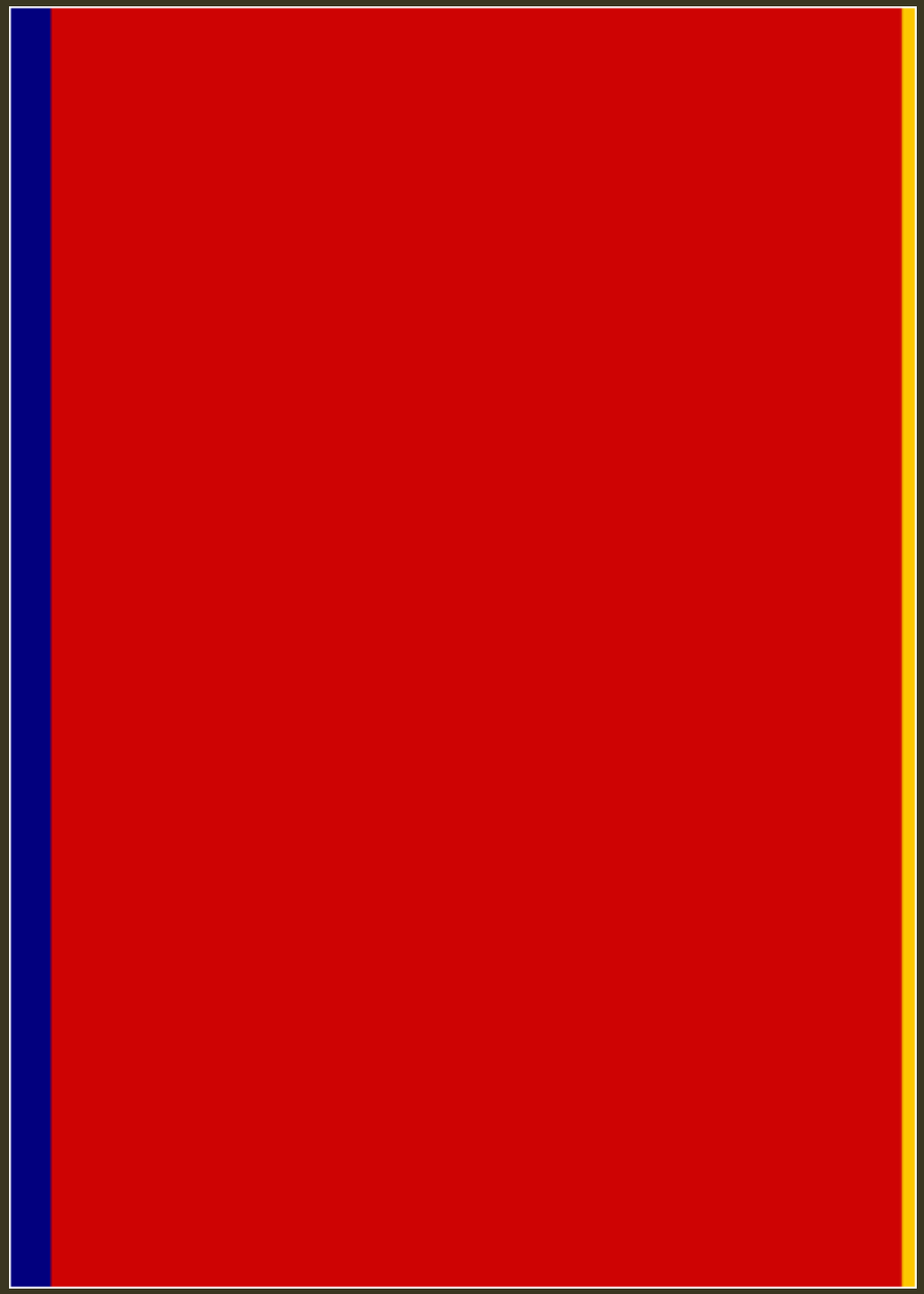
B. mental disorder

C. ideological:

- political
- religious
- ecology

D. malicious destruction

E. other



Barnett Newman, Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue III

Motivations of individual vandals

A. artistic:

- vandalism as part of performance act
- ignorance
- manifesto

B. mental disorder

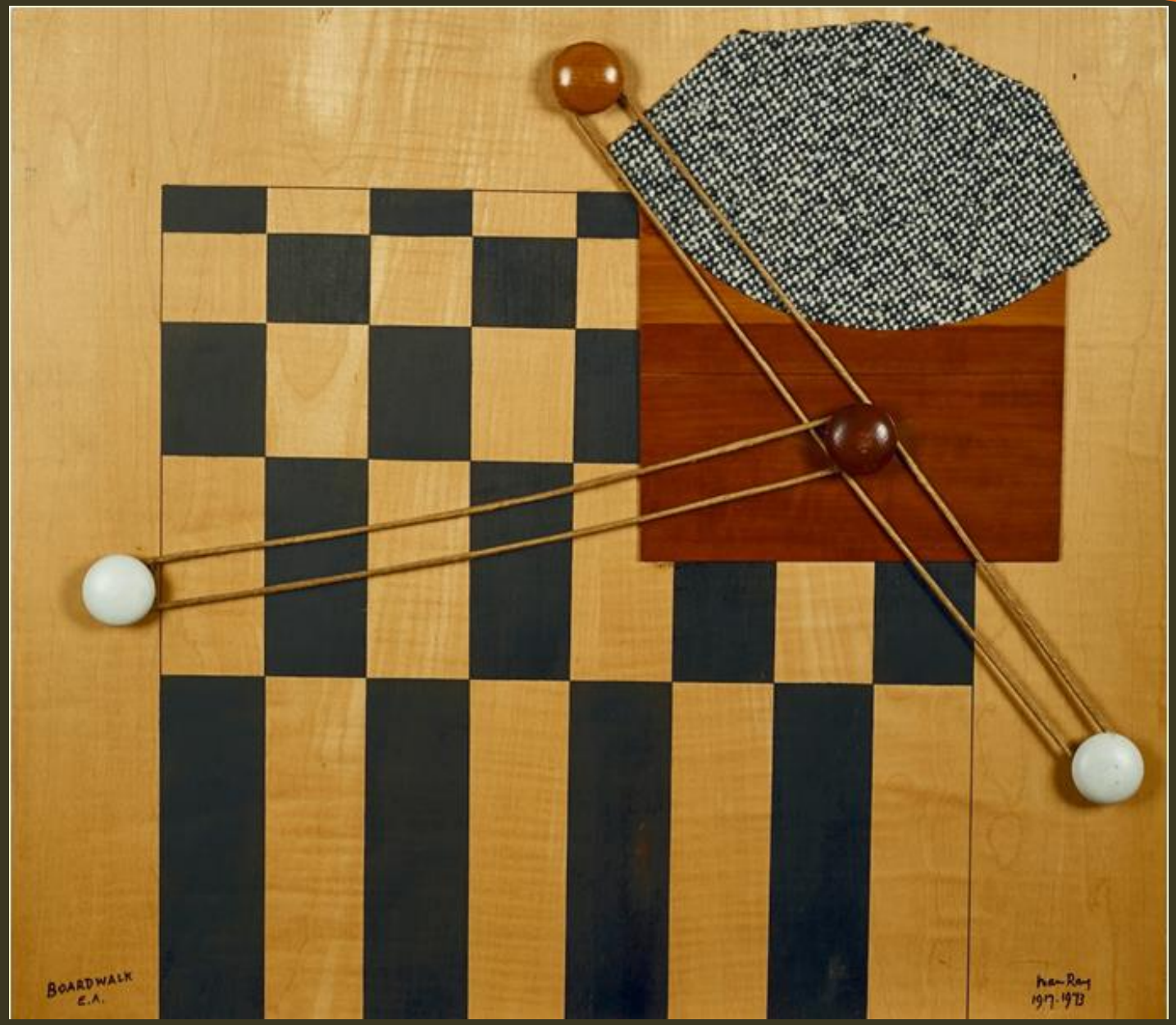
C. ideological:

- political
- religious
- ecology

D. malicious destruction

E. other

Man Ray,
Boardwalk,
1917



Motivations of individual vandals

A. artistic:

- vandalism as part of performance act
- ignorance
- manifesto

B. mental disorder

C. ideological:

- political
- religious
- ecology

D. malicious destruction

E. other

mental disorder

Laszlo Toth struck Michelangelo's Pieta

Motivations of individual vandals

A. artistic:

- vandalism as part of performance act
- ignorance
- manifesto

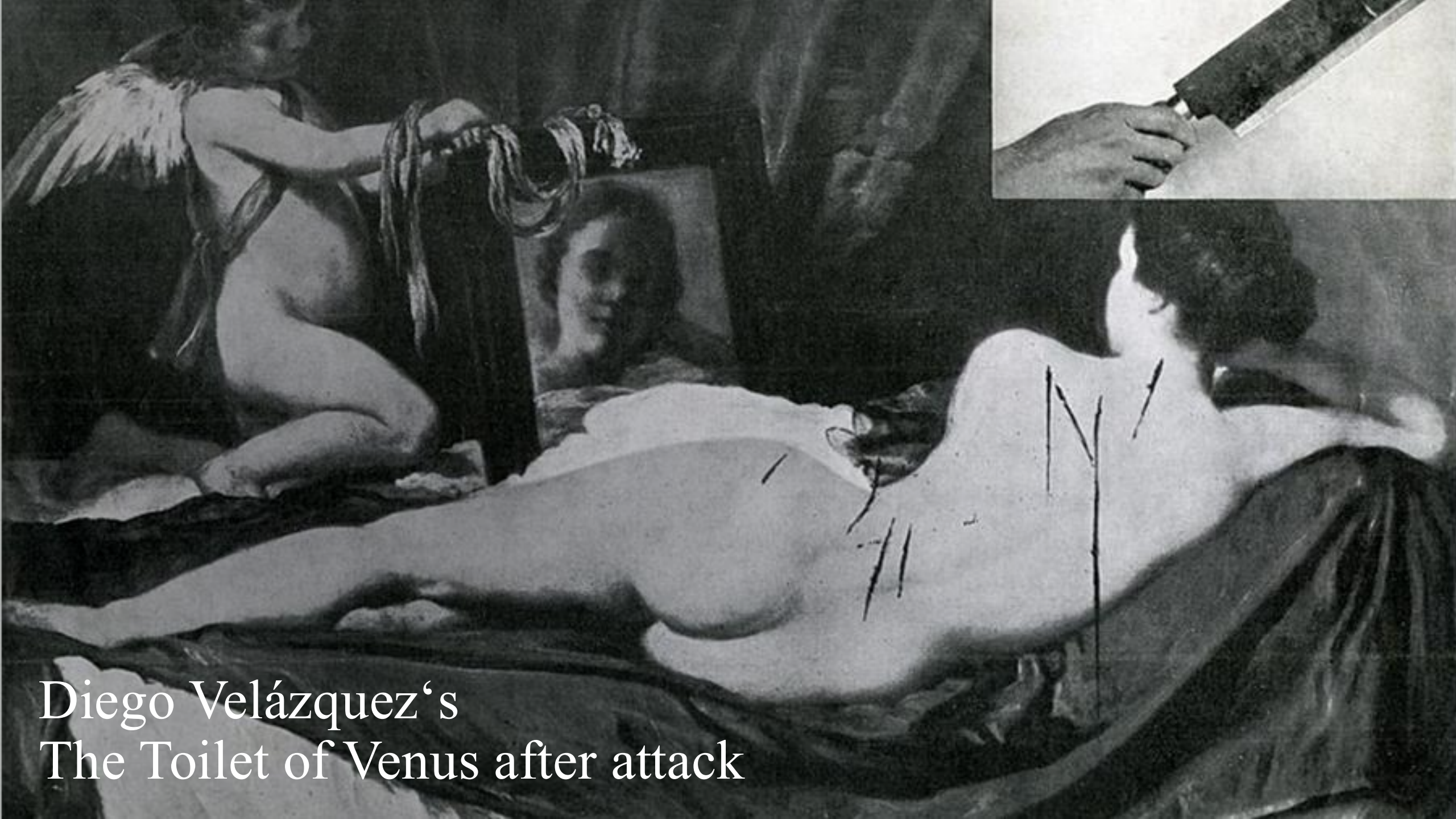
B. mental disorder

C. ideological:

- political
- religious
- ecology

D. malicious destruction

E. other



Diego Velázquez‘s
The Toilet of Venus after attack

Motivations of individual vandals

A. artistic:

- vandalism as part of performance act
- ignorance
- manifesto

B. mental disorder

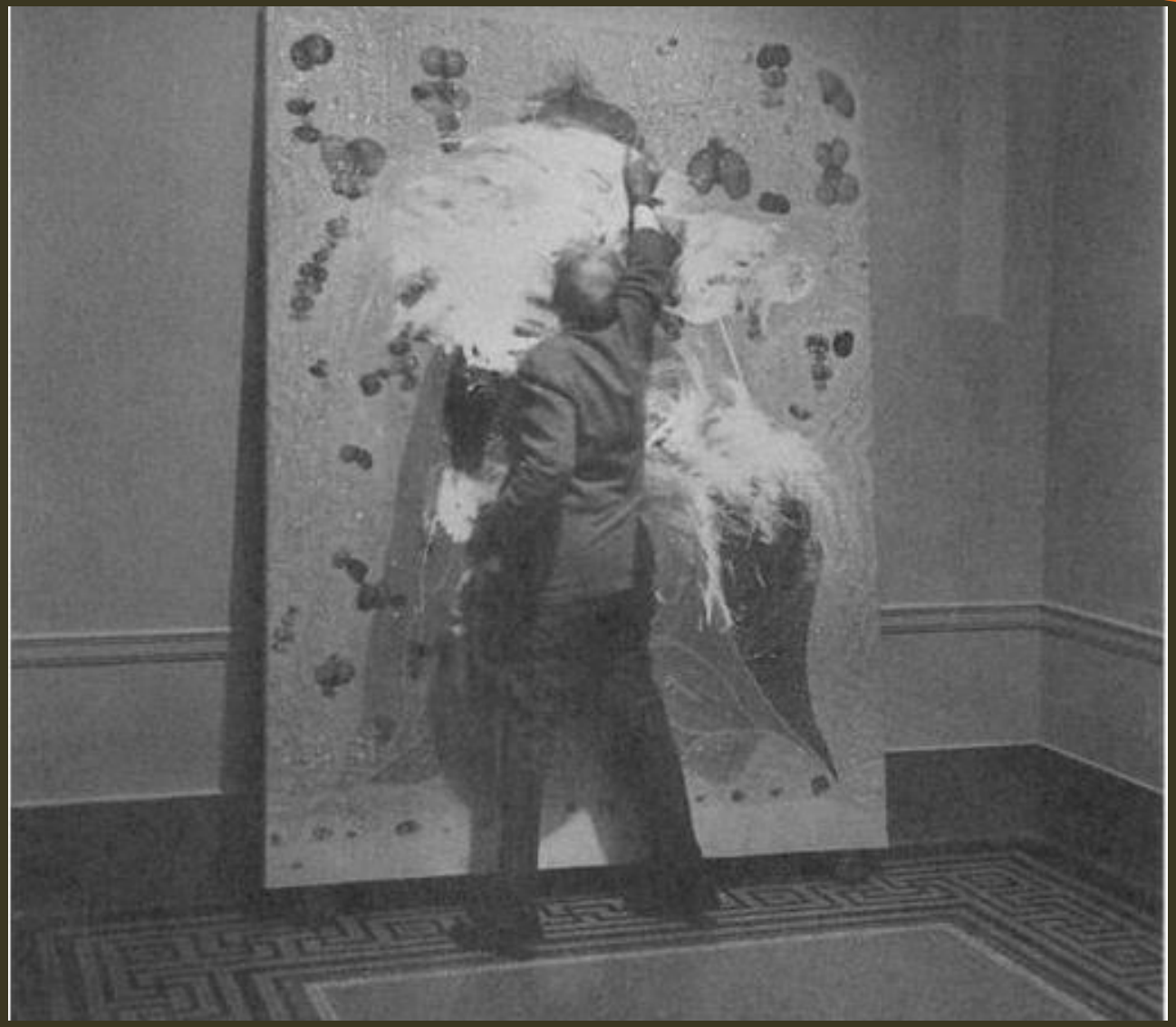
C. ideological:

- political
- religious
- ecology

D. malicious destruction

E. other

Chris Ofili's
The Holy Virgin Mary
Covered in white latex paint



Motivations of individual vandals

A. artistic:

- vandalism as part of performance act
- ignorance
- manifesto

B. mental disorder

C. ideological:

- political
- religious
- ecology

D. malicious destruction

E. other

Ecovandalism

- Modern activism?
- eco-protests targeting masterpieces at major museums
- Their actions are part of a growing climate protest movement in Europe
- “New oil and gas wells are a death sentence for humanity” - demands to end to new oil and gas projects (a stop to fossil fuel projects)
- The activists are part of the groups such as: Just Stop Oil, the Ultima Generazione group, Letzte Generation

Climate activists in Italy glue themselves to ancient Vatican Museums sculpture

Climate activists in Vienna pour 'oil' over Gustav Klimt painting

- In Germany, climate activists throw mashed potato at most expensive Monet painting sold at auction

Van Gogh’s Sunflowers covered in tomato soup by eco activists

Climate protestors attack Degas sculpture at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C

JUST STOP OIL
JUST STOP FAMINE

Motivations of individual vandals

A. artistic:

- vandalism as part of performance act
- ignorance
- manifesto

B. mental disorder

C. ideological:

- political
- religious
- ecology

D. malicious destruction

E. other

Italy condemns tourist who vandalised Colosseum with love note In a video posted online, a man carrying a backpack was seen using a set of keys to carve the words “Ivan + Hayley 23” into the 2,000-year old structure

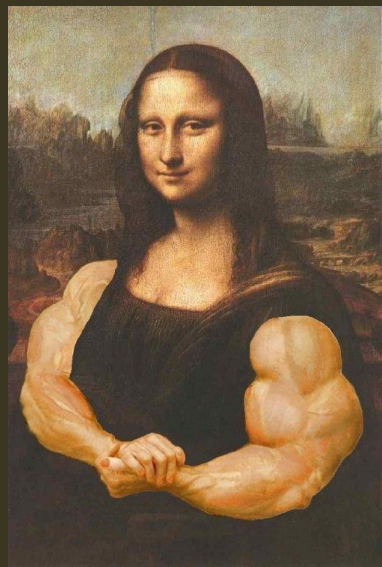
Two German tourists arrested for allegedly defacing Vasari Corridor in Florence

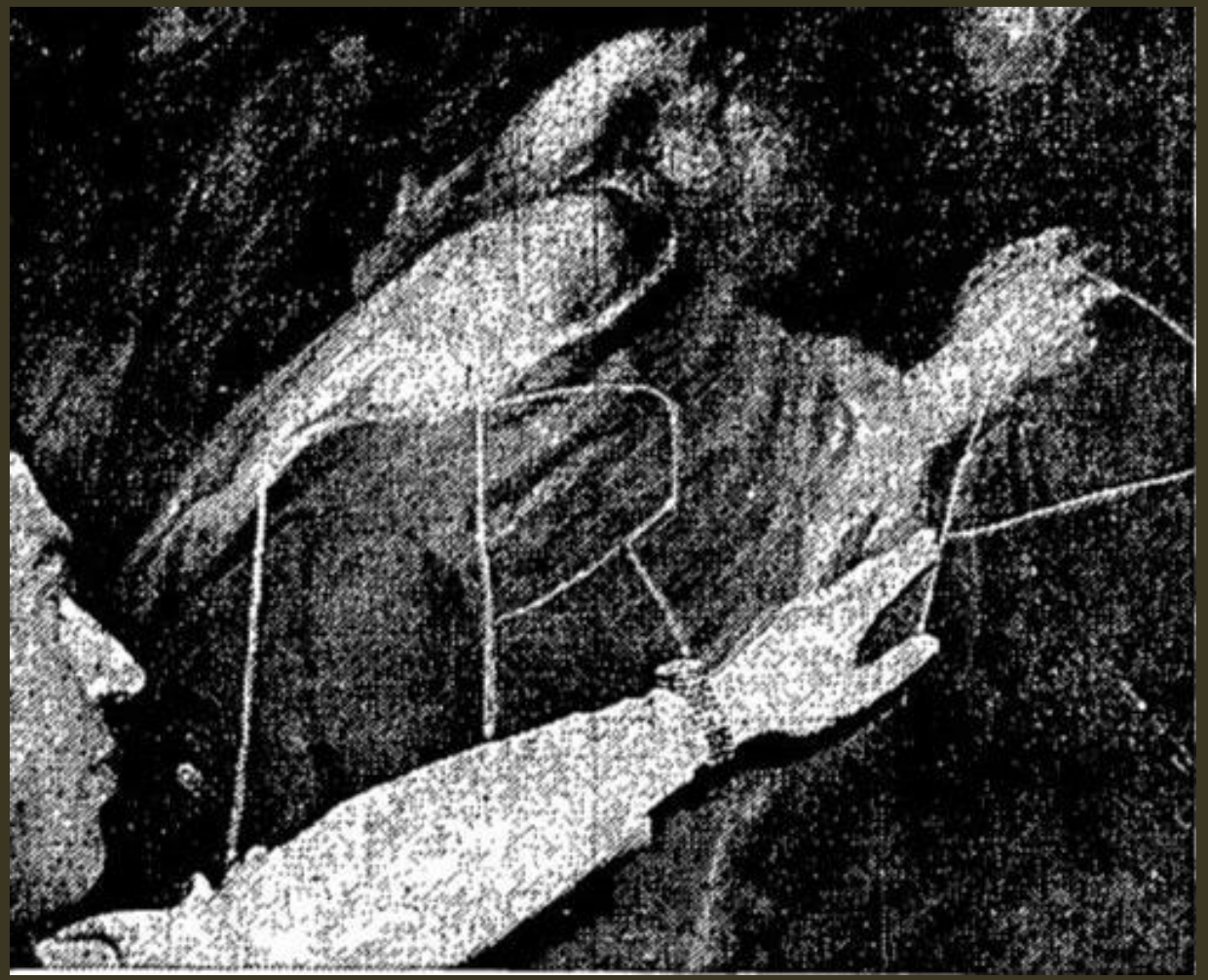
https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2023/08/24/two-german-tourists-arrested-for-defacing-vasari-corridor-in-florence?utm_source=The+Art+Newspaper+Newsletters&utm_campaign=bb69787a39-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_08_25_03_22&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-bb69787a39-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

Serial art vandal - Hans-Joachim Bohlmann

The most often attacked works of art

- Newman's Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue III
- Rembrandt’s The Night Watch
- Leonardo da Vinci’s Mona Lisa
- Rubens's Adoration of Magi





Typical forms of destruction and damage of art:

1. ideological vandalism
2. terrorism
3. individual vandalism
4. vandalism as side effect (to theft)

Atypical forms of vandalism:

1. ecological
2. graffiti
3. extravagant
4. archaeological sites

Atypical forms of vandalism

ecological - uncontrollable pollution of environment caused irreversible destruction of many cultural goods.

Destruction caused by acid rain

Typical forms of destruction and damage of art:

1. ideological vandalism
2. terrorism
3. individual vandalism
4. vandalism as side effect (to theft)

Atypical forms of vandalism:

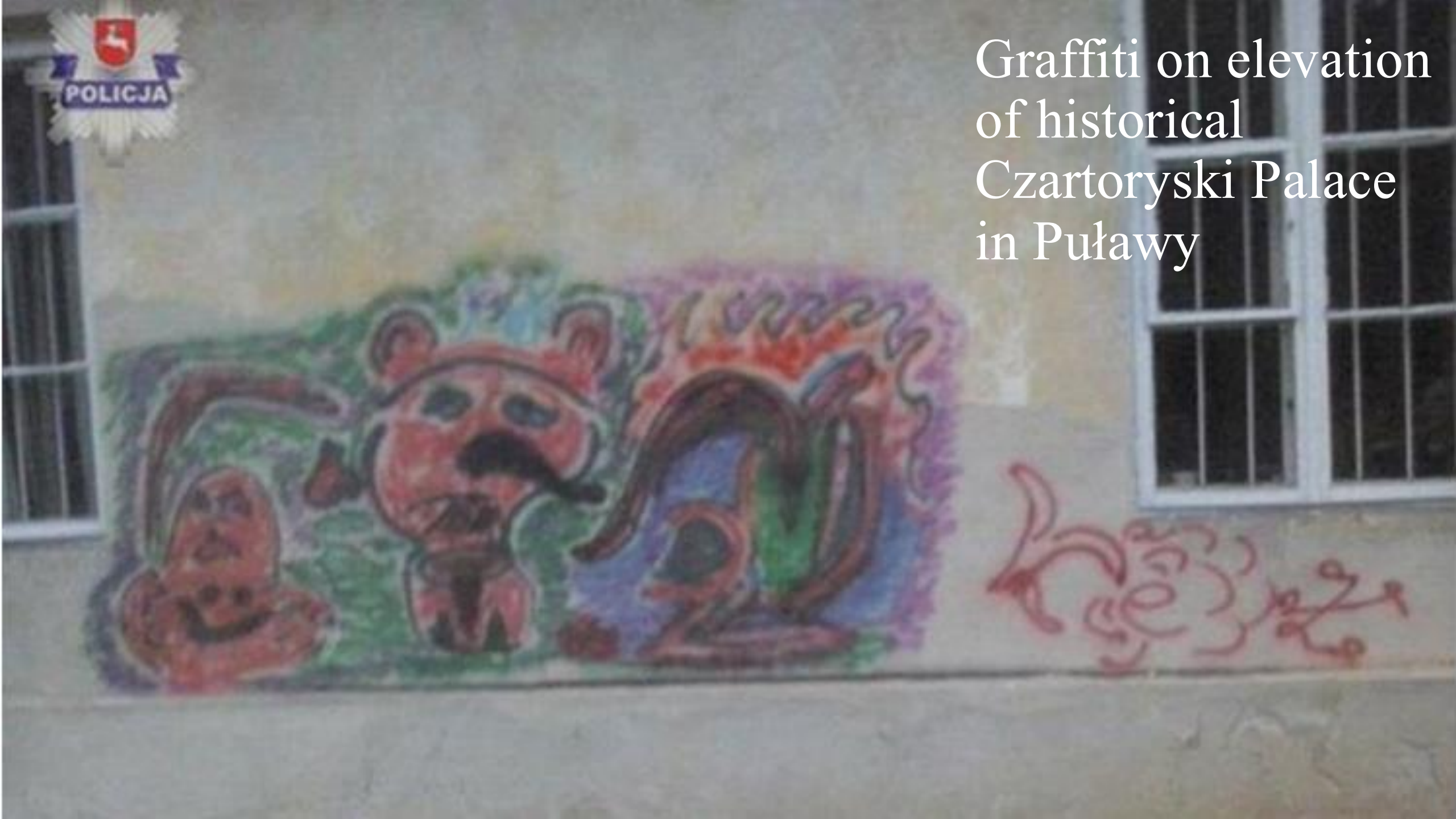
1. ecological
2. graffiti
3. extravagant
4. archaeological sites

Atypical forms of vandalism

graffiti -

it is a **play vandalism** (often motivated by boredom) and **ideological vandalism** combined together.

- contains every form of expression: pictures, signatures or drawings. Sometimes it is placed on cultural goods and monuments and might cause a serious damage.
- an action involving the unauthorized marking of public space by an individual or group.



Graffiti on elevation of historical Czartoryski Palace in Puławy

Graffiti on Gate House,
Old Oliwa Market

Yarn bombing

an ever-growing street art movement that was born in the early-mid 2000s from the combined love of street art and fiber arts.

Yarn bombing consists of covering, wrapping, or decorating objects in pieces of knit or crochet.

Common yarn bombing sites include fences, trees, street sign poles, street light poles, and more.

BROOKLYN
BATTERY
TUNNEL
TRUCK
ROUTE
LOCAL

Street art that washes in the rain

BBC
davidzinn

Typical forms of destruction and damage of art:

1. ideological vandalism
2. terrorism
3. individual vandalism
4. vandalism as side effect (to theft)

Atypical forms of vandalism:

1. ecological
2. graffiti
3. extravagant
4. archaeological sites

Atypical forms of vandalism

extravagant

the actions taken by public figures actors, politicians etc. towards works of art publicly displayed.

The destruction of Mauricio Cattelan's *La Nona Ora*

Typical forms of destruction and damage of art:

1. ideological vandalism
2. terrorism
3. individual vandalism
4. vandalism as side effect (to theft)

Atypical forms of vandalism:

1. ecological
2. graffiti
3. extravagant
4. archaeological sites

Vandalism at archeological site - Cuevas de Anzota, Chile

Italy condemns tourist who vandalised Colosseum with love note

In a video posted online, a man carrying a backpack was seen using a set of keys to carve the words “Ivan + Hayley 23” into the 2,000-year old structure

Conclusion

- Destruction and damage is the most dangerous and serious crime against works of art.
- Very often the effect of such action if irretrievable. Sometimes it is possible to restore a damaged piece but when it comes to destruction the consequences are tragic and the loss is huge.
- Social danger of such crimes is great because loss is not only in money value but in cultural identity, artistic or historical value as well.
- Sometimes the loss is priceless and final.

Criminalistics methods used to protect monuments from vandalism

There are two directions:

1. full monument registration (3d scanning, inventory, complex database, registry)
2. protection from destruction

The 3D laser scanning

- The 3D laser scanning method is the safe and easy way to have complete digital information about any building and historical monument in the cultural and natural heritage.
- The digital copy of the monument or historical building from the built heritage contributes to:
  - conservation and protection of national heritage;
  - developing and promoting tourism in the region;
  - preserving, in the most accurate and safe way, the patrimony to future generations;

3D scanner

Laser scan data of the Peirene Fountain at Ancient Corinth in Greece.

The Palmyra Athena statue after desecration by ISIS

The restored statue

The Al Lat Lion in Palmyra

After the destruction

Databases

- *Object ID* which is an international standard for describing cultural objects. Having established the descriptive standard, the Object ID project now helps combat the illegal appropriation of art objects by facilitating documentation of cultural property and by bringing together organisations around the world that can encourage its implementation.
- *Stolen Works of Art* an Interpol's database - it combines descriptions and pictures of more than 50,000 items. It is the only database at the international level with certified police information on stolen and missing objects of art.
- But there isn't one database universal for all countries. There are postulates to create such database using *AFIS* (Automated Fingerprint Identification System) as an inspiration and starting point.

bject ID

OBJECT ID CHECKLIST

❑ TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs are of vital importance in identifying and recovering stolen objects. In addition to overall views, take close-ups of inscriptions, markings, and any damage or repairs. If possible, include a scale or object of known size in the image.

❑ ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:

Type of Object
What kind of object is it (e.g., painting, sculpture, clock, mask)?

Materials & Techniques
What materials is the object made of (e.g., brass, wood, oil on canvas)? How was it made (e.g., carved, cast, etched)?

Measurements
What is the size and/or weight of the object? Specify which unit of measurement is being used (e.g., cm., in.) and to which dimension the measurement refers (e.g., height, width, depth).

Inscriptions & Markings
Are there any identifying markings, numbers, or inscriptions on the object (e.g., a signature, dedication, title, maker's marks, purity marks, property marks)?

Distinguishing Features
Does the object have any physical characteristics that could help to identify it (e.g., damage, repairs, or manufacturing defects)?

Title
Does the object have a title by which it is known and might be identified (e.g., *The Scream*)?

Subject
What is pictured or represented (e.g., landscape, battle, woman holding child)?

Date or Period
When was the object made (e.g., 1893, early 17th century, Late Bronze Age)?

Maker
Do you know who made the object? This may be the name of a known individual (e.g., Thomas Tompion), a company (e.g., Tiffany), or a cultural group (e.g., Hopi).

❑ WRITE A SHORT DESCRIPTION

This can also include any additional information which helps to identify the object (e.g., color and shape of the object, where it was made).

❑ KEEP IT SECURE

Having documented the object, keep this information in a secure place.

Criminalistics methods used to protect monuments from vandalism

Ad. 2. There are different possible forms of protection:

1. Unmanned aerial vehicle also known as drone - allows aerial photography of archeological sites

2. Systems of preventing from various forms of crime:

- CCTV
- Fire Alarm System
- An Intrusion Detection and Prevention System
- Access Control System

3. The Graffitage project financed by EU - Development of a new antigraffiti system, based on traditional concepts, preventing damage of architectural heritage materials