

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Christie's faces international lawsuit over art set

February 3, 2021



Pre-Columbian artifacts will be auctioned in Paris next week through Christie's. Image credit: Christie's

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

Mexico's National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) has filed a legal claim over more than 30 pre-Columbian artifacts to be sold at auction house Christie's in Paris next week.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

In addition to filing a claim with the Mexican attorney general's office to have the items returned, INAH has urged the country's Ministry of Foreign Relations to take diplomatic action in this dispute. Christie's plans to begin offering lots next week.

Art dispute

On Feb. 9, Christie's plans to auction sculptures, vessels, masks, plates, carved stones and other figures from the Aztec, Mayan, Toltec, Totonac, Teotihuacan and Mixtec cultures. One of the more anticipated lots is a stone sculpture dated 600-1,000 AD that was discovered in Veracruz, and it is estimated at nearly 900,000 euros, or \$1.1 million at current exchange.

Another is a Teotihuacan greenstone mask from 450-650 AD, formerly belonging to Henri Matisse's son Pierre Matisse, and is estimated at nearly 550,000 euros, or about \$662,000. In 2011, the mask was sold at Sotheby's for \$530,500.



Teotihuacan greenstone mask. Image credit: Christie's

In September 2019, Mexico called on French auction house [Millon](#) to cancel the sale of nearly 100 pre-Columbian artifacts, but the sale continued and closed at 1.2 million euros, or \$1.4 million.

One month later, Mexican leaders called on Sotheby's to cancel the sale of pieces being auctioned and return them to the country, but the sale continued as planned.

Last year, Christie's saw record online sales amid the global pandemic, as it adapted its business strategies to make it easier for bidders around the world. The auction house registered clients from 70 countries and new bidders generated as much as 80 percent of sales for select events.

The company specifically noted strong sell-through rates in the luxury categories, ranging from 89 percent to 99 percent of lots sold. Overall, items earned beyond their pre-sale estimates ([see story](#)).

© 2021 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.