



Press article – 04-05-2001

**Return of internationally significant cultural treasures to Nigeria
| Press Release 04.05.01**

On Friday, the Walu Gallery in Zurich presented a gift of significant cultural treasures to the Nigerian state and its national museums. In an official ceremony, 44 objects, including Esie stone sculptures, Ife and Benin bronze heads and terracotta heads, were handed over to the Chief Executive of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), Dr. (Chief) Omotoso Eluyemi, and his delegation consisting of government representatives from Nigeria and from the Nigerian embassy in Bern.

The African art specialist René David explained that he had been able to put these objects of importance to Nigeria's cultural history into safe custody some time before in cooperation with various international organizations. Owing to the uncertain political situation and upheaval in Nigeria, it had been inopportune to repatriate these artworks directly, as no assurance could be given that they would arrive at their intended destination at the corresponding museums in Nigeria and would then remain there. The current government, the committed and recently elected Minister of Culture and Tourism, Boma Bromilow-Jack, and the active executive board of the NCMM now appear to have the wherewithal, the will and the serious intention of safeguarding this cultural legacy at an appropriate place in keeping with its significance. In recent days, the ministry launched a sweeping campaign within the Nigerian population to promote greater understanding of Nigeria's history and of the artistic testimonies to the past. The current constellation of museum structures and staff and the improved security installations have done much to ensure that significant cultural treasures do not again end up on the market through some obscure channels.

With this second hand-over (significant objects were repatriated to Nigeria back in 1997 also), René David proves his commitment to and his respect for the culture of the African continent. This gesture is also a way of expressing his appreciation for the superb cooperation and long-standing friendships he has had with important figures in Nigeria and underscores his 45 years of active contact with Africa's culture. The gallery will now be run by Jean David, René David's son.

Galerie Walu | www.walu.ch