

Media Release for Immediate Distribution

ICAHM Condemns Proposed Sale of Possible Native American Human Remains by Christie's

The ICOMOS Scientific Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management (ICAHM) condemns the proposed auction of unidentified human remains by Christie's auction house, which is scheduled to occur on January 22, 2010 (lot 157 / sale 2287). Because these human remains were in the possession of the Yale Skull and Bones Society, there is a distinct possibility that they are those of a Native American. Native American remains looted by undergraduate members of that society are reputed to include those of Geronimo.

ICAHM is aware of the sincere and profound religious significance attached to human remains by the Native American community and many other cultural groups, and is appalled at the absence of sensitivity to these beliefs demonstrated by Christie's. The human skull that is among the items to be auctioned was previously cut to serve as a ballot box; Christie's has further disregarded the dignity of human remains by offering this human skull and bones for auction. ICAHM calls for the evaluation of the human osteological remains by a qualified physical anthropologist. If they are indeed found to be those of a Native American, then Christie's should comply with the federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. If they are found to be those of an individual associated with a federally recognized Native American group, they should be repatriated.

ICAHM asks that its members urge Christie's to halt the auction of the remains until their cultural origin can be determined and to alert colleagues to this proposed sale. We also ask that members monitor future auctions by Christie's and other companies that sell items that are significant to particular cultural groups and to our common human heritage.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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BACKGROUND:

ICAHM is the scientific committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) that advises the UN World Heritage Committee on matters pertaining to the management of archaeological sites, landscapes, and other remains. The World Heritage Committee was established by the World Heritage Convention, which has been signed by more countries than any other international treaty.

URL: <http://www.icomos.org/ica hm>