

How science debunked the ancient Aztec crystal skull hoax

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They may have gained fame in the Steven Spielberg adventure film "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull," but those quartz-crystal skulls that once ranked as a great enigma of archaeology are certifiably fake. And the current edition of *Chemical & Engineering News*, (C&EN) the weekly news magazine of the American Chemical Society, the world's largest scientific society, recalls the details of their rise and fall.

In the article, Sarah Everts, C&EN's European science correspondent, delves back into history, explaining that the skull sculptures—supposedly crafted before the Spanish conquest in the 16th century—began appearing on the art market in the 1860s. They graced collections of institutions as renowned as the British Museum in London, the Quai Branly Museum in Paris and Washington, D.C.'s Smithsonian Institution.

Experts began doubting the authenticity of the [skulls](#) as long ago as the 1930s. Everts describes how experts at those three museums have used scientific instruments to show that the skulls are post-Columbian fakes. French antiquities dealer Eugène Boban played a major role in sparking public fascination with the skulls by getting some of the first fakes placed in major museums.

The article is titled "[Crystal Skulls Deemed Fake](#)."

Provided by American Chemical Society

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