**NEW YORK CITY (April 13 2023):** The **Hispanic Society Museum & Library** (HSM&L) is the primary institution dedicated to the preservation, study, understanding, exhibition and enjoyment of art and cultures of Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking countries and communities.

Our acclaimed exhibition - *Spain and the Hispanic World. Treasures from the Hispanic Society Museum & Library* - held at the Royal Academy in London between January 21-April 10 has closed. We now rejoice in welcoming back some of the beloved highlights of the HSM&L’s permanent collection.

In the challenging context of the ongoing strike among the personnel of the Hispanic Society, we want to express our gratitude to, and acknowledge the professionalism of our colleagues from the Royal Academy and from Masterpiece International for ensuring a professional and safe homecoming of the artworks in close collaboration with our Head of Collection, Operation and Security teams.

While the delivery of the artwork was properly handled and went smoothly as planned and expected, the Hispanic Society was disappointed to witness the presence of some staff members on strike, joined by external protesters, try to disrupt the transportation and safe delivery of the artworks. The HSM&L is concerned that confidential information such as delivery schedules and the contents of the crates carrying the works seem to have been leaked and shared. The HSM&L was further shocked to see some striking employees’ behavior, some of them having reportedly been seen drinking (alcohol) the entire afternoon, actively distracting the art handlers and offensively addressing them with false and defamatory names. We apologize to the staff of Masterpiece International and the courier from the Royal Academy for this undeserved, unworthy treatment.

While one can understand and sympathize with workers on strike, it is appalling and disturbing to see museum professionals behave in a way that could endanger the art.

The Hispanic Society has been striving to reach a fair contract for more than one year. We have come to an agreement on most items, including retroactive wage increases of 5%, guaranteed future wage increases, competitive retirement benefits including guaranteed contributions by the Society, as well as generous vacation time - up to 5 weeks based on seniority - and Paid Time Off (15 days). More recently, on April 3, we agreed to maintain free health care benefit for current employees, which was the demand of the union.

In addition, the Hispanic Society agreed to guarantee minimum salaries for all union positions, ranging from a **minimum** salary of $52,000 to a **minimum** salary of $95,000, depending on the salary grade of the position, and on par with other museums in the city.

The Hispanic Society wants to stress that, prior to 2021, benefits were unfairly allocated among the staff. Certain roles, like curators, were given expensive benefits that are unusual in the industry (such as free tuition for their children), and discriminatory to other categories, while other employees had very low income and no retirement plan at all.

Since 2021, all full-time employees have a retirement plan and health care benefits. Several employees received significant raises, while others were offered promotions and new jobs within the institution. **Eight new staff members have been hired** in various areas including curatorial, education and development.

The Hispanic Society’s management is sorry to read recent false narratives that have been picked up in the press and on social media. While the institution’s attitude has historically been to avoid escalation and find a path of reason, recent behavior of union members, who were reported harassing and/or bullying other employees, interns, and fellows, has become an object of serious concern.

The Hispanic Society – a beloved institution - has been closed long enough, failing its mission to engage with a large audience, starting with its local community. In recent years, many efforts have been made to change what was perceived as an insular, unwelcoming attitude. However, it is fair to acknowledge that this new direction encountered some resistance from a few longtime staff members. While most employees are fully embracing the vision of a more public facing organization, an active minority seems to prefer the previous situation. We hope this has no part in their role in the current disruption of the HSM&L activities.

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**ABOUT THE HISPANIC SOCIETY MUSEUM & LIBRARY**

The Hispanic Society Museum & Library (HSM&L) is the primary institution and reference library dedicated solely to the preservation, study, understanding, exhibition and enjoyment of art and cultures of Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking countries and communities. Located in Upper Manhattan in the dynamic Washington Heights neighborhood, the institution has, since its inception, remained free of charge, providing unrivaled access to the most extensive collection of Hispanic art and literature outside of Spain and Latin America.

The HSM&L’s permanent collection is unparalleled in its scope and quality, with half a million items that address nearly every aspect of cultures in Spain, Portugal and Latin America from antiquity to present day. HSM&L is unmatched in the multi-disciplinarity and broad historical and geographical extension of its art collection and library, highlighting Hispanic art and cultures’ incredible breadth as seen through its diverse religious, cultural and geographical influences. The collection includes masterworks by El Greco, Velázquez, Rodríguez Juárez, Goya, Campeche, Arrieta, Sorolla, Orozco and Tàpies; sculptures by Pedro de Mena, Luisa Roldán and Caspicara and masterpieces in all areas of the decorative arts. The collections of the Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books are among the most extensive outside Spain and the Library is available as a preeminent center for research on the history, art, and cultures of the Hispanic world. It is open to the public by appointment.

Founded in 1904 by American scholar, philanthropist and collector Archer M. Huntington, the HSM&L was established on the premise of a passion and curiosity for Hispanic and Latin American art, cultures and history. While the HSM&L is one of the most historic cultural institutions in New York City, the organization has continued to adapt and serve the local community and growing Hispanic and Latino populations in the United States at large, opening its doors to inspire, enrich and educate the public.

Under the stewardship of CEO and Director Guillaume Kientz and in the spirit of inclusivity, HSM&L makes a fervent commitment to give voice to and provide space for Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking communities and cultures. Through special exhibitions, a permanent collection, loans, education, support of living artists, public programming and research, HSM&L continues to reimagine the potential for a museum and its ability to incite greater change.