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Sommario/riassunto	This book explores the interplay of Western European exploration and trade, with collecting, cabinets of curiosities and museums, and with the role of booty and plunder in the building of empires from ca.1600 until the end of the 19th century. The book focuses principally on the Dutch, English, Spanish, French and Italian at different times of their colonial power over the course of these 300 years. The achievements of exploration and trade provide the basis for these countries and both the state and individuals to build collections and museums. This involved governments to legitimize the pursuit of booty and subsequently looting whether by themselves, members of the ruling

class or privateers. Throughout much of this period, there those who stood up and challenged such practices, passing laws to criminalize, curtail or contain these activities. By the late 18th century, these parallel but disparate activities converged. It was era of Napoleon and his imperial ambitions that drew these disparate activities together, with his support of intellectual inquiry alongside military plunder and collecting. This served as a symbol of imperial power of the French empire that, alongside England and Italy, exploited the wealth and riches of Egypt, India, and China. Charles Merewether, born in Edinburgh, received his BA (literature) and PhD in art history at the University of Sydney. He taught European modernism at the Universities of Sydney (1981-84), Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City (1986-88), and Universidad Autonoma in Barcelona. He received a research fellowship from Yale University (1991), was Inaugural Curator for the Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Monterrey, Mexico, (1991-1994), Curator at the Research Institute, Getty Center, Los Angeles (1994-2003) and taught at the University of Southern California. He was Artistic Director of the Sydney Biennale (2004-2006), Deputy Director of the Cultural District, Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi (2007), Director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, Singapore, (2010-2013), Visiting Professor at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (2014) and Baptist University, Hong Kong (2015). He was Curator of Contemporary Art, National Art Museum in Tbilisi, Georgia (2016-2019). His books include: In the Sphere of the Soviets (2021), State of Play: Art in Georgia 1985-2000 (2017), After Memory: The Art of Milenko Prvacki (2013) and Under Construction: Ai Weiwei (2008). He was co-editor of After the Event (2010), editor of both Art, Anti-Art, Non-Art: Experimentations in the Public Sphere in Postwar Japan 1950-1970, (2007) and The Archive (2006).
