



## Association of Art Museum Directors

120 East 56<sup>th</sup> Street  
Suite 520  
New York, NY 10022  
Tel: 212.754.8084  
Fax: 212.754.8087

### **ASSOCIATION OF ART MUSEUM DIRECTORS' ANNUAL MEETING HELD IN TORONTO**

New York, NY, June 18, 2009—More than 100 members of the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) attended the AAMD's annual meeting this week in Toronto. AAMD's member museums are cultural and educational institutions in the US, Canada, and Mexico that are dedicated to making art a vital part of peoples' lives through museum collections, exhibitions, and public programs. Colleagues from the Canadian Art Museum Directors Organization also held their annual meeting in Toronto and participated in many of the AAMD programs.

The meeting featured a series of panels, members' forums, and committee meetings focused on salient issues affecting art museums today. The meeting built on discussions at the AAMD's mid-winter meeting in San Diego, discussions which are now being integrated into AAMD's strategic planning process. These topics include: the challenges museums face as a result of the current economic climate; policies and practices relating to the deaccessioning (sale or dispersal) of works of art in museum collections; strategies and tactics that both the Association and its members can pursue to foster diversity in the field and provide training and professional development for future museum leaders.

On the subject of the economy, AAMD organized and presented a panel featuring noted museum trustees and philanthropists Donald B. Marron (CEO, Lightyear Capital), Joseph L. Rotman (Chair, Canada Council for the Arts), as well as Ellen Holtzman (Program Director for American Art, Henry Luce Foundation). The panel was moderated by Alex Nyerges (Director, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts), and included three other AAMD members: Mimi Gates (Director, Seattle Art Museum), Glenn Lowry (Director, Museum of Modern Art), and Stephanie A. Stebich (Director, Tacoma Art Museum). Drawing on their deep knowledge of the field, as well as their experiences with institutions of varying sizes, the panelists discussed the importance of renewing an institution's commitment to mission, strategies for more cost efficient operations, the imperative for art museums to continue to present innovative programming even in times of financial challenge, and the role of trustees in supporting a museum's work in these areas.

The membership heard two presentations about the issue of diversity and the changing demographics in the art museum field. Johnetta B. Cole, the new director of the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, and the founder of the Johnetta B. Cole Global Diversity and Inclusion Institute, discussed short- and long-term strategies to attract a more diverse pool of art museum directors. Janet Meredith of Janet Meredith Consulting presented an analysis of the changing demographics within the field of art museum directors and how AAMD might support future professional development.

AAMD's discussion of deaccessioning continued a dialogue begun in late 2008—following the National Academy Museum's sale of works and the subsequent news regarding the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis—about AAMD's Professional Practice policies in this area. AAMD is addressing the scope and clarity of guidance provided by its policies, especially regarding new and previously unanticipated issues regarding the sale of art. Underlying the discussion is the members' continuing belief in the vital importance of art collections as the heart of a museum's service to its community and to the general public.

AAMD's members also participated in the organization's strategic planning process, which is expected to be completed in 2010. In addition to an ongoing evaluation of the Association's goals, all of the issues above—financial planning, demographics and diversity, the importance of sustaining and enhancing the best professional practices for art museums in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and maintaining and deepening museums' service to the public—were important parts of the overall discussion about the organization's future strategies.

The Association of Art Museum Directors, representing 192 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](http://www.aamd.org).

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Contacts:

Janet Landay / Christine Anagnos  
Association of Art Museum Directors  
212-754-8084  
[jlanday@aamd.org](mailto:jlanday@aamd.org)  
[canagnos@aamd.org](mailto:canagnos@aamd.org)

Sascha Freudenheim / Elizabeth Chapman  
Resnicow Schroeder Associates  
212-671-5172 / 212-671-5159  
[sfreudenheim@resnicowschroeder.com](mailto:sfreudenheim@resnicowschroeder.com)  
[echapman@resnicowschroeder.com](mailto:echapman@resnicowschroeder.com)