Mobility of culture, of artefacts and ideas, is a vital condition for both art production and cultural reception. The phenomenon, as well as the speed of its impact, is strengthened by changes of power in society: from the gradual growth of socio-economic networks springing from processes of migration and intercultural exchange to radical ruptures in times of conflict (revolution, war) and colonialism. The scale of the mobility of the spoils of antiquity for instance, caused by Napoleonic warfare and Western imperialism in the first quarter of the nineteenth century had no parallels until today and it is still an ongoing process. As a result of the creation of nation states and the nationalization of historiography in the last two centuries, requests are made for ‘lost’ heritage to be repatriated, even if the ‘patria’ at the time of the conflict was entirely different in geography, constitution, population and even language. This chapter will examine how carefully selected spoils of antiquity, kept and explained in various encyclopaedic museums and museums of antiquities in Europe, have been intrinsically bound up with political ideals and war since the emergence of the modern nation states in the early decades following Napoleon’s war of conquest around 1800. It will also take into consideration that the removal of Roman collections by the French in 1797 enlarged the stage for a tradition that can be traced back to humanist times. Contemporary academic research tells us that the spoils of antiquity in humanist Rome, in a continuous process of changing compositions and re-locations are to be understood as a coherent narrative, in order to continually reconsider power, history and myth. Yet at a later stage other thoughts can enter the discourse, questioning or confirming if today’s practice of heritage selection, a method that uses the whole world as a stage, is not just another continuation of this phenomenon.

1 See Wren Christian’s Empire without End (2010) for a coherent culture-historical and sociological study on this topic.
A Catalyst for Globalization of Culture: 
The Removal of Classical Statues from Rome to Paris

Of all his many conquests, Italy was Napoleon's favorite, the territory he regarded as a special domain. As first consul and even more as emperor, he thought increasingly of Italy not as a French interest or a nation to be liberated but as a possession of his own, a fief to be exploited for the aggrandizement of himself and his acquisitive family. Despite the proclamation of the young General Bonaparte in April 1796 addressed to the people of Italy to declare his intention of respecting their property, religion and customs, many of the art treasures from Milan and Venice were removed and brought to Paris in the first years to follow. One of the goals of Napoleon's 'Directory's' foreign policy was the accumulation of foreign wealth, and one of the instruments available to achieve this was pillage. The occupying forces favored two types of pillage. One was the immediate sacking of a town after its capture in order to sell looted objects and spend the revenues to buy provisions for the army. The other was a more official form of plunder in order to collect and to remove objects to the Paris. In practice works of art were stolen, but these actions were justified by new French legislation deriving from the 1797 Treaty of Tolino. Thus a legal basis was created for the removal of artworks to embellish the Louvre and the city of Paris. French Committees bargained about the value of art treasures with local directors of museums until they had listed enough for a fixed amount of booty. The quick transfer of one hundred masterpieces, including eighty-one antiques, from Roman- to Paris collections, was a prelude to the dramatic transformation of the Roman classical canon. As a result the importance of Rome, until then the nucleus of European culture, diminished and Paris became the new (cultural) capital of the Empire. The selection of the antique marbles was not only a tribute to consecrated taste, as has been argued by Haskell & Penny but was predominantly based on the historically recognized powers they had represented in the ages before. In general it can be said that

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3 Kila (2012), pp. 80: In France decrees and rules on the protection of certain “condemned treasures and monuments” were made as early as in 1791. Not much later these were followed by protective legislation demonstrated by the fact that decrees ordering the destruction of the “vestiges of despotism” should make exceptions for works of art. Only since recent times, as an outcome of the WWII, troops are obliged to defend heritage according to the The Hague Convention of 1954.