

Statement submitted for the record to  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives

on behalf of  
Association of Art Museum Directors, New York, NY  
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Regarding FY 2013 Appropriations for  
National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities

March 28, 2012

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a statement for the record regarding FY 2013 appropriations for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). We respectfully request that the Subcommittee approve a funding level of \$155 million for the NEA and \$155 million for the NEH, which would restore them to their FY 2011 levels.

The Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) is composed of the directors of more than 200 art museums in the United States, as well as several in Canada and Mexico. Its mission is to support its membership in fostering vibrant communities. The AAMD is a current grantee of the NEA.

Both the NEA and the NEH help museums achieve their mission of preserving, exhibiting and interpreting art to the broadest possible audiences. To cite a recent example, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) received grants from both the NEA and the NEH to support the exhibition *Children of the Plumed Serpent: The Legacy of Quetzalcoatl in Ancient Mexico*, its accompanying catalogue and educational activities.

According to the exhibition website:

“Recent scholarship demonstrates that a confederacy of city-states in southern Mexico ... successfully resisted both Aztec and Spanish subjugation. *Children of the Plumed Serpent* explores the extraordinary wonders in fresco, codices, polychrome ceramics, gold, turquoise, shell, textiles, and other precious materials that were produced by these confederacies between AD 1200 and 1500, as their influence spread throughout Mesoamerica by means of vast networks of trade and exchange. A ruling class of nobles, or *caciques*, believing that Quetzalcoatl, the human incarnation of the Plumed Serpent, had founded their royal lineages, called themselves the ‘Children of the Plumed Serpent’ ... The culture hero Quetzalcoatl, the Plumed Serpent, epitomizes a Mexican sense of national identity that is deeply rooted in the heroic qualities of its ancient art.”

*Children of the Plumed Serpent* opens at LACMA on April 1, 2012. After its run in Los Angeles it will travel to the Dallas Museum of Art. Together, the NEA and NEH contributed nearly 25% of the cost of the exhibition, which totaled approximately \$1.3 million. As is always the case, the NEA and NEH “seal of approval” leveraged other contributions. There is no doubt that the federal grants had a huge impact in keeping *Children of the Plumed Serpent* in its desired format and scope.

The exhibition highlights the role of museums in cultural exchange and collaboration. The U.S. Department of State, having determined it to be in the national interest of the United States, awarded it protection from seizure, assuring that the works would be returned to their lenders. Further, LACMA collaborated with two important cultural institutions in Mexico, the National Council for Culture and the Arts and the National Institute for Anthropology and History. The exhibition also received indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities, which is administered by the NEA and without which many objects would not be able to travel to the U.S.

(In connection with the indemnity program, which Congress expanded in 2007, we respectfully suggest that it may be time to look again at raising the limits available for domestic and international exhibitions.)

The educational outreach of the exhibition is targeted to low income, primarily Hispanic parts of the metropolitan area, and will include bilingual materials. Typically, attendance at the museum is about 12% Hispanic but it doubles when there is a Latin American exhibition. Attendance for *Children of the Plumed Serpent* is estimated at about 100,000 people in its LACMA venue. For the past decade, LACMA has had a Latin American initiative, with at least one exhibition per year. Last year’s show, *Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World*, which examined the significance of indigenous peoples within the artistic landscape of colonial Latin America, also received an NEH planning grant and a grant from NEA; attendance was 56,748. That exhibition was on view at LACMA from November 6, 2011 through January 29, 2012 and is currently touring to two museums in Mexico.

More information about the exhibition is available online at:

[www.lacma.org/art/exhibition/children-plumed-serpent-legacy-quetzalcoatl-ancient-mexico](http://www.lacma.org/art/exhibition/children-plumed-serpent-legacy-quetzalcoatl-ancient-mexico)

Museum staff notes that the majority of the cost of exhibitions often comes down to labor and materials - shipping, crating, couriers to accompany the art, and installation. This was dramatically illustrated recently by the ongoing creation and installation of *Levitated Mass*, which entailed quarrying and transporting a 340 ton boulder across several congressional districts, beginning in the 44<sup>th</sup> (where the museum has over 250 individual and family members) and ending at the museum campus, which sits on the border between the 30<sup>th</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> districts. As LACMA director Michael Govan told the Los Angeles *Times*:

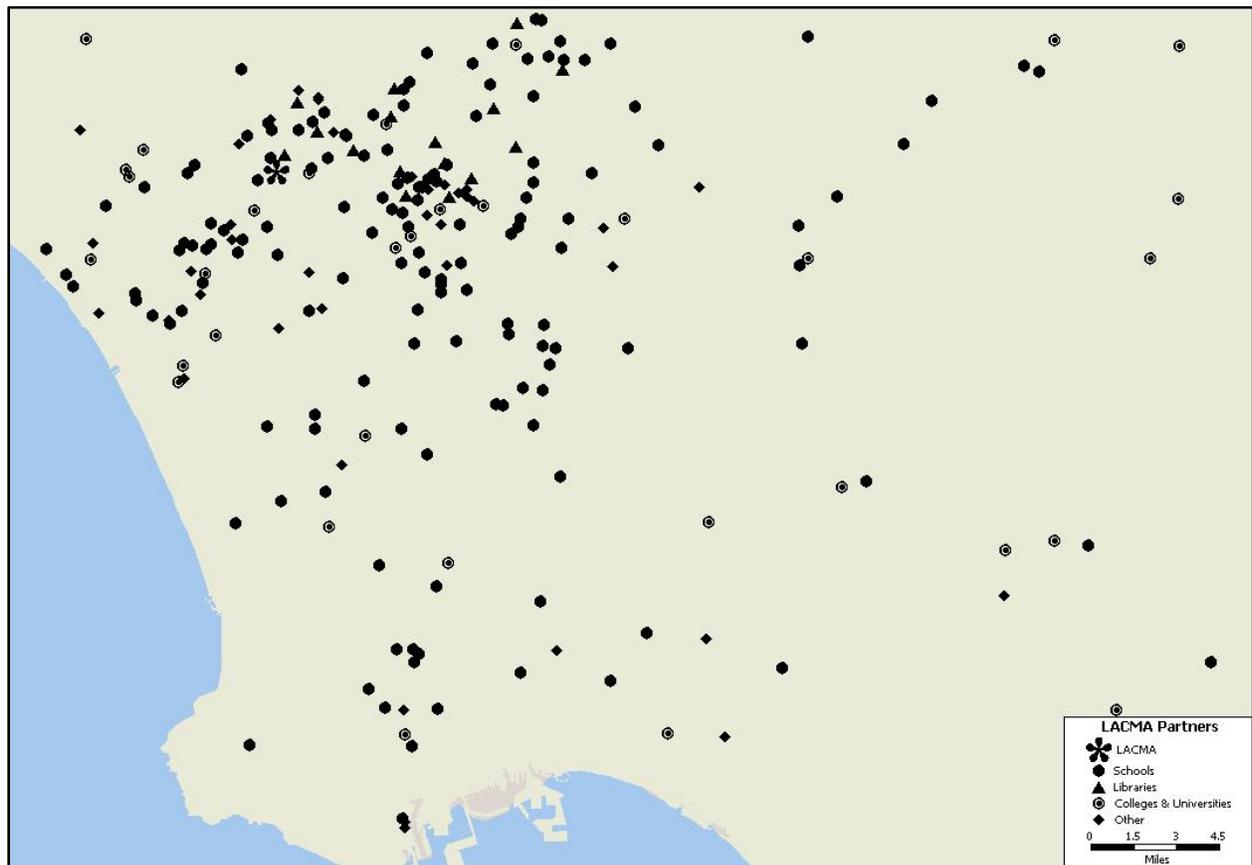
“This is not money used for buying something but for building something: it goes to concrete workers, truckers, quarry workers, so this money is being injected into the economy and lives of working people. It’s not unlike the impulse of the 1930s WPA Works Progress Administration to put craftspeople in a down economy to

work. For me, there is a key distinction: Are you putting money into the pockets of a European gallery or putting money into the American economy?”

To put into context the educational scope of the museum: it serves between 600,000 and one million people a year, including more than 300,000 through its education programs. Education activities include art-making programs in schools and libraries, tours of the museum for students and adults, art classes for children, teenagers, and adults, summer and holiday art camps for children, programs for college students, high school internships, family days, workshops and curriculum materials for teachers, lectures, concerts, films, conversations with artists, and more. Across the entire state, the museum’s education programs reach 351 organizations including 217 schools, 67 colleges and universities, 31 community organizations, 22 cultural organizations, and 14 healthcare organizations. Nearly 70,000 individuals and families are members of LACMA; membership fees start at \$25 for college students, which entitles them to free admission all year. All children under 18 are NexGen members, which allows them free admission and free admission for one accompanying adult.

LACMA is also a proud participant in the Blue Star Museums initiative, which offers free admission to military families from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

The map below shows the extent of the museum’s outreach, with each dot symbolizing an organization that uses LACMA’s educational services.



The AAMD mapping project, which is supported in part by an NEA grant, now encompasses 100 museums, including:

- National Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson Hole, Wyoming
- Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art at the University of Oklahoma
- Phoenix Art Museum, which serves 30 schools in the 6<sup>th</sup> district of Arizona
- Walker Art Center, Minneapolis Institute of Arts and Weisman Museum of Art in the Twin Cities
- Bronx Museum of Art

Please note that the maps are generally produced in color and with more detail. The map depicted was altered to fit the testimony format required by the Subcommittee.

Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the mapping project gives museums the capacity to analyze their community service by geography and socio-economic level, allowing them to target resources to where they are most needed. For example, just last week a museum requested a list of majority-minority census tracts in its service area.

With the NEA's help, the mapping project has given us a new level of understanding of the reach and depth of museum programming in their communities. Further, surveys of our membership show that one-third of them offer free admission to all, while two-thirds offer free admission to children. The average full price of admission for adults is under ten dollars, but nearly all offer steep discounts and/or free days. 100% of AAMD member museums serve K-12 schools; 93% percent serve colleges and universities; and 68% percent of our museums serve preschools. In total, AAMD members serve about 40,000 schools across the nation. A third have programs for people with Alzheimer's, and their caregivers, and an increasing number offer art instruction for medical and nursing students, which has been proven to increase their powers of observation, leading to better diagnostic skills.

None of this work is possible, however, unless museums can care for and present art to the public. In these basic, core functions, the help of the NEA and NEH has been and continues to be invaluable.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony for the record.