

In response to the letter from former trustees, the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) has released the following statement:

We are confident that there are no legal issues relating to the BMA's deaccession of works by Brice Marden, Clyfford Still, and Andy Warhol, or to the intended use of the proceeds of the sale. We have reached out to Secretary of State John C. Wobensmith and Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh to provide them with information regarding our actions, and we look forward to working with them to answer any questions that they may have, and to sharing any necessary documents or additional details.

Deaccessioning artworks from a museum's collection is a standard practice, and these decisions are guided by curatorial vision and then ultimately validated by a museum's Board of Trustees. That is the process that the BMA followed. The selection of works was determined through a rigorous collection review process led by the museum's senior curators, who proposed the artworks for deaccession, in accordance with AAMD's criteria. The selection was then reviewed and approved by the museum's leadership team, accessions committee, executive committee, and full board. Furthermore, the history of deaccessions at the BMA is such that Andy Warhol's *The Last Supper* was itself purchased through funds made possible by the deaccessioning of a painting by the Abstract Expressionist master Mark Rothko. That history, from a Rothko to a Warhol, demonstrates that collections management—which includes both accessioning and deaccessioning—is a critical aspect of curatorial practice and is not one that is purely additive.

The accusation of a conflict of interest among the BMA's curators is equally unfounded. The lowest paid hourly wage earners within the institution—none of whom were involved in determining the works for sale—are the only individuals for whom a specific pay increase has been defined. Members of HR and senior leadership are working to map out additional positions in need of pay increases in order to achieve equitable compensation across the institution. Moreover, key senior curatorial positions at the BMA are endowed, making these positions minimally impacted by any changes in salaries overall.

The suggestions that the BMA's engagement with Sotheby's or that the sale of Andy Warhol's *The Last Supper* is suspect are also unfounded. The BMA firmly believes it has a fiduciary duty to maximize the proceeds from any artwork it deaccessions. BMA leadership worked in collaboration with Sotheby's experts to determine that a private sale would be the most effective format for the sale of *The Last Supper*, and that the works by Marden and Still should go to public auction. Both formats are commonplace approaches to the sale of art, and these decisions are driven by an awareness of market value, an understanding of the quality and singularity of the works themselves, and knowledge of the existing pool of prospective buyers. The BMA has worked with Sotheby's on numerous occasions, as have institutions across the United States, to great success.

Lastly, it is essential to underscore that the BMA envisioned the *Endowment for the Future* in response to the necessary and just demands that museums begin to live their missions through all phases of their day-to-day operations, moving beyond mere rhetoric towards measurable actions with measurable consequences. The BMA's deaccession provides fresh opportunity for curators to reshape the narratives told within its walls and to present a fairer and more fulsome art history. Equally, this effort acknowledges the museum's dual responsibility to create an internally equitable structure and an externally equitable and mutual relationship with its diverse publics. In Baltimore, a city whose population is 63% Black, this responsibility is particularly salient and essential to our future relevance. In our discussions about the sale of works by three well-recognized, historically anointed artists, it is critical to acknowledge the vast range of new voices that the museum will be able to share and engage through this effort.