



June 4, 2013

The Honorable Rick Snyder
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Governor Snyder,

The Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) is deeply concerned that the Emergency Financial Manager responsible for addressing the City of Detroit's financial problems has questioned whether works of art could be sold from the collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) to pay for the city's operating expenses and debt obligations. Taking such a step would violate fundamental principles long recognized by the museum community (and embedded in many organizational policies including those of the AAMD) as well as constitute a breach of trust with the generations of donors, both of art and funds for acquisitions, to the DIA. Furthermore, selling art for operations of the City would constitute a material change from the financial statements presented for many years to the public and others by the DIA.

The acquisition, conservation, and exhibition of a museum's collection are at the very heart of the museum's service to its community. These activities represent the fundamental responsibility museums have for the stewardship of the cultural assets they hold in trust for present and future generations. For these reasons, and many more, it is a fundamental professional principle that if works of art are removed (deaccessioned) from the collections of art museums, the funds realized from their sale can only be utilized to enhance their collections and for no other purpose.

The DIA's collection is one of the most significant in the United States, and the museum has long been an outstanding example of the role an arts institution can play as an anchor for its community. The DIA was a founding member of AAMD, which was established in 1916, and has continued to be an active participant in the Association and a leader in the museum community.

The sale of any part of the DIA's collection to provide funds for any purpose other than the acquisition of art would place it firmly outside the standards of the American museum community. The impact of such a decision would be felt in many, many quarters. For example, fund raising for any state, county or city owned museum in Michigan could be impacted. Donors of objects to state, county or city owned museums would be very concerned about making any donation of their property for fear it would be sold anytime the government had a financial issue.

Such a sale—even against the will of its staff and leadership—would mean that the museum would not be operating in compliance with nationally accepted professional principles. If such a

step were taken, it would violate the guidelines defined for the stewardship of collections in the AAMD's Professional Practices in Art Museums. It would, moreover, represent a breach of the City of Detroit's responsibility to maintain and protect an invaluable cultural resource that has been entrusted to its care for the benefit of the public.

The AAMD strongly encourages everyone involved in the process of seeking solutions to Detroit's fiscal challenges to preserve this irreplaceable part of the heritage of the city. It is a link to Detroit's past and a fundamental key to Detroit's future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy Rub", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Timothy Rub
President, Association of Art Museum Directors
George D. Widener Director and CEO, Philadelphia Museum of Art