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France to Return Human Remains to Madagascar, American Library Association Sues Trump Administration, and More: Morning Links for April 9, 2025

BY THE EDITORS OF ARTNEWS

April 9, 2025 9:15am



France's President Emmanuel Macron delivers a speech during the Jean-Pierre Bloch award ceremony of the International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism (LICRA), at the Elysee palace in Paris, on April 2, 2025. (Photo by Thibaud MORITZ / AFP) (Photo by THIBAUD MORITZ/AFP via Getty Images)

AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

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The Headlines

THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION has joined new legal challenges against **President Trump**'s efforts to dismantle federal library and museum services, reports the *New York Times* (<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/08/arts/american-library-association-lawsuit-trump-cuts.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare>). The library association, along with a union representing over 42,000 US cultural workers, the **American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees**, has filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, seeking a preliminary injunction against the current administration's dismissal of the majority of staff at the **Institute of Museum and Library Services** (<https://www.artnews.com/t/institute-of-museum-and-library-services/>), as well as the cancellation of grants allocated by the institute. The suit argues that congressional approval was required before such cuts were ordered. "Congress is the only entity that may lawfully dismantle the agency, not the president and certainly not DOGE," said the lawsuit. The IMLS provides hundreds of millions in funding to US museums, libraries and archives. Last week, attorneys general of 21 states filed a similar lawsuit in a Rhode Island court. Meanwhile, a coalition that advocates for the **National Endowment for the Humanities** estimates that more than 1,200 grants supporting culture and history programs run by the organization across the US have been cut due to Trump's actions, reports the *Washington Post* (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/style/2025/04/07/neh-grants-canceled-cuts/>).

RETURNING REMAINS. For the first time since a 2023 French law was passed to facilitate the restitution of human remains, Paris's **Natural History Museum** is returning the skulls of **King Toera** and two warriors to Madagascar, reports *the Art Newspaper* (<https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2025/04/08/france-to-return-human-remains-to-madagascar-in-first-action-under-new-law>). French **Prime Minister Francois Bayrou** announced the decision, which the new law makes possible by removing previous requirements to deaccessioning human remains from the national collection, such as a vote by parliament. The French museum has one year to repatriate the remains, which were taken to Paris following a massacre by French soldiers of the island in 1897. Madagascar requested their return in 2022.

The Digest

The Vienna-based **OstLicht Auction** house has accused a Chinese firm, **Lidong Auction Co.**, of manipulating bidding results for a camera auction they conducted in collaboration last year. OstLicht Auction said they discovered after the sale that the stated 95 percent sell-through rate and multiple sale records were “manipulated by our Chinese partners.” The Shanghai-based company denies the allegations. [**Artnet News** (<https://news.artnet.com/market/austrian-auction-bid-rigging-2629420>)]

An international student at the **Rhode Island School of Design (RISD)** has had their visa revoked, without a reason given for doing so, according to a public letter to the campus from the school’s president, **Crystal Williams**. The unnamed student is one of hundreds of international students impacted by **President Trump’s** crackdown on international students who have shown pro-Palestinian support. [**Hyperallergic** (<https://hyperallergic.com/1002222/risd-student-visa-revoked-amid-trump-crackdown/>)]

One of the world’s rarest diamonds, a 10-karat blue diamond from South Africa called “The Mediterranean Blue,” is the centerpiece of a new exhibition worth a combined \$100 million at Abu Dhabi’s **Bassam Freiha Art Foundation** on Saadiyat Island, until April 10. **Sotheby’s** and the Abu Dhabi Investment Office are responsible for organizing the exhibit, and the blue diamond will be auctioned for an estimated \$20 million in May. [**Associated Press** (<https://apnews.com/article/uae-diamonds-abu-dhabi-auction-c3df44401d52aff9671b81a09c8fd738>) and **press release** (<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2025/high-jewellery-ge2502/the-mediterranean-blue>)]

Vancouver Art Gallery is partnering with local doctors and the **BC Parks Foundation** to enable healthcare professionals to prescribe visits to the latest **Emily Carr** exhibition. It is the first collaboration of its kind in Canada. [**Stir** (<https://www.createastir.ca/what-is-stir>)]

The Kicker

ECHOES OF TRAUMA. The Lebanese, Paris-based artist **Ali Cherri** has two large exhibitions about to open this year in Europe, and on that occasion, he discusses with the *Financial Times* (<https://www.ft.com/content/8df5e150-3795-4321-bc02-1fd6f705b659>) his sculptures and films, which question how to treat the trauma of war through stories and poetry. Cherri gained recognition for his video installation, “Of Men and Gods and Mud,” which won the **Silver Lion** for best emerging artist at the **Venice Biennale** in 2022, and which is included in the UK show. “I’m first a moving image person,” he says. “That’s how I build my thoughts,” while he constructs sculpture installations – often shown side by side – “like a movie set – directing the gaze and what

the audience sees first, with light, shadow, drama.” The artist had to miss the opening of his last show in December, after both his parents were killed in an Israeli drone strike in Beirut on November 26. He declined to speak about this shattering loss, but said his mother was a kindergarten teacher and his father a textile merchant. “How I Am Monument,” opens April 12 at the UK’s **Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art** in Gateshead, and “Les Veilleurs,” will show in **Marseille’s contemporary art museum** June 6- January 4, 2026.



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