

March 11, 2015

Environmental Committee
Legislative Office Building
Room 3200
Hartford, Connecticut

Re: HB No. 6955

Connecticut's most prominent miniaturist was Anson Dickinson. Born in Milton in 1779, he grew up in Litchfield, establishing his first studio in Hartford at the age of seventeen. Dickinson's distinguished clientele included Governor Edward Livingston (Metropolitan Museum of Art), General Jacob Brown, Washington Irving (private Connecticut collection), Sam Houston and Gilbert Stuart (New York Historical Society). The largest collection of Dickinsons is held in the Litchfield Historical Society, a magnet for scholars of the art. The Stamford Historical Society has the artist's paintbox and the most famous portrait of Dickinson. Both were lent to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for their seminal exhibition along with several pieces from Litchfield's collection.

Portrait miniatures were our portable portraits until photography. Painted on paper-thin wafers of ivory, they were set in elaborate gold cases often hand-fashioned by our most famous silversmiths including Paul Revere. In many instances, there is no other extant portrait of a celebrated colonial citizen.

Miniaturist William Verstelle saw action in the Revolutionary War as lieutenant in the Connecticut Militia. He started his artistic career by painting his fellow soldiers. He finished it by painting President and Mrs. Washington. The Connecticut Historical Society and the The Wadsworth Atheneum both have impressive collections of these Revolutionary period portraits, as does the Yale Art Gallery, which has a dedicated section in the museum specifically for the display of miniatures. Yale's miniature collections are among the most important in America.

Hartford artist Nathaniel Jocelyn, an outspoken abolitionist, made public the plight of the Armistad. Jocelyn's portrait of the Armistad's leader is in the New Haven Colony Historical Society. Additionally, he was instrumental in forming the Yale Art School. Jocelyn's brilliant miniatures are essential documents of Connecticut history.

I implore you not to tie the hands of this State's important museums and historical societies, or the collectors who support them. Allow museums to continue to display, borrow, loan and legally purchase these significant pieces of American History. And please permit collectors to continue to legally acquire authenticated items. These objects - many over 200 years old, are integral to our cultural heritage.

Finally, I must ask, why is confiscating and destroying as outlined in your bill different from Isis destroying the museum in Mosul?

A middle ground, preventing the trade of new and illegal ivory, while preserving and encouraging our heritage and history is possible.

Please add an antiques exception.

Yours sincerely,



Elle Shushan