DON'T PANIC!

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The art world, apparently, is upset as the architectural fraternity. The new Getty Museum, which opened in Malibu a short while ago, will soon, it is hinted, have something like six million disposable art dollars to spend each year dawdling all other museums of the world by, at least, a factor of three. What to do with this money is the major problem, as any intensive buying will upset the delicate art market and create shortfalls in things like original statues by Lysippus.

Talking with the director Stephen Garrett (a British architect) about this problem and doing some quick arithmetic, I suggested that the Getty trustees should spend the money on erecting new replica museums around the world—especially in Pompeii and Herculaneum from which this one in Malibu is recently departed. It cost circa $2 million, so you could have a New Romano Villa Papyri every two years (and with parking underfoot, and choruses in the pool). The virtue of the place, whatever the venue, is as a simulation of first-century life in a rich patrician's villa and what could be more appropriate and needed now for exhibiting excavated artefacts? It would add a new and appropriate dimension to tourism (imagine a reconstructed Myron's or King Arthur's Castle). It would keep the art world happy and solve the vexing question of all those free-floating petro-dollars.

However, this difficult problem turns out, there are other questions which exercise architects. Should a building today be a straight revivalist version of a previous building? Most architects and critics answered negatively, especially when confronted with this piece of Roman revival—located on the edge of Los Angeles. Some used an old romantic analogy arguing that architectural languages live and die and that this ancient one they believed, or rather hoped, was moribund. Part of this wishful thinking was no doubt directed against the straight revivalism going on in American cities and the work of Henry Hope Reed, John Blaetner, or in Britain Quinlan Terry. So the Getty Museum was damned as "disgusting", "dowdy in its outrageous", "too learned", "frequently lacking in basic architectural design judgement", "fraudulent", "recreated by