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Metropolitan to return antiquities to Italy

20 items that were looted or likely stolen are to be restituted

Jason Edward Kaufman

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The Metropolitan Museum is to return 20 antiquities to Italy, including a 5th-century BC krater painted by Euphronios which Italy says was looted from the Etruscan site of Cerveteri, and a hoard of silver believed to have been stolen from Morgantina, Sicily. Museum director Philippe de Montebello signed the agreement in Rome on 21 February with Italian culture minister Rocco Buttiglione.

Under the terms of the agreement, Italy will provide the museum with long-term loans of equivalent antiquities. Those items were not specified, nor were the terms of the loan.

Mr de Montebello says the deal will allow the Euphronios krater and the silver to remain on view in New York until early 2008, after the Metropolitan opens its new galleries for Greek, Roman, and Hellenistic art in late 2007.

The Euphronios krater was bought in Switzerland in 1972 by the then director of the

Metropolitan, Thomas Hoving. Since then Dr Hoving has repeatedly stated that the antiquity was looted from Italy and provided detailed accounts of its provenance.

Professor Malcolm Bell, who directs excavations at Morgantina, Sicily, first questioned the provenance of the third-century BC silver hoard more than a decade ago.

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