



Association of Art Museum Directors

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New York, NY—December 3, 2010—In response to the Smithsonian Institution’s National Portrait Gallery’s removal of artist David Wojnarowicz’s film from the exhibition “Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture,” the Association of Art Museum Directors issued the following statement:

It is extremely regrettable that the Smithsonian Institution’s National Portrait Gallery, a major American art museum with a long history of public service in the arts, has been pressured into removing a work of art from its exhibition “Hide/Seek.”

More disturbing than the Smithsonian’s decision to remove this work of art is the cause: unwarranted and uninformed censorship from politicians and other public figures, many of whom, by their own admission, have seen neither the exhibition as a whole or this specific work.

The AAMD believes that freedom of expression is essential to the health and welfare of our communities and our nation. In this case, that takes the form of the rights and opportunities of art museums to present works of art that express different points of view.

Discouraging the exchange of ideas undermines the principles of freedom of expression, plurality and tolerance on which our nation was founded. This includes the forcible withdrawal of a work of art from within an exhibition—and the threatening of an institution’s funding sources.

The Smithsonian Institution is one of the nation’s largest organizations dedicated to the dissemination and diffusion of knowledge—an essential element of democracy in America. We urge members of Congress and the public to continue to sustain and support the Smithsonian’s activities, without the political pressure that curtails freedom of speech.

The Association of Art Museum Directors, representing 198 art museum directors in the US, Canada, and Mexico, promotes the vital role of art museums throughout North America and advances the profession by cultivating leadership and communicating standards of excellence in museum practice. Further information about AAMD’s professional practice guidelines and position papers is available at www.aamd.org.

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