

A Case for Supporting Seven of Connecticut's Leading Art Museums

Each year hundreds of thousands of visitors, many from all over the country and abroad, visit seven leading art museums in Connecticut – the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield; the Bruce Museum in Greenwich; the Florence Griswold Museum in Old Lyme; the Hill-Stead Museum in Farmington; the Lyman Allyn Art Museum in New London; the Mattatuck Museum in Waterbury; and the New Britain Museum of American Art in New Britain. Our seven museums offer some of the most exciting and stimulating exhibitions to be found anywhere. And, collectively, our holdings consist of art treasures of incalculable value. Located strategically through the state, our institutions wish to contribute even more to the cultural and economic vitality of our state through a new partnership with the State of Connecticut.

Our partnership seeks to build upon our already significant contributions to Connecticut's "creative" economy. We enhance the state's identity as a cultural hub, its attractiveness as a tourism destination, and the unparalleled quality of life found here. Together, these seven art museums employ 176 people who organize 87 exhibitions a year (some of which travel to other parts of the United States); 3,959 programs and 337 special events; and serve 362,463 visitors (including 59,745 students) each year. Additionally, we support the work of hundreds of living artists through exhibitions and competitions. The aggregate operating budget for these art museums is \$15,576,924, of which \$1,313,848 is devoted to marketing aimed at attracting visitors to the state who, in turn, spend millions annually. Nearly every dollar spent by our museums through their operating or capital budgets becomes sales to state businesses or income to employees. These businesses and employees, in turn, reinvest in the Connecticut economy. Our studies (see attached) show that the economic impact of these seven art museums exceeds \$25 million dollars a year for Connecticut and supports the equivalent of nearly 720 jobs throughout the State.

Given the steady, reliable impact of these seven art museums on the state economy, we are seeking an annual appropriation of \$1.5 million dollars from the State of Connecticut to be shared equally by our seven member museums. Such an appropriation will enable our institutions, both individually and collectively, to deepen the impact of what they do best – the presentation of exhibitions and educational programs designed to attract the participation of residents and visitors to Connecticut. Appropriated funds will be designated for *increased* operating expenditures on exhibitions, programs, and marketing, and, based upon the leveraged return of \$3 for every \$1 invested, promises to have an economic impact of at least three million annually.

What is most alarming to the seven of us is the decline in general operating support and tourism funding since 2009. In 2009, \$440,000 was received by the seven of us, and in 2013 in aggregate we received \$81,000. This decline has been precipitous and has adversely impacted the operations of all of our museums across the state. This comes at a time when we want to participate more vigorously in a wide variety of different

programs, from early childhood education to attracting tourists from around the country. Furthermore, over the last several years, comparable groups such as the theaters of Connecticut have achieved line item funding along with the performing art centers and almost all the other institutions of significance, except the art museums. We ask for your consideration and support as the seven art museums of Connecticut represented by our consortium are in a crisis.

Our seven art museums are among the most special "places" in Connecticut. Created by Connecticut citizens over the past century, we closely reflect the cities, towns and regions in which we operate and benefit today from the involvement of tens of thousands of residents as volunteers and members. From this position of strength, we stand ready to deepen our service to the state in new and creative ways.

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