

June 22, 2011

John E. Klein
Randolph College
Office of the President
2500 Rivermont Avenue
Lynchburg, VA 24503-1526

Dear Mr. Klein,

On behalf of AAMD's Board of Trustees, I am writing to thank you and Peter Dean for taking the time to come to our meeting last fall to explain the background and current situation regarding the sale of art at Randolph College and for the time that you and members of the Board of Randolph and others spent with our former trustees Alex Nyerges and William Eiland, on their recent visit to the college.

AAMD's long-standing policy restricting the use of funds obtained through deaccessioning to the acquisition of new works of art exists to protect the art museum community. Selling art to support operations fundamentally undermines the critically important relationship between art museums and patrons who contribute works of art to collections to help advance a museum's mission. Selling art to support operations also erodes the incentive for patrons and other funding agencies to support art museum programs. Why invest in such programs if art museums can pay for them by deaccessioning a few works of art now and then? Supporting operations through the sale of works of art also fundamentally undermines the core mission of an art museum and its public service. Finally, some of the tax exempt planning benefits that art museums provided depend, in part, on maintaining the integrity of collections to benefit the public. Art museums, standing alone or operated as part of a college, university, or non-profit agency, fundamentally compromise these core principles and negatively impact the entire art museum community when they sell art to support operations.

The Maier Museum of Art is advertised and described as an art museum on the Randolph College website, in the College's press materials, and in the College's Form 990: "the College has an extensive collection which is maintained in a museum under curatorial care and is used for instruction, public exhibition, scholarly research, preservation for future generations, and loan and exchange programs."

We have carefully considered Randolph College's position that the Maier Museum of Art is not an art museum and is therefore not subject to AAMD's prohibition against selling art to support operations. We find this position irreconcilable with the College's public statements in its advertising, promotion, and Form 990 filings, all of which state that Randolph College operates an art museum.

We are sympathetic to the fiscal challenges Randolph College confronts, but once a college or university creates a museum, it must manage that museum according to the standards of the museum field. Failure to do so not only compromises the standing of the Maier Museum of Art, but also that of the art museum community as a whole.

Based on these points, AAMD confirms its censure of the previous sale of a work, the plan to use the proceeds (or the income therefrom) for operations, and the announced intention to continue such practices.

Finally, we believe that everyone—the public, the museum field, the college and its students, faculty, and alumni—would benefit from Randolph clarifying the status of its museum. If it is Randolph's position that the college is not operating an art museum, then it should not state the contrary. As we have with other institutions facing some of the challenges you have identified, AAMD is very willing to discuss with the leadership of Randolph alternatives to the course of action currently being pursued.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dan Monroe".

Dan Monroe
President, Association of Art Museum Directors
Director and President, Peabody Essex Museum