



Society of Vertebrate Paleontology

9650 Rockville Pike • Bethesda, MD 20814-3998

Phone: (301) 634-7814 • Fax: (301) 634-7455

Email: svp@vertpaleo.org • Web:

www.vertpaleo.org

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November 20, 2018

Artcurial
7 roundabout Champs-Élysées
75008 Paris
France

Dear Mme Boudot de la Motte,

We are writing to you in our capacity as members of the Executive Committee of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP: <http://vertpaleo.org/>), to express our concern about your forthcoming auction on Wednesday 21st November of two dinosaur skeletons, *Allosaurus* and *Camptosaurus*:

https://www.artcurial.com/sites/default/files/2018-10/cp-3880_Dinosaure-en.pdf

The SVP is a nonprofit scientific organisation with more than 2200 members that represents vertebrate palaeontologists on an international scale. The Society's remit is to advance the science of vertebrate palaeontology around the world. Your forthcoming auction of the two dinosaur skeletons has raised substantial concern in the international palaeontological community.

We urge you to reconsider and cancel the sale of these scientifically important skeletons. Scientifically important vertebrate fossils are part of our collective natural heritage and deserve to be held in public trust. Scientific practice demands that conclusions drawn from the fossils should be verifiable: i.e., scientists must be able to reexamine, re-measure, and reinterpret them (such reexamination can happen decades or even centuries after their discovery). Fossil specimens that are sold into private hands are lost to science. Even if made accessible to scientists, information contained within privately owned specimens cannot be included in the scientific literature because the availability of the fossil material to other scientists cannot be guaranteed, and therefore verification of scientific claims (the essence of scientific progress) cannot be performed. For these reasons, our Society's bylaws explicitly state that "The barter, sale, or purchase of scientifically significant vertebrate fossils is not condoned, unless it brings them into, or keeps them within, a public trust."

We are also concerned that there is no specific information on whether the two dinosaur skeletons were legally collected in the United States, and legally exported to France. In the United States, removal of vertebrate fossils from government (federal) owned public land without a proper permit is not allowed under the Paleontological Resources Preservation Act of 2009, and such a permit is generally issued by the U.S. government with a written agreement that

specimens will eventually be held in a public-trust repository. Is Artcurial certain that the two dinosaurs originated from a section or sections of legally permissible land?

The SVP also opposed the auction of an *Allosaurus* skeleton in Paris by the auction house Aguttes, in April of this year. This story gained international media attention with strong criticism from the scientific community, for example:

<https://www.newsweek.com/dinosaur-auction-aguttes-paleontologists-960808>

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-05299-3>

<http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2018/06/allosaurus-auction-block>

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/scientists-are-not-happy-about-private-sale-mysterious-dinosaur-skeleton-180969246/>

You will therefore understand our position, and we strongly urge you to reconsider and cancel the sale of these scientifically significant specimens. We are happy to provide further information pertaining to this matter should you so wish.

Sincerely yours,



Emily J. Rayfield, Ph.D.
SVP President



Jessica M. Theodor, Ph.D.
SVP Vice President



P. David Polly, Ph.D.
Past SVP President