



Association of Art Museum Directors

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ASSOCIATION OF ART MUSEUM DIRECTORS ANNUAL MEETING HELD IN INDIANAPOLIS

New York, NY, June 10, 2010—At a meeting noteworthy for the unprecedented membership-wide discussion of issues and opportunities facing the museum field, 127 art museum directors from 3 countries joined colleagues in Indianapolis this week at the annual meeting of the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD). In addition to the customary standing committee meetings and panel discussions, the members were invited to identify and discuss topics of particular relevance to their institutions. During the meeting, AAMD also crossed several significant milestones, including the adoption of a new strategic plan and an updated policy regarding deaccessioning.

This also marked the final meeting under the two-year presidency of Michael Conforti, director of the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. Conforti's tenure was distinguished by a series of significant accomplishments for the Association. These include:

- ◆ The creation of a search committee to identify and hire a new Executive Director
- ◆ The implementation in 2008 of new cultural property guidelines, the launch of the object registry, and closely related actions to improve American art museum relations with the international and archaeological communities
- ◆ Increased advocacy initiatives with legislators and Federal agencies
- ◆ Constructive engagement of the National Academy of Design, Brandeis University, and other museums whose actions have contradicted AAMD deaccessioning policies
- ◆ Initiation and oversight of internal processes to set the future course for AAMD, and keep its policies relevant and responsive to a rapidly changing environment.

Growing out of a 15-month process of self-study and analysis, on Tuesday, June 8th, members voted to adopt a new strategic plan for AAMD. The plan defines for the Association the vision of making art and art museums essential to everyone. The hallmarks of the plan are: broadened advocacy of and communication about the value of art museums in society; a forward-looking orientation, especially with respect to diversity and inclusivity within the field; leadership development and mentoring; increased transparency with internal and external audiences alike; and upholding best practice while offering AAMD's considerable professional expertise to assist museums in need. The membership charged the Trustees with developing the tactical implementation plan to achieve these goals.

On Wednesday, June 9th, the membership adopted updated policies governing deaccessioning, which reaffirm AAMD's core principle that funds from deaccessioning may not be used for operating and capital expenses. This is consistent with AAMD's long-held belief that collections are the cornerstone of an art museum's research, exhibitions, and public programs. The policy acknowledges the important role

that deaccessioning plays in refining and improve the quality of museum collections, and elaborates on the processes by which museums may engage in responsible deaccessioning. The plan also provides greater clarity on the following points:

- ◆ University and college museums play a significant role in acquiring, preserving, and presenting collections. While the primary focus of the university or college is education, it must also adhere to professional standards and ethics when operating a museum.
- ◆ Fractional deaccessioning is prohibited, except to other public organizations that are committed to keeping the work in the public domain.
- ◆ AAMD will provide guidance by which institutions may redress the cause for sanctions or censure, obtain AAMD's professional assistance to restore financial viability if necessary, and rejoin the community of North American art museums.

The meeting also featured the following:

- ◆ An open forum in which members identified salient topics. Certain topics, such as monetization of collections, were assigned to the appropriate AAMD committees. Five topics were selected for intensive discussion by break-out group; the five were: museum exhibitions of permanent collections; new audiences and members; a changing media landscape; institutional partnerships; and interactive media for educational purposes.
- ◆ A program called "Future Think," in which four directors presented new visions for financial stability, publications, collecting, and new practices for art museums.
- ◆ Continued discussion of issues affecting the development of the next generation of museum directors.
- ◆ The first-ever live Tweeting of an AAMD meeting by the meeting's host, Maxwell L. Anderson, director of the Indianapolis Museum of Art, at <http://www.twitter.com/AAMDIndy>.

As the meeting concluded, the membership voted in a new slate of Officers and members of the Board of Trustees: President, Kaywin Feldman (Minneapolis Institute of Arts); Vice President at Large, Dan Monroe (Peabody Essex Museum); Secretary, Michael Shapiro (High Museum of Art); Treasurer, Saralyn Reece Hardy (Spencer Museum of Art); Art Issues Committee chair, Malcolm Rogers (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston); Membership Committee chair, Stephanie Stebich (Tacoma Art Museum); Nominating Committee chair, Gail Andrews (Birmingham Museum of Art); Professional Issues Committee chair, Sylvia Wolf (Henry Art Gallery); and Public Affairs Committee chair, Brian Ferriso (Portland Art Museum).

The Association of Art Museum Directors, representing 198 art museum directors in the US, Canada, and Mexico, aids its members in establishing and maintaining the highest professional standards for themselves and the museums they represent. It serves as a forum for the exchange of information and the exploration of ideas, and as a voice with which museum directors may express their joint perspectives and those of their institutions. Further information about AAMD's professional practice guidelines and position papers is available at www.aamd.org.

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