

What is treasure hunting? What is archaeology?

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The latest newsletter from SAFE (Saving Antiquities for Everyone) challenges the recent admittance of Harrison Ford (aka Indiana Jones) to the Board of Directors of the Archaeological Institute of America...

Archaeologist Dr. Oscar Muscarella, outspoken critic of the antiquities trade and the plunder of archaeological sites, objects to the recent election of Harrison Ford-of Indiana Jones fame-to the Board of Directors of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA). AIA is North America's oldest and largest non-profit organization devoted to archaeology, and according to the AIA website, "the legendary archaeologist Indiana Jones ... shows his commitment to real archaeology." However, according to Dr. Muscarella, Indiana Jones is not an archaeologist, but a plunderer.

And lest we think that Dr. Muscarella's is an isolated opinion, consider a recent statement (lohud.com) by Mark Rose, online editorial director for the Archaeological Institute of America, who also holds a PhD in archaeology: "There are codes of ethics in archaeology, and I don't think [Indiana Jones] would be a member [of the profession]. Not in good standing, anyway." Professor Bob Murowchick, associate professor of archaeology at Boston University, bemoans the fact that "the movies emphasize the tomb-raiding aspect, leaving the impression that artifacts are there for the taking by whoever stumbles on them first.... The one thing we do worry quite a bit about is the looting aspect, because archaeological looting is really a serious issue," Professor Murowchick said.

It's ironic, as the Associated Press's David Germain points out, that "the closest thing to authentic archaeology in the "Indiana Jones" flicks is done by the bad guys, whose elaborate, systematic digs in 'Raiders' resemble actual excavations." Dr. Jane MacLaren Walsh, an anthropologist for the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History, agrees. "Not a whole lot of what we know as archaeology goes on in these movies, except what the Nazis do. They seem to be doing some real archaeological work," Walsh said.

Is Indiana Jones a plunderer? Do Indiana Jones movies legitimize plunder and/or treasure hunting?

Take the poll on SAFE's blog [SAFECORNER](#) and tell us what you think. Add your voice to the discussion on this important issue.