



Association of Art Museum Directors

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David W. Miles, President
Board of Regents, State of Iowa
1402 Tulip Tree Lane
West Des Moines, IA 50266-6665

Dear Mr. Miles:

On behalf of the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), we write concerning Jackson Pollock's painting *Mural*, in the collection of the University of Iowa Museum of Art, and the pending legislation that would force the sale of this important painting.

Great universities have great museums, and those who are fortunate enough to study at The University of Iowa have the resources of the collection to learn about art, culture, and history, and to be inspired to develop their own artistic and intellectual creativity. The Museum and its collection also benefit the broader public--even when that collection is on view elsewhere in Iowa. We believe that access to the arts is essential, not only for the development of leaders in the arts and humanities, but also for an educated and enlightened society.

Moreover, the University itself clearly understands the value of its collection, and of Pollock's *Mural*. The University promotes the Museum on its website to define the important and long-standing role of the arts on campus. It features the Pollock as a leading example of the strength of the institution, and highlights a number of gifts to the collection--not just the Pollock--to underscore donors' commitment to the Museum as an essential part of the University. *Mural* has been included in major exhibitions in cities such as Frankfurt, London, New York, and Los Angeles, thereby further enhancing the reputation of the University.

It is precisely because of this deeply rooted belief in the importance of collections that AAMD applies strict professional standards to deaccessioning. The AAMD guidelines (as detailed in *Professional Practices in Art Museums*, 2001 and the revised policy on deaccessioning, 2009) state clearly that deaccessioned works of art may not be used to provide operating funds of any kind. The proceeds from the sale of works of art must be treated only as acquisition funds, to support continued strategic growth of an institution's collection.

The policy on deaccessioning states that “*Infractions by any art museum may expose that institution to censure and/or sanctions, as determined by the Board of Trustees of the AAMD, that may, in the case of sanctions, include, without limitation, suspension of loans and shared exhibitions between the sanctioned museum and museums of which AAMD members are directors.*”

We sympathize with the challenges faced by the University and its museum, beginning with the devastating flood and continuing through the economic downturn that has put pressure on non-profit organizations everywhere. But we believe it would be nothing short of tragic to compound the devastation of the flood with the loss of one of the University’s premiere attractions. As a part of the Museum’s collection, *Mural*’s greatest value is as a tool for learning and teaching, representing a pivotal period in the history of American art and culture.

Once lost, this resource cannot be recovered--to the detriment of current and future students, and to the citizens of Iowa. At the same time, the sale of the painting will harm the reputation of the University itself, calling into question the trust that future donors might seek from the University, not just its art museum. The Museum’s ability to attract future donors--of dollars, as well as works of art--would no doubt diminish, along with its competitive edge in winning grant awards and fellowships.

As representatives of the board and membership of AAMD, we urge the University of Iowa Board of Regents to take action to prevent the loss of this remarkable work of art, and to urge the legislature not to force the University to deaccession *Mural* from the collection of its Museum.

With appreciation for your consideration, and best wishes,



Kaywin Feldman
President
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Cc:

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