

T-rex in Singapore as experts decry 'harmful' auctions

October 28 2022, by Catherine LAI



Shen, which stands 4.6 metres tall and 12 metres long, is thought to be male.

Dinosaur fans got a glimpse of a Tyrannosaurus rex skeleton as it went on display in Singapore Friday before an auction next month, as experts slammed the big-money bone trade as "harmful to science".

The 1,400-kilo frame, composed of about 80 bones, will be the first T-rex skeleton auctioned in Asia, according to Christie's, which has not given an estimate for the lot.

Dubbed Shen, meaning god-like, it will be on display for three days before being shipped to Hong Kong to be sold in November.

"None of the 20 T-Rex that exist in the world is owned by either an Asian institution or an Asian collector," said Francis Belin, president of Christie's Asia Pacific.

"We really wish that Shen will find a new home amongst our Asian collectors here."

The adult dino, which stands 4.6 metres tall and 12 metres long, is thought to be male. It was excavated from [private land](#) in the Hells Creek Formation in Montana in the United States in 2020.

"I've never seen a real-life fossil before... It makes me feel in awe because it's quite majestic," said Lauren Lim, 33, who went to view the exhibit.

'Bad news for science'

Shen—which lived during the Cretaceous period about 67 million years ago—is not the only dino auctioned in recent years.



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In July, the first skeleton of a Gorgosaurus went under the hammer for \$6.1 million in New York. Another T-rex, "Stan", was sold for \$31.8 million by Christie's in 2020.

But the trend for prehistoric [auction](#) lots has some experts concerned.

"It's a sad thing that dinosaurs are becoming collectible toys for the oligarch class, and I can only hope this fad ends soon," said Steve Brusatte, a paleontologist at the University of Edinburgh.

He told AFP the trend was "[bad news](#) for science", and the remains

belonged in museums.

Thomas Carr, a paleontologist from the US, described such sales as being "unquestionably harmful to science" even if the skeletons had been studied before being sold.

"A secure, permanent collection ensures that the observations that a scientist makes of a fossil can be tested and replicated—and a commercially held fossil has no such assurance," Carr said.

Belin, of Christie's, said he hoped a public institution would buy Shen, and added that the whole skeleton had been fully researched, recorded in 3D and "all the elements of the [skeleton](#) will be made available for the public to research".

"We strongly hope that the new owner, whether it's an institution or private, will ensure that it's being seen by the public," Belin said.

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