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## Benin artworks: France to return thrones and statues

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A report commissioned by the French president recommends that disputed artworks should be returned to their countries of origin

**French President Emmanuel Macron has said that France will return 26 artworks taken from the west African state of Benin in the colonial era.**

His announcement follows an experts' report recommending that African treasures in French museums be returned to their countries of origin.

The 26 thrones and statues were taken in 1892 during a colonial war against the then Kingdom of Dahomey.

They are currently on display in the Quai Branly museum in Paris.

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Benin officially asked for their return some years ago. President Macron said the statues would be returned "without delay".

His office said the return of art to Benin should not be an isolated case.

The president "hopes that all possible circulation of these works is considered: returns but also exhibitions, loans, further cooperation", the Elysee palace said.

A panel of experts, commissioned by the president to study the issue of African artworks in French museums, presented their findings to him on Friday.

Ousmane Aledji, director of the Benin cultural centre Artistik Africa, told the AFP news agency he was pleased to see "a new form of cultural exchange" with France.

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During colonial rule in Africa, thousands of cultural artefacts were seized from the continent by Western countries.

The official report states that most of the Africa collection in the Quai Branly museum - approximately 46,000 pieces - was acquired with some degree of duress.

France's announcement comes as major museums across Europe have agreed to lend key artefacts back to Nigeria.

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