



Toledo, Ohio

24 October 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

“Deaccessioning” is defined as the process by which an artwork (or other object) is permanently removed from a museum’s collection. Proceeds received from the sale of deaccessioned artworks must be used by art museums for the acquisition of other artworks. As such, U.S. and international professional organizations have long upheld the role of deaccessioning as vital to the care of collections. Some nationally funded museums do not allow deaccessioning under any circumstances, and internationally it is not as prevalent as it is in America, where many museums are privately funded. The Toledo Museum of Art respects that there are different points of view, but American art museums have upheld the practice of judiciously managing collections.

Following these professional museum standards, TMA periodically reviews its holdings and occasionally deaccessions a select few works of art, based on what will enhance the entire Museum collection. The funds realized from deaccessioning are used solely to improve TMA’s collection through the purchase of new art, in compliance with the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) Professional Practices in Art Museums (see [here](#)), the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) Code of Ethics (see the most recent update to AAM’s guidelines [here](#)) and the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics (see [here](#)).

From Oct. 19 to Oct. 26, the Toledo Museum of Art (TMA) is deaccessioning 68 objects from its antiquities collection through Christie’s auction house in New York. All information about these objects can be found online at Christie’s website. In response to inquiries concerning this sale, it is important to underscore TMA’s collecting philosophy as well as the Museum’s commitment to ensuring clear provenance of all of the objects in its collection.

Founded in 1901, the Toledo Museum of Art holds a collection of extraordinary artworks. We are a free museum that had nearly half-a-million visitors last year and is nationally renowned for its focus on art education. Even with those distinctions, the Museum is most notable for the quality of its collection. Aside from its comprehensive collection of glass—Toledo is known in America as the Glass City—TMA has never sought to be comprehensive in its approach to collecting—the institution’s focus has been and remains on singular artworks by singular artists. Quality has always been the outstanding attribute of our collection, and the objects being sold are not of the quality of our permanent display collection; have been on display rarely;

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have not been sought out by scholars; or have not been published in recent decades. In short, these objects were not working to fulfill our mission.

We take the stewardship and integrity of our collection seriously, from acquisition to deaccession, and maintain transparency about all of our professional practices. Preserving the world's cultural heritage is of the utmost importance to collecting institutions. To that end, we publicly share our Collections Management Policy (see [here](#)) as well as our commitment to ensuring clear provenance (see [here](#)). The donors of the deaccessioned objects or their heirs have been contacted, and none have objected to the sales. And indeed, any future acquisitions made with the funds earned through deaccessioning will acknowledge the original donor in the credit line.

The guidelines of AAMD state that: "Deaccessioning is a legitimate part of the formation and care of collections and, if practiced, should be done in order to refine and improve the quality and appropriateness of the collection, the better to serve the museum's mission." The American Alliance of Museums is even more explicit: "For this [use of institutional resources] and other reasons (e.g., when items are considered redundant, are damaged beyond repair or are of poor quality), deaccessioning is both a logical and responsible collections management policy." We uphold these professional standards and do so in the service of creating an ever-better museum experience for our public and scholars alike.

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