

Press release: Museum activities in Villa Karo in fall 2018

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Villa Karo returns Mami Wata collection to Benin

The French president Emmanuel Macron recently announced an initiative to return Beninese objects, exported in the colonial era, from Parisian museums back to their origin in Benin. The initiative coincides with a similar project carried out by Villa Karon ystävät ry already this year. A collection of Mami Wata gathered by Matti-Juhani Karila between 2000-2018 will be transported back to Benin during the fall.

Mami Wata is known as the goddess of water in vodun, the main religion of Benin. The collection comprises more than a hundred statues. Parts of it have been exhibited in Amos Anderson Art Museum at the turn of 2011 and 2012 as well as in Helinä Rautavaara Museum in 2015.

Karila's collection certainly has a whole different origin and history from the objects exported from colonies. However, we do agree with Macron on the fact that African cultural heritage shouldn't be on display only in European private collections and art museums. "African heritage must be highlighted in Paris, but also in Dakar, in Lagos and Cotonou", says Macron in an interview with The New York Times.

Changes will take place in Villa Karo's Petit Musée towards the end of the year: the previous exhibition will be taken down and the new exhibition will be dedicated to the Mami Wata collection. Villa Karo has further collections of objects related to vodun religion and culture which will be exhibited in upcoming exhibitions of Petit Musée. There are only a few public museums in Benin and that's why Villa Karo's museums have a national importance. Petit Musée, focusing on vodun religion, was founded in 2001 and Musée Karo in 2015. In spring 2018, Musée Karo opened an exhibition and sale that showcases contemporary art by Beninese and Togolese artists.

Villa Karon ystävät ry is also responsible for planning and realisation of the cultural program and practical arrangements for the vaccination project studying ETEC bacterium.

The article by The New York Times on Macron's initiative of returning artefacts:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/29/arts/emmanuel-macron-africa.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/06/arts/design/france-restitution-african-artifacts.html>

Vaccination project:

<https://tutkimusmatka.com/>

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