

An Open Letter to the Trustees of the Berkshire Museum

Members of the Board of Trustees:

We send you this appeal while there is still time to stop the impending auction on November 13, on behalf of those in and beyond the Berkshires who seek to save the art.

Like you, we care deeply about the future of the Berkshire Museum, and offer these thoughts in the spirit of that shared affection and concern. We know you have the Museum's best interest at heart, and are certain you originally voted to deaccession the 40 artworks because you believed it was the best option available. But the intervening months have cast new light on the issue, and with it an opportunity to reconsider this drastic and distressing plan.

No fewer than four financial experts have established that the Museum is not in the "existential crisis" originally claimed. With the proper attention to development and creative programming, the doors will not close. The Berkshire community's bond to the artworks and the values they represent is abundantly clear. The national attention the sale has generated, much of it critical, could be turned to your favor and yield a bonanza of goodwill and necessary funding.

Zenas Crane's original concept of the Berkshire Museum as a temple and classroom of natural history and art is as relevant today as it was when the doors opened in 1903. By placing renewed emphasis and resources on its traditional role as keeper of the Berkshires' cultural memory, both history and art, the Museum can thrive as a first-class regional collection. It is not a "reboot" that is required to revive the Museum, but a vision committed to the special character and culture of Berkshire County.

You alone have the power to restore balance to the museum. Only you can heal the division the proposed sale has inflicted on our community, and reverse the harm done to the reputation of the trustees and institution we love. It lies in your power to avoid divisive legal action. We ask you to honor the objections of the Rockwell family, and heed the unanimous outcry of the museum profession over the damaging precedent the sale would set. Future generations look to you to prevent the irrevocable loss of their cultural inheritance.

Before it is too late, we implore you to stand up in conscience and duty and stop this sale. When you do, you will find many friends willing to help form a successful and sustainable strategy for the Museum's future. There is courage and wisdom in changing one's course in light of altered circumstances. We at SAVE THE ART—SAVE THE MUSEUM stand ready in our numbers to assist you to the full extent of our knowledge, expertise, and ability. We extend our hand in the spirit of dialogue, cooperation, and good faith.

Respectfully,

SAVE THE ART—SAVE THE MUSEUM

A version of this letter was sent to each member of the Berkshire Museum trustees:

Elizabeth McGraw, President
Stacey Gillis Weber, Vice President
Ethan Klepetar, Vice President
Stephen Bayne, Treasurer
Lydia S. Rosner, Secretary

Mike Addy
Jay Bikofsky
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SAVE THE ART—SAVE THE MUSEUM is a citizens group dedicated to serving and preserving the integrity of the Berkshire Museum and its collections.

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