Policy for Collecting Archeological Materials and Antiquities at the Harn Museum of Art

The Harn Museum of Art accepts and abides by the Statement of Principle and Guidelines outlined in the linked document: “Report of the AAMD Task Force on the Acquisition of Archaeological Materials and Ancient Art.” In keeping with that document, the Harn will be guided by the following policy in its collection of all archeological materials and antiquities. When considering the acquisition of any archeological materials or antiquities, the Harn Museum will always prefer objects that have well documented provenances (for example, that have been published in earlier books or catalogues, that have recorded sales histories, or that have been recorded in legal documents.) The provenance should indicate that the object under consideration was collected prior to 1970, the date of the UNESCO Convention (see AAMD document). The museum recognizes that objects with such provenances are typically more difficult to find and more expensive to buy than objects without such provenances. However, the museum believes that collecting ethically is more important than collecting economically.

The museum may occasionally consider the acquisition of archeological objects or antiquities that do not have documented provenances pre-dating 1970. In these cases, the curator shall demonstrate to the director verbally and in the written acquisition justification that the objects in question are not exceptionally rare or unique to a particular archeological context, and that comparable pieces have been widely collected by other museums and private individuals for many years.

When purchasing archeological objects or antiquities, the museum will prefer to purchase objects from well advertised public auctions that are open to academic, legal, and governmental scrutiny. If the museum purchases or accepts the donation of an undocumented object from a private individual or gallery, the museum will require the individual or gallery to provide a letter explaining what he or she knows about the origins of the piece, verifying that they have legal title to sell or donate the piece, and stating that the piece was not illegally removed from its country of origin.

In the event that claims are made against any archeological objects or antiquities collected by the Harn Museum, the museum will cooperate fully with the claimants to establish the proper ownership of the objects in question. If an object in the Harn Museum collection can be proven to have been removed from its country of origin illegally, the museum will turn over the object to an appropriate institution in that country.

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