

Letters from our readers

28 September 2013

On “Why workers must defend the Detroit Institute of Arts”

An art teacher and friend commented, “I don’t understand why this is even happening in Detroit. Art should be above the fray, art should be exempt.” Your article helps people understand why support for the arts is a political issue.

The loss of the Detroit museum would hurt art lovers everywhere because we would be deprived of Detroit’s participation in the reciprocal exchanges among museums.

I visited the Detroit Institute of Arts several years ago on a chartered bus tour from Cleveland, for an exhibition of Van Gogh portraits. The exhibit featured the DIA’s self-portrait of Van Gogh and many other portraits on loan from museums throughout the US and Europe.

Through special exhibitions, museums are windows on the international art world for the people in their home cities, displaying art works in a wider context; and “art destinations” for travelers. The imaginative possibilities for exhibition themes are endless.

Speaking as a passionate art lover and museum-goer, I like the concept of the “right to art” as a social right. I think this “right” should give the population at large a voice in how collections are developed and what types of exhibitions are sponsored and how touring programs are put together.

As funding for art museums is cut, it is disappointing to note how the touring programs are also being scaled back. Some of the best of the special exhibitions have had very limited touring schedules, or none at all.

Last year’s “Rembrandt in America” exhibition organized by the Cleveland Museum of Art, certainly deserved wider attention. It was the largest exhibit of Rembrandt paintings ever assembled in the United States. Smaller, regional museums have mounted some excellent exhibits, e.g., Kent State University Museum’s “On the Home Front: Civil War Fashions

and Domestic Life,” which did not tour anywhere outside Kent, Ohio.

The dazzling exhibition, “Impressionism, Fashion and Modernity” which will close September 29 at the Art Institute of Chicago, had only one other US venue: New York City. Many paintings are on loan from the Orsay Museum in Paris. Attending on the opening day in Chicago, I have seldom seen a more breathless and excited audience.

As a supporter of the Snow Leopard Trust, I was horrified at the thoughtless remarks about zoo animals as quoted from the *Detroit Free Press*. To speak of the “market value” of snow leopards is the vulgar language of poachers who kill these endangered animals for their valuable pelts, and are the biggest threat to snow leopard survival.

“Poachers” is the right word for the whole ugly lot of financial managers, bankers, bondholders, politicians, journalists, union bureaucrats and auctioneers who are descending upon the Detroit Institute of Arts. These creatures are the ones who should be locked up in the zoo!

Lesley J
Ohio, USA

23 September 2013

On “Minnesota Orchestra lockout approaches one year”

Thank you for covering this story. The *Star and Tribune* newspaper in Minneapolis, whose CEO sits on the Minnesota Orchestra board, reported that the free concert had 4,000 or more in attendance. The park police put that number at almost double (7,500) Also, the banks involved are US Bank and Wells Fargo. Richard Davis is CEO of US Bank and is one of the “masterminds” behind this destruction.

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