

Statement Submitted to the U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Ways and Means
by the Association of Art Museum Directors

Hearing on Tax Reform and Contributions, February 14, 2013

The Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) is composed of the directors of approximately 220 of the leading art museums in North America. AAMD's mission is to support its members in increasing the contribution of art museums to society. We are grateful for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the role of charitable giving in enabling museums to serve their communities.

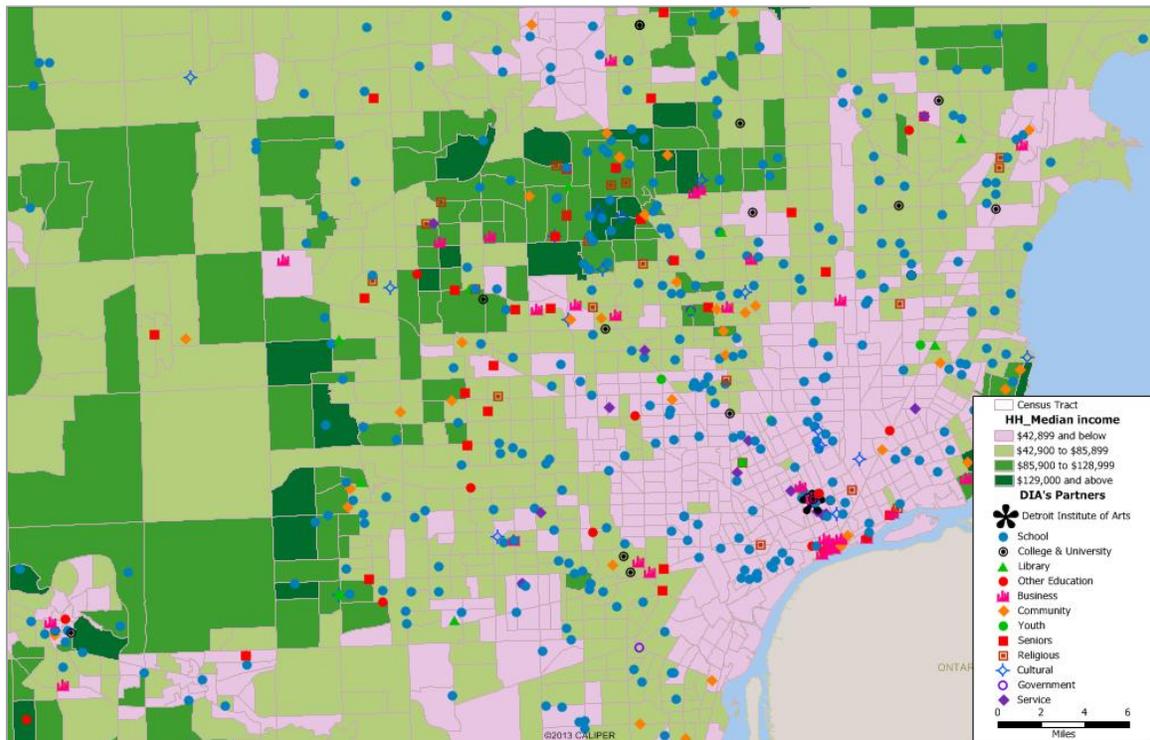
Art museums are repositories for collections that encompass the cultural, religious, secular and spiritual expression of humankind from prehistory to the present day. From their beginnings in the 19th century up to the present time, American museums have placed education at the heart of their mission. While museums have long hosted field trips for schools, today they are often the primary source of exposure to visual arts for many at-risk children and youth, given that formal arts education barely exists in far too many school systems. As the field has developed, museums have branched out in surprising directions. Museum programs show teachers how to connect specific works of art to school curriculum in every academic subject. Over 90 percent of AAMD members offer programs for universities, and more than 70 percent have preschool programs. More than a third have programs for Alzheimer's patients and caregivers, while nearly half have programs for nursing home residents. Others have offerings for seniors at home, children in the juvenile justice system, and incarcerated adults. Thirty-one percent offer art instruction for medical, nursing, and pharmacy students, which is clinically proven to sharpen observation skills and hence improve the ability to make correct diagnoses. All of these museum activities stand side by side with museums' traditional role in fostering lifelong learning for general audiences, as well as in scholarship and other academic activities.

Absent charitable giving, most museums would be able to do little more than keep their collections safe. As matters now stand, most art museums in the United States derive a quarter to a third of their budgets from annual giving.

Because of charitable giving, art museums are accessible. One-third of AAMD member museums offer free admission to all, all the time, and two-thirds offer free admission for children under 12. Those with admission fees nearly always offer some form of free admission (for example, free days or free hours) and discounts for seniors and students. Taking all of this into account, we estimate the average cost of admission at AAMD museums to be about five dollars or less. At the same time, the cost to museums per visitor is about \$85. Clearly, donations subsidize a great deal of the difference.

The average AAMD museum serves approximately 200 schools annually. Collectively, AAMD members reach approximately 40,000 K-12 schools nationwide through on-site

and off-site programs, including direct work with students and teachers. (This total does not include schools reached online.) Our research indicates that museums serve broadly across all income levels, as exemplified by the map below, which shows organizations in greater Detroit served by the Detroit Institute of Arts, with shading that indicates the median household income level by U.S. 2010 Census Tract. Each symbol on the map represents an organization – ranging from churches to schools to senior centers – that the museum served in 2009-10.



Museums are creative about expanding their reach. In Pittsburgh, for example, the Carnegie Museums offer reduced fees to holders of Pennsylvania ACCESS cards, which are given to families on welfare, food stamps, or medical assistance. Whereas normal admission costs \$15 for adults, ACCESS families may visit for \$1 per person. In 2007, the program’s first year, 171 people took advantage of it. By 2010, usage had climbed to over 10,000 people. Similarly, when the Baltimore Museum of Art initiated free admission – which was made possible by a gift from a very generous donor - attendance at family programs grew by over 80 percent.

AAMD members share a commitment to serving the public, partnering with their community institutions, including health, human service, and education organizations, and applying the unique resources of the arts to serving a wide variety of purposes. Museums are anchors in their communities, often serving as the centerpiece of new or revitalized neighborhoods, providing jobs, attracting tourists as well as residents, and in a less literal sense, helping to form the community’s identity – its sense of self.

As Congress considers restructuring the charitable deduction, it should consider the

experience of museums subsequent to the 1969 and 1986 revisions, when certain types of donations plunged dramatically.

In 1969, Congress restricted the ability of artists to take a fair-market value deduction for gifts of their own art; as a result, artist gifts have been relatively rare ever since. In 1986, the Tax Reform Act made gifts of appreciated property a preference item under the Alternative Minimum Tax; gifts of art plummeted by 90 percent by 1989, causing Congress to reverse itself and restore full deductibility in 1990. Donors give for altruistic reasons, but the tax code influences the size, timing, and form of gifts.

In conclusion: discouraging gifts to the arts by reducing their tax deductibility would have a counter-productive effect. It would lessen institutions' growing ability to serve the very populations whom Members of Congress most wish charities to serve, and would deprive those populations of the chance to participate fully in civil society and to have access to collections and programs that speak to their specific needs and interests. Supporting the needy and supporting the arts are not mutually exclusive enterprises.

With this testimony we are submitting summaries of published articles that document the unique and sometimes surprising ways in which art museums serve the public; and a link to a blog posting "Why the arts matter to medicine" (Arts Practica, September 25, 2012, reproduced with permission) that includes a link to a video presentation on art museum-medical school partnerships and a list of key research studies.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue.

Summaries of articles:

Alternative sentencing for juvenile offenders

Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute / Williamstown, MA

The Responding to Art Involves Self Expression (RAISE) program is a collaboration between the Berkshire County Juvenile Court (BCJC) and the Clark. This alternative sentencing model shifts the sentencing paradigm from punishment to education, fostering self-awareness and self-esteem. Through this program, adjudicated youth participate in group meetings, writing and self awareness exercises, and gallery talks. Since its inception in 2006, RAISE has served more than 75 boys and girls ages 12 to 17. The program is being replicated at other museums in America and France. It has been recognized by the International Council of Museums, the French American Museum Exchange, the Annenberg Foundation, the United States Department of State, and the American Association of Museums. <http://www.clarkart.edu/about/raise.cfm>

Academic and emotional support for girls at risk

Samuel P. Harn Museum / Gainesville, FL

In 2010, a collaboration was created between the Harn Museum of Art and the PACE Center for Girls in Gainesville, Florida. The mission of PACE is to prevent school withdrawal, juvenile delinquency, teen pregnancy, substance abuse and welfare

dependency among adolescent girls considered “at-risk.” Through the collaboration with the Harn, the girls regularly meet with museum educators to observe, analyze, discuss, write about and create art. The partnership gives participants an opportunity to interact with positive role models and builds their confidence, visual awareness, critical thinking, and social skills. The program has received grants from the Division of Cultural Affairs and the National Endowment for the Arts.

<http://www.gainesville.com/article/20100428/ARTICLES/4281012>

Building observation skills in medical and nursing students

The McNay Museum of Art / San Antonio, TX

The McNay Art Museum offers a program designed to help medical and nursing students improve their observation and communication skills. The Art Rounds program was developed in 2010 in conjunction with the University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio, stemming from the realization that too many students had weak observational skills and were relying solely on technology. Originally offered as a three week workshop, the program was offered as a full-credit course in the 2011-2012 school year. By learning to carefully observe and evaluate artwork at the museum, students are also honing their skills in making accurate diagnoses, devising treatment plans and interacting with patients and colleagues.

http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/local_news/article/Art-for-medicine-s-sake-992864.php

Art museum helps recovering addicts

Herbert F. Johnson Museum / Ithaca, NY

Educators from the Herbert F. Johnson Museum at Cornell University knew that the museum could play a significant role in the treatment of recovering addicts. They contacted two local treatment centers with their idea, and within four years the program they created had served over 1,700 people. As part of their treatment, participants visit the museum to learn about artists who have also struggled with addiction, the role that art making can play in their recovery, and how the museum can become a place for meditation, reflection, and to reconnect with loved ones.

<http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/ithacajournal/access/2228922261.html?FMT=ABS&FMTS=ABS:FT&type=current&date=Dec+30%2C+2010&author=Rachel+Stern&pub=The+Ithaca+Journal&edition=&startpage=n%2Fa&desc=Art+program+at+Johnson+Museum+helps+addiction+recovery+effort>

Museum collaboration with Native American tribe separates fact from fiction

Seattle Art Museum / Seattle, WA

The popular ‘Twilight’ series of movies has thrust the Quileute Nation of La Push, Washington, into an international spotlight. But the werewolves portrayed in the film and novels bear little resemblance to actual Native Americans, either historical or contemporary. A curator from the Seattle Art Museum spent over a year working with tribal members to design an exhibition that would counteract the fictional depiction and celebrate Quileute culture for tribal members, ‘Twilight’ fans and the general public.

http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2012589090_quileute11m.html

Museum aims to help Alzheimer's patients

Walker Art Center / Minneapolis, MN

The Walker Art Center has partnered with the Alzheimer's Association of Minnesota/North Dakota to offer programming for early-stage dementia patients. Modeled after a similar program at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Walker's 'Contemporary Journeys' program helps Alzheimer's patients build a support network and connect with their caregivers via a memory, an experience or an emotion evoked by the artwork. Studies conducted by New York University and George Washington University have shown that patients who take part in this type of program show an overall improvement in their mood, cognitive function, and social interaction. http://ww2.postbulletin.com/newsmanager/templates/localnews_story.asp?z=10&a=4855
[96](#)

Museum offers sculpture tours for the visually impaired

Des Moines Art Center / Des Moines, IA

Docents at the Des Moines Art Center have been specially trained to offer art tours of the Pappajohn Sculpture Garden in downtown Des Moines to the blind and visually impaired. Participants are able to touch sculptures with gloved hands while docents describe the artwork and discuss the artwork and the artist. The program allows a new level of access to the museum's collection for those who cannot see. Docents are trained by the Iowa Department for the blind. <http://www.kcci.com/video/23754397/detail.html>

Art museum partners with jail to bring art education to inmates

Aspen Art Museum / Aspen, CO

A partnership between the Aspen Art Museum and Pitkin County Jail helps counteract the idleness of prison life with an educational opportunity. Museum educators visit the facility twice a month with books, art supplies, and images of the museum's exhibits. Following a lesson and discussion, participants learn to create their own artwork using a variety of media. Studies have shown that prison inmates who participated in creative art programs exhibited higher levels of positive coping skills, decreased anger levels, and spent fewer days in punitive confinement. <http://museumpublicity.com/2011/04/14/aspen-art-museum-partners-with-pitkin-county-jail-to-bring-art-education-to-inmates/>

Kwanzaa family festival celebrates African heritage

Crocker Art Museum / Sacramento, CA

Nearly 2,000 people showed up to participate in the Crocker Art Museum's Kwanzaa Family Festival in December 2010. The festival featured African art from the collection, as well as African music, dance, stories, food, fashion, and crafts. The event was sponsored by Target corporation and organized with the assistance of the Sojourner Truth Multicultural Art Museum, the Kuumba Collective Art Gallery, and Wo'Se Community Church. http://www.sacramentoexpress.com/headline/42717/Kwanzaa_Family_Festival_at_the_Crocker

Ruby Bridges visits museum to discuss desegregation and racism
Tacoma Art Museum / Tacoma, WA

Ruby Bridges became an icon of the civil rights movement as a little girl in 1960, when she was photographed walking into the newly desegregated William Frantz Elementary in New Orleans. Bridges' famous walk -- escorted by federal marshals -- also became the inspiration for Norman Rockwell's painting entitled "The Problem we all Live With." In May 2011, the painting appeared as part of a Rockwell exhibit at the Tacoma Art Museum. Ms. Bridges also appeared at the museum to tell her story and discuss the history of racism in America.

<http://www.thenewstribune.com/2011/05/15/1665907/inspiring-rockwell-educating-a.html>

Cop recruits learn fine art of policing
Art Institute of Chicago / Chicago, IL

A program at the Art Institute of Chicago hones the observational skills of police recruits. Staff at the police academy say that the program "helps officers try to see all aspects of a potentially dangerous situation instead of relying on their tunnel vision -- limiting their focus to just what's in front of them."

http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-02-11/news/ct-met-police-art-institute-20110210_1_cop-recruits-painting-century-italian-artist

Blog post, Arts Practica, "Why do the arts matter to medicine?" September 25, 2012, reproduced with permission. The post includes a link to a video of a presentation on museum-medical school partnerships, as well as a list of key research studies:

<http://www.artspractica.com/2012/09/why-do-the-arts-matter-to-medicine/>

Supplemental Information:

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