

Statement of Christine Anagnos
Executive Director, Association of Art Museum Directors

Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies

Regarding the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the
Humanities, and the Fish and Wildlife Service

The Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) requests funding of \$155 million each for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) for Fiscal Year 2018. We also ask that the subcommittee provide the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) with the funding necessary to staff and train personnel in order to avoid placing any additional impediments on American art museums that are importing works of art containing ivory for the purposes of temporary public exhibition.

ARTS AND ARTIFACTS INDEMNITY PROGRAM

AAMD again thanks the Subcommittee for revising the statutory caps for exhibition indemnity agreements under the Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Act, which is administered by the NEA on behalf of the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities, of which both NEA and NEH are members. Participating AAMD members reported saving an average of more than \$650,000 in insurance fees in 2015. A few examples of recent, current or upcoming indemnified exhibitions that may be of particular interest to members of the Subcommittee include:

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco - Monet: The Early Years

Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, VT - Hunting and Fishing in American Art

Albuquerque Museum of Art and History and Portland (OR) Art Museum - Masterpieces from Ecole des Beaux Arts

Baltimore Museum of Art – Matisse/Diebenkorn

Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis, TN - Thomas Cole's The Voyage of Life

Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville, TN - WWI and American Art

Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MS - When Modern was Contemporary: Selections from the Neuberger Collection

Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI - Lines of Thought: Drawing from Michelangelo to Now from the British Museum

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

As stated above, AAMD requests that Congress appropriate \$155 million for the NEA. The agency continues to make modest but important grants that leverage significant private support, disseminate best practices, and foster innovation. A few examples of recent grants listed on the NEA's website include:

Anchorage Museum, Anchorage AL: To support a series of programs exploring the ecology of the Arctic in partnership with the University of Alaska Anchorage's Alaska Center for Conservation Science. Through augmented reality and other experimental technologies, the organizations will work with artists and scientists on a series of projects including exhibitions, events, and online presentations that will engage the public in immersive virtual environments as a way to convey the complexity of the Northern landscape through curated experiences.

St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO: To support the exhibition, "Degas, Impressionism, and the Paris Millinery Trade." More than 100 artworks were showcased, including paintings and works on paper by Degas. The exhibition explored the millinery industry of the period, the international trade in exotic feathers and floral decorations, the importance of men's hats as a counterpart to what has traditionally been considered a feminine fashion, and the connections to France's colonial history. Free public programs and a symposium accompanied the exhibition.

Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MD: To support promotion and installation costs for the exhibition "A Feast for Senses: Art and Experience in Medieval Europe." In medieval Europe, the walled garden with fragrant flowers, herbs, sweet breezes, bird songs, and a gurgling fountain was idealized as a place of delight for the senses and escape from the tumult of everyday cares. Such aspects of life inspired works of art that were the focus of this international loan exhibition. Lectures, workshops, and performances for adults, drop-in activities and hands-on learning for families, and outreach, tours, and workshops for students and teachers complemented the visitor experience.

RISD Museum, Providence, RI: To support professional development programs for artists at the RISD Museum. The program includes a fellowship, professional development activities, and special museum membership for artists. Run by the museum at the Rhode Island School of Design, the program engages emerging and mid-career artists to develop their creative practice, increase their visibility among new audiences, connect creative sectors, and support the generation of new work. The program includes workshops and training on professional practice, access to curators and globally recognized artists, participation in programs for creative professionals, and research opportunities that support the creation of new work inspired by the collections.

AAMD commends NEA for its commitment to the Blue Star Museums initiative, now in its eighth year. AAMD members have responded with overwhelming enthusiasm to Chairman Chu's invitation to offer free admission to active duty military and their families at least from Memorial Day through Labor Day. In 2016, approximately 90

percent of AAMD members in the United States either formally joined the program or already offered free admission to all. According to a survey conducted by Blue Star Families, 900,000 people took advantage of the program, and fifteen percent of participants reported that it was the first time they had visited a museum. AAMD is grateful to Blue Star Families and the NEA for the opportunity to serve this new audience.

Comments to Blue Star Families from museums included:

“Blue Star allowed us the extra opportunity to reach out to our local marine corps logistics base and other service members as a way to thank them for their role in our nation and community.”

“Offering free admission and other programs to vets and blue star families is the least we can do to thank these brave men and women and their families who sacrifice so much. It is our honor to do this small thing.”

“Loved seeing families come and being able to offer them free admission as a thank you for all they’ve done for the country.”

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

This important agency assists art museums in presenting humanities scholarship to the general public and in strengthening the teaching of humanities in our nation’s schools. For example, the NEH awarded the Walters Art Museum a planning grant to explore collaborative approaches with cultural, educational, and philanthropic stakeholders to more deeply engage Baltimore City schools with the humanities. With funding from the NEH, the Walters is creating an intentional, strategic, and holistic plan that will “launch new forms of collaboration towards the goal of restoring and enhancing meaningful student exposure to humanities instruction.” This dialogue and process is timely as Baltimore City welcomes a new superintendent of schools. Similarly, the St. Louis Art Museum received a grant to establish the St. Louis Humanities Education Collaborative, a new Museum-led project that will co-create approaches to advancing the humanities and connecting schools to innovative curriculum.

NEH also plays an invaluable role in assisting with the preservation and conservation of important collections. This is exactly the type of unglamorous work for which it is chronically difficult to raise private funding, making federal support all the more valuable. For example, a major grant is helping to stabilize and protect the Shelburne Museum’s wildfowl decoy collection, which numbers nearly 1,400 objects and spans more than 150 years of decoy making. To protect the collections, the museum improved environmental conditions, security, and fire protection in the 1832 Dorset House, where the decoy collection and related art and artifacts are exhibited and stored. Additionally, it improved exhibition and "open storage" conditions to allow better physical and intellectual access for the collection.

AAMD commends the NEH for two initiatives in particular. The Common Good is designed to demonstrate the critical role that humanities scholarship can play in public life. This is especially suitable for museums, which have developed expertise in presenting complex ideas to non-specialists. Standing Together, the Humanities and the Experience of War, supports programs that explore war and its aftermath, promote discussion of the experience of military service, and support returning veterans and their families.

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

The AAMD has had extensive conversations with the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) about the importance of presenting works of many cultures to the American public, works that without temporary exhibitions, Americans would never see. These works, entrusted to our museums from both foreign museums and foreign private collectors, are fragile, invaluable and represent the highest professional quality. American museums borrowing these works must be assured that the works can move quickly, safely and be fully protected.

This is especially true when moving works of art, made in whole or in part of ivory, through designated ports as called for in the Director's Order 210 issued February 25, 2014. The Director's Order 210 imposed strict requirements on importing works of ivory from abroad, with which museums are struggling to comply.

Unfortunately, the FWS has limited capacity to staff and train personnel at the designated ports to process works of ivory for special exhibitions. There must be sufficient staff to ensure that the works move in accordance with professionally accepted procedures and the new requirements at the speed that a temporary exhibition requires. The AAMD urges the committee to provide FWS with the funding necessary to staff and train personnel in order to avoid placing any additional impediments on American art museums.

ABOUT AAMD

The purpose of the Association of Art Museum Directors is to support its members in increasing the contribution of art museums to society. The AAMD accomplishes this mission by establishing and maintaining the highest standards of professional practice, serving as forum for the exchange of information and ideas, acting as an advocate for its member art museums, and being a leader in shaping public discourse about the arts community and the role of art in society.

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