



United States
House of Representatives

May 11, 2023

Daniel H. Weiss
President and Chief Executive Officer
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10028-0198

Dear Mr. Weiss,

As you know, I wrote to you on November 18, 2022, regarding my concerns that the Metropolitan Museum of Art (the “Met”) had multiple Cambodian artifacts in its collection that may have been stolen from Cambodia. The seriousness of these allegations and the importance of expeditiously determining the true provenance of these artifacts cannot be overstated. In addition to the moral and legal implications of acquiring and possessing stolen art, this issue hits closer to home. I have heard from Cambodian Americans in the communities I represent who expressed concern that the Met is potentially holding stolen Cambodian artwork. These constituents are understandably eager to see this issue resolved.

Unfortunately, your response failed to answer all but one of the questions posed. While I appreciate your commitment to continue working with the Department of Justice to resolve this issue, your response did not provide a meaningful update on the Met’s internal investigation into the provenance of the artifacts in question. As such, I reiterate my request that you please provide further details so that I can understand whether additional action is necessary. The Met also failed to state whether it had set a deadline to complete its investigation and make final determinations about the provenance of the artwork in its possession. I respectfully request once again that you please provide me with this deadline.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, your response did not commit to returning these treasures to the people of Cambodia should the Met determine that they were originally stolen. In February 2023, 77 gold relics from Douglas Latchford’s collection, which officials believe were previously looted, were returned to the people of Cambodia.¹ As you know, the Met purchased the 13 artifacts I wrote about previously from Mr. Latchford. Clearly, possessing artifacts that Mr. Latchford handled has become dubious at best. While I appreciate that the Met voluntarily returned two Cambodian artifacts in 2013, that should serve as a precedent for future actions. After all, your response to my letter stated, “The Met has a long and well documented history of

¹ Tom Mashberg, *Cambodia Says It Has Recovered Looted Gold Jewelry Once Worn by Royals*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 20, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/20/arts/cambodia-gold-jewelry-royals-latchford.html>.

responding to claims regarding works of art, restituting objects where appropriate, being transparent about the provenance of works in the collection...”² Anything less than a future commitment to returning stolen Cambodian artifacts would be incredibly inconsistent.

Please send me your answers by May 25, 2023.

Sincerely,



Lori Trahan,
Member of Congress

CC. United States Department of Justice
United States Attorney of the Southern District of New York

² Letter from Daniel Weiss, President and Chief Executive Officer, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, to Congresswoman Lori Trahan (Dec. 16, 2022).