

# T. rex skeleton sells for more than \$5M at Zurich auction

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Cyril Koller, CEO of auction house Koller, stands next to the head of the skeleton of a Tyrannosaurus rex named Trinity, during an auction in Zurich, Switzerland on Tuesday, April 18, 2023. The 293 T. rex bones were assembled into a growling posture that measures 11.6 meters long (38 feet long) and 3.9 meters high (12.8 feet high). The skeleton is expected to fetch 5 million to 8 million Swiss francs (\$5.6-\$8.9 million). Credit: Michael Buholzer/Keystone via AP

Nearly 300 Tyrannosaurus rex bones that were dug up from three sites in the United States and assembled into a single skeleton sold Tuesday at an auction in Switzerland for 4.8 million francs (\$5.3 million), below the expected price.

Crafted into an open-mouth pose, the T. rex skeleton measuring 11.6 meters long (38 feet long) and 3.9 meters high (12.8 feet) high came in under the anticipated range of 5 million to 8 million francs when it went under the hammer at the Koller auction house in Zurich.

Koller had said Tuesday's sale would be the first time such a T. rex skeleton would go up for auction in Europe. The composite skeleton, featuring 293 bones, was a showpiece of an auction that featured some 70 lots, and the skull was set up next to the auctioneer's podium throughout.

"It could be that it was a composite—that could be why the purists didn't go for it," Karl Green, the auction house's marketing director, said by phone. "It's a fair price for the dino. I hope it's going to be shown somewhere in public."

Green did not identify the buyer, but said it was a "European private collector." Including the "buyer's premium" and fees, the sale came to 5.5 million Swiss francs (about \$6.1 million), Koller said.

Promoters said the composite T. rex, dubbed "Trinity," was built from specimens retrieved from three sites in the Hell Creek and Lance Creek formations of Montana and Wyoming between 2008 and 2013.



The head of the skeleton of a *Tyrannosaurus rex* named Trinity, is seen during an auction in Zurich, Switzerland on Tuesday, April 18, 2023. The 293 *T. rex* bones were assembled into a growling posture that measures 11.6 meters long (38 feet long) and 3.9 meters high (12.8 feet high). The skeleton is expected to fetch 5 million to 8 million Swiss francs (\$5.6-\$8.9 million). Credit: Michael Buholzer/Keystone via AP

Koller said "original bone material" comprised more than half of the restored skeleton. The auction house said the skull was particularly rare and also remarkably well-preserved.

"When dinosaurs died in the Jurassic or Cretaceous periods, they often lost their heads during deposition (of the remains into rocks). In fact, most dinosaurs are found without their skulls," said Nils Knoetschke, a

scientific adviser who was quoted in the auction catalog. "But here we have truly original Tyrannosaurus skull bones that all originate from the same specimen."

T. rex roamed the Earth between 65 million and 67 million years ago. A study published two years ago in the journal *Science* estimated that about 2.5 billion of the dinosaurs ever lived. Hollywood movies such as the blockbuster "Jurassic Park" franchise have added to the public fascination with the carnivorous creature.



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A model of a dinosaur is seen during an auction of auction house Koller, for the skeleton of a Tyrannosaurus rex named Trinity, in Zurich, Switzerland on Tuesday, April 18, 2023. The 293 T. rex bones were assembled into a growling posture that measures 11.6 meters long (38 feet long) and 3.9 meters high (12.8 feet high). The skeleton is expected to fetch 5 million to 8 million Swiss francs (\$5.6-\$8.9 million). Credit: Michael Buholzer/Keystone via AP



A view of the skeleton of a Tyrannosaurus rex named Trinity, during a preview by auction house Koller at the Tonhalle Zurich concert hall, on Wednesday, March 29, 2023 in Zurich, Switzerland. A giant T. Rex skeleton that's been dug up from three sites in the United States is going up for auction in Zurich on Tuesday, April 18, 2023 a first sale of its kind in Europe. Credit: Michael Buholzer/Keystone via AP, File



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The two areas the bones for Trinity came from were also the source of other T. rex skeletons that were auctioned off, according to Koller: Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History bought "Sue" for \$8.4 million over a quarter-century ago, and "Stan" sold for nearly \$32 million three years ago.

Two years ago, a triceratops skeleton that the Guinness World Records declared as the world's biggest, known as "Big John," was sold for 6.6 million euros (\$7.2 million) to a private collector at a Paris auction.

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