

Statement by Roslyn Walker on behalf of the Dallas Museum of Art and the Association of Art
Museum Directors

Meeting of the Cultural Property Advisory Committee to Review the Proposal to Extend the
Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. and the Government of Mali

April 2, 2012

My name is Roslyn Walker. I am the African art curator at the Dallas Museum of Art, which has an international art collection, including African art. The African collection is representative of the visual arts of sub-Saharan Africa, but most of the objects date from the late 19th to the mid-20th century. Not only are there few antiquities in the collection, few works of art are from Mali. Ideally, I would like to display objects that reach back in time, for example a Djenne-jeno or Bankoni-style terracotta figure or a Tellem ritual vessel or wooden headrest from Mali. Exposure to such objects would enhance our visitors' appreciation for African art and culture and foster a deeper sense of pride in the thousands of African peoples who have made the Dallas metroplex their home.

The Dallas Museum of Art is neither buying nor accepting gifts of Malian antiquities as per the Cultural Property Implementation Act. The only way the Museum can obtain Malian antiquities is to borrow them from the National Museum of Mali. I do not know what the process is and I do not know what is available for loan. The National Museum's website offers little information about the permanent collection beyond the first page of the website. I understand the Museum's being protective of its collection, but I would like to offer a suggestion. The Museum could post a form of loan application on the website with an invitation to only accredited museums. If the National Museum of Mali is satisfied with the applicant's credentials, the National Museum can make their inventory available electronically or on-site. There would follow the formal request, approval of the loan by either the director or a government official, determination of the loan fee if it is not standardized, the logistics of crating and shipping the objects and/or an agreement on exchange of services, and granting of an export permit.

The DMA is willing to offer expertise, training, conservation, and to collaborate on exhibitions of mutual interest in exchange for loan-term loans of no less than ten years with the option to renew. It is possible that there might be a collaborative effort among the museums that have expressed interest in long-term loans from Mali that would maximize exposure of the objects visiting in the United States of America and be of greater benefit to the National Museum of Mali.

