



March 20, 2013

William F. Ruprecht  
Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer  
Sotheby's  
34-35 New Bond Street  
London W1A 2AA UK

Dear Mr. Ruprecht,

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) writes to express its concerns with the planned auction of the Barbier-Mueller Collection of pre-Colombian art, scheduled to take place at Sotheby's Paris on March 22nd and 23rd, 2013.

SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to the research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With more than 7,000 members, SAA represents professional archaeologists in colleges and universities, museums, government agencies, and the private sector. SAA has members in all 50 states as well as many other nations around the world.

The proposed sale represents a setback for the international preservation and protection of cultural resources by furthering the commercialization of archaeological materials while degrading their context by dispersing them to different buyers across the world. SAA and many other organizations oppose the commercialization of the archaeological record and items of cultural patrimony. This commodification is the primary stimulus for the looting of archaeological sites. When unscrupulous individuals see objects like those comprising the Barbier-Mueller collection fetch the high sums expected in this week's sale, they go searching for similar items. The result is the widespread looting and unprofessional, profit-oriented excavations that are destroying archaeological sites throughout the world.

Peru, Mexico, and Guatemala claim that particular artifacts in the Barbier-Mueller Collection are items of national patrimony that were illegally obtained. Any item illegally obtained from any nation, should be returned to their host country. The descendants of the ancient peoples who created these masterpieces will have their cultural heritage diminished if the sale proceeds. Knowledge of their past will be made more difficult; public symbols of cultural values will be lost.

SAA respectfully requests that the sale be postponed or cancelled altogether and that an alternative to a commercialized sale be arranged.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William F. Limp".

William F. Limp, Ph.D.  
President