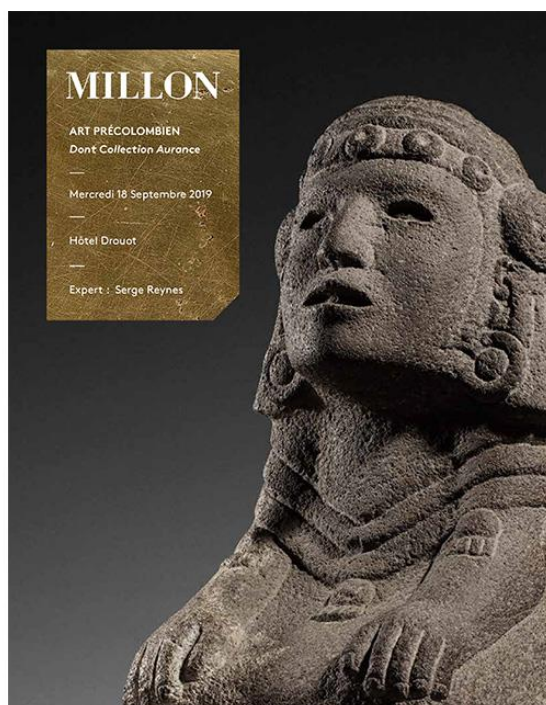


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## Mexico urges halt to pre-Columbian art sale in Paris



Auctioneers Millon told AFP the sale would go ahead.

**PARIS (AFP).**- The Mexican government called for an auction of pre-Columbian art in Paris on Wednesday to be halted, insisting that 95 works going under the hammer are a part of its cultural heritage.

Ambassador Juan Manuel Gomez Robledo also questioned the provenance of the pieces, warning some "could turn out to be imitations".

But auctioneers Millon told AFP the sale would go ahead.

Last week it agreed to withdraw a pre-Hispanic artefact from neighbouring Guatemala from the sale.

At the Drouot auction house, Millon are selling 120 religious and cultural artefacts from several private collections, including sacral jewellery worn by a shaman.

The works were expected to fetch between several hundred and 90,000 euros (\$99,000).

Under the government of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, Mexico has made the protection of its indigenous heritage a priority.

As well as calling for artworks to be returned to the country, it has accused major fashion houses of cultural appropriation for lifting native designs for their clothes.

Gomez Robledo said the cancellation of the Paris sale would be "a first step towards the restitution of authentic cultural property of Mexico."

"This type of trade encourages pillage, illegal trafficking and counterfeiting practised by organised transnational crime networks," the diplomat told reporters, lamenting that the artefacts were being treated as "simple objects of decoration".

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