

Italy reclaims 337 looted antiquities from US

Posted on April 30, 2026 by Rosanne Tempest

ROME — Rome welcomed back 337 stolen cultural treasures on April 29, 2026, in a ceremony organised by the *Carabinieri per la Tutela del Patrimonio Culturale* (Carabinieri police for the Protection of Cultural Heritage), Italy's specialist policing unit for art crime.

The repatriated objects handed over at the Caserma "La Marmora" (La Marmora Barracks), seat of culture-focussed law enforcement authorities, span the Villanovan Iron Age to the Roman and Hellenistic periods and include Greek, Etruscan, Italic, and Egyptian works. Among the most significant pieces are a first-century marble head of Alexander the Great unearthed at the Roman Forum, a bronze sculpture stolen from Herculaneum, and two Egyptian basalt figures.

"Culture is not lost, not forgotten, but protected, recovered and, above all, returned to the community," Culture Minister Alessandro Giuli said. "Protecting our heritage means defending memory, strengthening identity, and transmitting to new generations the value of culture as a universal public good."

Source: https://italynow.co.uk/italy-reclaims-337-looted-antiquities-from-us/



Looted artefact (*Credits: Arma dei Carabinieri*)

A transatlantic operation

Of the 337 objects, 221 were returned through cooperation with the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, while the remaining 116 were recovered on April 10, 2026, via a joint operation involving the FBI, Homeland Security Investigations, the District Attorney's Office, and, in one instance, New York auction house Christie's.

General Antonio Petti, commander of the cultural heritage unit, called the trafficking network "a complex criminal phenomenon capable of feeding increasingly sophisticated transnational circuits." He said only constant operational cooperation with foreign authorities could break the chain of illicit profit.

Since 2022, thousands of works have returned to Italy, with an estimated combined value running into tens of millions of euro. Italy and the United States renewed their bilateral memorandum of understanding on cultural cooperation in December 2025, extending import restrictions on certain categories of Italian archaeological material and strengthening customs controls.

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