



April 30, 2014

Monterey Museum of Art

Stakeholders' Update from Board of Trustees President Melissa Burnett

Meeting held March 20, 2014 at the Monterey Museum of Art—La Mirada

I want to share some updates on what has been happening since our annual meeting last summer. Much has changed since then, as a reflection of our ongoing commitment to long-term feasibility and cultural and community relevance. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I am excited to share our progress, and to seek your insight on further work the organization faces.

One of the most obvious changes we have made at the Museum is in the hiring of our Executive Director, Dr. Charlotte Eyerman, last October. For those of you who haven't had a chance to meet Dr. Eyerman, I encourage you to spend a little extra time with her at any of the numerous upcoming events. Dr. Eyerman comes to Monterey with over twenty years of success in museums, academia, and the private sector, including experience as director, curator, strategist, and project manager. As part of the search for a new director to pursue the revised vision, mission, and strategies adopted by the Board of Trustees in 2012, we identified several priorities for the Executive Director:

- Gain an understanding of the Museum by learning its history and culture, mission and vision, education and public programs,

- operations and constituents, and by understanding its base of support and its potential;
- Strengthen the Museum’s cultural leadership in the community by reaching out and developing strong collaborative relationships;
  - Assess the Museum’s strengths and utilize those to produce a revitalized, coherent set of public programs designed to build audience;
  - Critically review the operations, facilities and collection; with the Board, embark on a plan to evolve the support required to strengthen the Museum.

Dr. Eyerman offers remarks in response to these priorities, and to reflect upon the direction she anticipates as a result of this type of assessment and review:

*I started my role in October having studied the organization, the collections, exhibitions and programs as a candidate and took the position with a very clear sense of the challenges and rewards of leading the Monterey Museum of Art.*

*Having lived and worked here for nearly six months, I now have a much deeper understanding of the Museum, and our diverse and exciting community. My family and I have made a commitment to establishing our life here, and are very happy to be here.*

*From the start, I have, with the Board’s guidance and involvement, met a broad array of cultural and civic leaders in Monterey County. I have also gotten to know the Museum’s core supporters—individual donors, foundations, corporate partners, and of course, the broad array of Museum members. While the Board set up my initial few months of meetings, I am now pursuing follow-up meetings and making connections with organizations and individuals with whom the Museum can pursue collaborative relationships and partnerships.*

*Since my arrival, I have been working with staff to assess all aspects of the Museum’s operations. In preparation for a Board Retreat in January, we gathered metrics on the Museum’s finances, collections, facilities, attendance, membership, and human resources. The Board was presented with a 360-view of where we are, with recommendations about how to move forward, with the big-picture strategies in mind. My work with staff consistently emphasizes*

*alignment with mission in the work we do, with an eye to working together more efficiently and strategically. From the metrics, all departments are looking at key priorities moving forward. In curatorial, the focus is now on studying the permanent collection (much of which is not catalogued). Accordingly, we will do fewer exhibitions and gallery rotations annually, and will offer more programming in relation to substantive, high-quality exhibitions with longer runs. We will maintain a balance of historical and contemporary exhibitions and permanent collection galleries.*

*We are also addressing processes and practices to address ways to improve our performance—including a review of all vendor relationships to ensure that we use our financial resources as responsibly as possible, and to create a more effective work environment (for example, we have chronic deficiencies in IT that are being addressed). In the meantime, we have made and continue to make upgrades to our website and social media sites, with continuing efforts to make smart and effective use of marketing resources to reach key audiences. As a member of the “Monterey Experience” social media initiative (supported by the Community Foundation for Monterey County and the Monterey Bay Aquarium), we are seeing measurable results, and are increasing the Museum’s visibility through other means, as well.*

*Some of these tactical changes address the strategic goals directly, others were about eliminating unnecessary costs (such as getting out of paid storage units; requesting better service and more competitive rates from vendors). One big change was to move away from outsourced Security services to new in-house positions that combine the gallery guard function with a more visitor-friendly Gallery Guide position—personnel on staff with art backgrounds who also provide interpretation and educational content. Our consulting HR professional has been instrumental in encouraging us to invest more in full-time staff and we are looking at ways to build staff within our means. I have invested in Professional Development opportunities for all Senior Staff and some of their direct reports (conferences, professional memberships, and training courses), which they had not previously received.*

*There have been some crucial vacancies over the past year, notably in Education. In December, we posted the Director for Education and Community Partnerships position. From a pool of 60 applicants, we have identified strong, exceptionally qualified finalists and are in the*

*end stages of interviewing. I expect that we will make the appointment soon. The professional who joins us in this capacity will be a key member of the team to advance our already robust collaborative initiatives, and will bring cohesion and focus to our Educational and public engagement activities.*

*Another mantra shared with the staff is that our goal is to connect people with art. We have made great strides in creating a visitor-centric culture, and have worked hard to make adjustments to our hours and program offerings that stress our commitment to making the Museum accessible to a variety of audiences: new hours that include being open on Sundays and Mondays, with evening hours at La Mirada on Thursdays. We also introduced a robust schedule of interdisciplinary programs on Thursday evenings in connection with the stellar Karsh and Adams exhibitions. The response has been very positive and we see significant increases in attendance with the programs. Other visitor-friendly initiatives, aimed at attracting new audiences and enlivening attendance were introduced last month: complimentary membership to full-time college students and active military, and free admission to all under 18.*

*The emphasis on La Mirada is the result of an assessment of facilities and recognition that its galleries are superior for experiencing works of art. Given the resources it consumes, we are best served by programming exhibitions there (La Mirada has museum-level HVAC, while Pacific Street does not). This shift reflects the stated priority of the Board for the Museum to start a process of being in one facility. A 1, 3, and 5 year outline to achieve that strategic goal is in development. We will focus on La Mirada as a primary venue for the display of art, particularly after the close of the summer exhibitions at Pacific Street in the Fall, and are working to address its limitations (parking most notably) while we chart the course forward. A rigorous review of short-term capital upgrades at La Mirada is underway, with a view to a much deeper analysis of its potential as we look to 2019 and beyond. For the upcoming fiscal year, we will maintain a presence at Pacific Street as an educational and community-gathering space, with some permanent collection works on view. And within the month, here great masterpieces from our early California paintings collection will come out of storage to go on display in the Drawing Room.*

*Thank you.*

Additionally, the Board endorsed the following positions in advance of the start of Dr. Eyerman's tenure last October:

- The greatest potential for improving our immediate financial forecast lies in upper level membership—both in reengaging lapsed members, and in increasing giving levels;
- The success of Art in Bloom is essential in meeting our income projections;
- There is a need for improving the organizational structure, especially in guiding external affairs and communication;
- Multiple collaborative efforts have been launched, and will be realized under the new leadership. These should be nurtured, built and expanded upon, and assessed for future opportunities;
- The programmatic balance between exhibiting our permanent collection (primarily early 20<sup>th</sup> century) and contemporary art must be carefully managed;
- The Board of Trustees is open and supportive to the idea of exploring the facilities plan of the organization.

## FINANCES

One of the keys to long-term feasibility is sound fiscal policy and practice. Over the past several years, the Board has made this a priority in our oversight, and has made great strides in anticipating fluctuations and adjusting for concerns. As recently as a year ago, we faced income shortfalls of nearly \$400k. Through the hard work of our Financial staff, our Treasurer, and our Development Committee, we were able to close this gap significantly, and reduce the impact by over half. In budgeting for the 2013/2014 fiscal calendar, the Board and staff presented a very prudent plan for expenses, reflecting the changing management and personnel, and the possibility for sluggish income. We are happy to report that as of February 2014, we are projected to be cash positive at the end of this fiscal year—it is

a great relief to find our financial health much improved. Much of this is due to renewed giving from lapsed members, as well as favorable returns from our endowed funds. Yet there is much work to be done on the development front, especially as it relates to our Corporate Sponsors. As we develop a broader range of benefits for our Corporate Sponsors, it is exciting to think about new ways we might build upon our recent successes, such as our collaboration with Fidelity Investments. In the words of our Chief Financial Officer, Trustee Sandor Nagy, when speaking about our operational finances, “a message of cautious optimism is appropriate.”

In addition to the daily financial health, the Finance Committee was reinstated to review and oversee our financial policies and investment strategies. Chaired by Bill Carter, CFP, of Fidelity Investments, this impressive group of individuals has worked vigorously to review best practices of nonprofit organizations across the country in financial management, and is presently finalizing an Investment Policy Strategy for the Board’s review in May. This work, in conjunction with the work of the Development Committee under the leadership of Chair Marilyn Timoney, will explore ways to maximize the effectiveness of our endowment in supporting the Museum’s basic operations. With the guidance of Giff Lehman, CFP, on the Development Committee, the Museum will be renewing its Legacy Society for individuals who make commitments to the Museum in their estate planning. This has proven to be an important component to a robust nonprofit organization, and one that was sorely missing as an option in an effort to **involve and motivate all supporters in expansion, improvement, and growth of the museum.**

## ART IN BLOOM

Building on the success of last year’s Art in Bloom celebration, the Museum

will once again host the multi-day event, adding a fifth day of programming and an off-site gala. For those of you unfamiliar, the event tasks twenty floral designers with creating a floral design in interpretation of a work of art in the upcoming exhibition, *SHIFT, Five Decades of Contemporary California Painting from the collections of the Monterey Museum of Art and the Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula*. It is the continued belief that this sort of event has the broad appeal that enables us to advance our mission of **expanding a passion for the visual arts**. With Mona Zander returning as the honorary chair and Trustees Ronda Eubanks and Stefanie Skinner as co-chairs, the Art in Bloom Gala will be the key fundraising event for the Museum this year, and sponsorship support has been tremendous. At this time, staff is in the midst of finalizing the schedule for the event, and planning for the incredible influx of visitors to La Mirada for the event, as last year we had over 1500 visitors during the event. We hope to see all of our members participate through out the event, May 1-5.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE and EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

The need for improving the organizational structure—particularly that of external communications—continues, and has actually increased as we have increased our outreach in the community. While Dr. Eyerman has been addressing these issues at the staff level, the Board has committed to making every introduction of our new leadership into the community. This has led to additional opportunities for collaboration, but has also challenged our staff in finding meaningful responses that support the Museum’s mission, and a consistent platform for evaluating their success. The strategy for **developing insights for action by assessing exhibitions and programs** is still thriving, but there is also an appreciation that new programs can require refined metrics.

Under Dr. Eyerman's leadership, there are new staff roles and responsibilities inherent in revising the operational structure, and we must carefully navigate the ways in which we continue to engage our volunteers. The Docents have been very patient through this transition, and are ready to be an active part of the educational programming that we anticipate under the leadership of a new Director of Education and Community Partnerships, a position we are working to fill before summer.

### COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

There have been numerous collaborative events since the start of the fiscal year in July, as part of the Museum's strategy of **strengthening cultural leadership in the community and embracing collaborative efforts**. Last September, we cohosted the opening night reception for Art in the Adobes with a performance by I Cantori di Carmel choir at La Mirada. We have had several engagements with Youth Music Monterey in promoting their youth orchestras and performers. All of these musically based programs led one of our supporters, Susan Meister, to volunteer as our impresario, navigating the various organizations and opportunities to collaborate. With her, we have developed a calendar of quarterly events for 2014.

We also continue to engage two of our more transient constituencies—the university and military communities. While Dr. Eyerman has developed events planned for these groups, at the Board level we have been seeking ways to ensure their voices are represented at the policy level of decision-making. Board of Trustees Chair of the Governance and Nominating Committee and Board Secretary Ronda Eubanks has been actively pursuing a position for a military representative on the Board, with the hope that this

connection could help the Museum respond to the needs of our military families. Our college communities continue to be a terrific resource in identifying the future talent of museum professionals, while injecting energy and curiosity into our programs.

## PROGRAMMATIC BALANCE

As stated by the Board, the programmatic balance between exhibiting our permanent collection of primarily early 20<sup>th</sup> century art and contemporary art must be carefully managed. Dr. Eyerman and Chief Curator Karen Hendon have taken that direction and brought back to Exhibitions and Acquisitions Committee a calendar that reflects the fluid relationship between the two interest areas. This winter we presented two historic photography exhibitions at La Mirada with the work of Yousuf Karsh and Ansel Adams, paired with exhibitions of working artists David Ligare and Bob Kolbrener's work on display at Pacific Street, with the intent to **inspire the appreciation of the evolving California artistic legacy**. This spring, La Mirada will be hung with paintings representing the last 50 years of painting in California, while we welcome the Jules Tavernier and Monterey Now exhibitions at Pacific Street. And in the spirit of balancing our programming between historic works and contemporary artists, the Board recently approved an Armin Hansen exhibition for 2015. We believe this balance critical in our **cultivation of audiences**, and we are committed to presenting **exhibitions of the highest quality and educational value**.

## FACILITIES PLAN

As Dr. Eyerman referenced, she has directed her staff to make a thorough and careful review of our facilities and our holdings. We were presented with an assessment that made clear that running two facilities with

duplicative functions made little financial sense, and we have thus begun developing a short-term and long-term plan for addressing this glaring issue. In our research of the problem, it was pointed out that the two previous strategic plans—from 2007 and from 2002—had pointed out the need to address our facilities, and had made it a priority for the next generation of leadership. The current Board has recognized the immediate need to respond to the prior calls for action, and has made it a priority to realize the steps necessary for long-term viability and prosperity.

As you might expect, there are many obstacles we face in addressing this challenge. At La Mirada, there have been thousands of square feet of building space that have been underutilized as gallery spaces befitting a museum. As Dr. Eyerman stated, the Drawing Room—one of our most prominent spaces in the existing layout of the building—will soon showcase some of our most iconic paintings. It is the hope of the Board that through this process we will have a superior gallery space dedicated to our early California paintings. This Museum has exquisite works of art in its permanent collection, and they deserve to be prominently and reliably on display, for all the visitors of Monterey Bay to experience.

We have also directed Dr. Eyerman and her staff to further document all of the furnishings and décor of the former Work residence (the majority of which are not accessioned in the Museum's collection), in anticipation that those spaces will be better incorporated into the daily function of the Museum. Presently, we cannot even enter that part of the building, due to some necessary upgrades. As an institution that serves the public, it is unconscionable to have spaces that are under-utilized to this extent, and we are working hard to explore our options in remedying the situation. We

hope that in the near future we will find a solution that allows for both access and functionality in the two floors of space that we own and operate.

This June, the Board anticipates a thorough review of all of staff's findings and recommendations on the short- and long-term facilities plan.

Additionally, we plan to hear from the leadership of the City of Monterey, as any municipality is a necessary partner in cementing the cultural fixture of a thriving art museum. I invite you all to attend the annual meeting in June, to hear further updates on the direction of this great Museum.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. A. M. Burnett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Melissa" and last name "Burnett" clearly legible.

Melissa Burnett  
President  
Board of Trustees