

Joint Statement of the Association of Art Museum Directors and the National Academy

New York, NY, March 11, 2009—Representatives of the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) and the National Academy met this week at the National Academy to discuss how the Academy could achieve financial stability and institute policies to preclude deaccessions for operating funds, and how AAMD could assist in this process. AAMD representatives participating in the meeting were Dan Monroe, Chair of the AAMD Art Issues Committee and Director of the Peabody Essex Museum; Mary Sue Sweeney Price, past President of AAMD and Director of the Newark Museum; and Janet Landay, Executive Director of AAMD. National Academy representatives were Director Carmine Branagan; and Treasurer of the Academy’s Board and National Academician, David Kapp.

In December 2008, AAMD imposed sanctions on the National Academy in response to the sale of two paintings from their collection where proceeds were used to cover operating costs. The AAMD’s professional practices—designed to protect museum collections, which are held in public trust—prohibit such action.

During this week’s meeting, the National Academy outlined a number of key initiatives they are undertaking to address their economic challenges and the conditions that led to the AAMD’s imposed sanctions. The Academy will begin a process to restructure its governance practices to: include more rigorous fiscal oversight; institute a comprehensive fundraising program incorporating board involvement and a professional development team; formulate a strategic, long-range plan which will include a financial plan and a strengthened collections management policy. The Academy also stated that they will not sell the additional works of art as was originally proposed. AAMD recognizes and encourages these steps by the National Academy.

“We are delighted with the progress that has been made in our discussions with the AAMD and we are very appreciative of the collaborative and productive spirit in which they have been undertaken,” said Carmine Branagan. “We look forward to further collaboration and a promising future as a strengthened institution that will play a vital role in the cultural life of our city.”

“We are very pleased to have had such a productive meeting with the National Academy,” said Dan Monroe. “We appreciate the National Academy’s openness to an ongoing, constructive dialogue on issues of collections care and institutional stewardship. Because a collection is the heart of a museum—the life source for its public programs and service to community—it is vital to preserve it for future generations.”

Michael Conforti, the President of AAMD, added “By taking swift action to change its course, the National Academy is demonstrating a commitment to protecting the works of art it holds in public trust and simultaneously moving towards a financially secure future. We look forward to working with the National Academy and providing our support as they implement the initiatives they have described.”

On the basis of these pledges and actions—and to assist the National Academy in realizing these goals—members of AAMD will meet with the Academy’s leadership over the coming months to provide guidance and support as it institutes these essential changes. Once accomplished, these initiatives will help the National Academy regain its footing as a member in good standing of the American art museum community.

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