



# The Culture of Property: The Crisis of Liberalism in Modern Britain

Jordanna Bailkin

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What kind of property is art? Is it property at all? Jordanna Bailkin's *The Culture of Property* offers a new historical response to these questions, examining ownership disputes over art objects and artifacts during the crisis of liberalism in the United Kingdom. From the 1870s to the 1920s, Britons fought over prized objects from ancient gold ornaments dug up in an Irish field to a portrait of the Duchess of Milan at the National Gallery in London. They fought to keep these objects in Britain, to repatriate them to their points of origin, and even to destroy them altogether. Bailkin explores these disputes in order to investigate the vexed status of property within modern British politics as well as the often surprising origins of ongoing institutional practices. Bailkin's detailed account of these struggles illuminates the relationship between property and citizenship, which has constituted the heart of liberal politics as well as its greatest weakness.

Drawing on court transcripts, gallery archives, exhibition reviews, private correspondence--and a striking series of cartoons and photographs--*The Culture of Property* traverses the history of gender, material culture, urban life, colonialism, Irish and Scottish nationalism, and British citizenship. This fascinating book challenges recent scholarship in museum studies in light of ongoing culture wars. It should be required reading for cultural policy makers, museum professionals, and anyone interested in the history of art and Britain.



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