

Efforts to talk to the museum, questions asked and the (non)responses.

1. Email to Randy Oostra, re: TAA show, my meeting with the new director, Adam Levine
2. Four letters to the board of directors — no response
3. Letter canceling our museum membership — the museum's response
4. Email asking for the list of 57 paintings going to New Zealand and Adam Levine's response

Subject: about the Museum and the artists of Toledo

To: "Oostra, Randy" <Randy.Oostra@ProMedica.org>

Date: 3/22/21

Dear Mr. Oostra,

Thank you for what you do for the museum and for Toledo.

I want to show you this website, <http://artistsoftoledo.com>, which is all about the historic artists in Toledo and the relationship of Toledo artists to the Toledo Museum of Art.

Toledo's artists read the recently publicized 5-year plan for the museum, which seems to feature community involvement. Please see the recent post asking, will you bring our Toledo Area Artists Exhibition back? <http://artistsoftoledo.com/2021/03/14/critique-of-museum/>

Also, we are aware that the Ward and Mariam Canaday house, Inlands, has been donated to the Museum. We wonder what your plans are for the house. Please see this page for the history of this house, and why it is so important to the history of Toledo. <http://artistsoftoledo.com/the-normandy-country-house-and-the-canadays/>

To tell you about myself, I was born and raised in Toledo. I really benefited from the museum's fine children's Saturday classes, and in college, the Toledo Museum of Art School of Design. Because of these strong beginnings, I moved to New York in 1981 and made a name for myself in the field of photography. I'm known for my distinctive baby photos which grace the covers of over 200 magazines including 18 *Time* and *Newsweeks*. I am the author of 12 books of babies (one of which is a popular book in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, given to 100,000 babies a year.) My photos are in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Contemporary Photography. I returned to Toledo in 2009, and I give back to the community through my website, artistsoftoledo.com.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Penny Gentieu

Subject: Re: about the Museum and the artists of Toledo

From: "Oostra, Randy" <Randy.Oostra@ProMedica.org>

Date: 3/29/21

Good afternoon Penny!

Sorry I didn't get back to you sooner!

Thank you for sharing your thoughts relative to TMA, the Toledo Area Artists exhibition, etc.!

Really appreciate your passion around local artists and the plans of the TMA.

Let me follow up with Adam and have someone give you a call!

Have a great day, Randy

My meeting with Adam Levine May 2021, that was arranged through the board of directors chairman, Randy Oostra, concerned the lack of art community involvement since the museum stopped the century-old Toledo Area Artists Exhibit in 2014. I was hoping they would bring it back, as it was an important tradition for the community. In response to a Blade article about the museum, I emailed the board, and the chairman, Mr. Oostra responded with great enthusiasm. He set up a meeting for me to meet with Adam Levine, which took place two months later. Also present was Rhonda Sewell, the newly hired "Belonging and Community Engagement Director." They told me that they were doing something even better for the local artists — they were bringing back one-person local artist shows, and will do them in a new gallery they were renovating that would be called the Robert Savage Community Gallery, named after the donor, Robert Savage. The museum used to have monthly solo shows for local artists for several decades before they stopped them in 1970. I felt, how great it would be if those shows would happen again, as they would be valuable and offer career-changing opportunities for local artists. Adam Levine said maybe sometime in the future it would be possible to bring back the TAA show but he couldn't do it yet because the exhibition schedule and Canada Gallery was already filled up until 2025.

They said it would take a few months due to the price of lumber, due to the pandemic. But they could have at least announced to the community their promised plans! Ten months later, there had still been no word about it. I remained hopeful for some announcement and took them for their word.

I sent this email to Adam and Rhonda on April 6, 2022:

Subject: May Show Season

Date: 04/06/2022 11:19AM

To: ALevine@toledomuseum.org, rsewell@toledomuseum.org

Dear Adam and Rhonda,

I just posted a new-found artist, Isaac Paul Rader, on artistsoftoledo.com — I thought you might be interested. At age 14, he won top prize in the TAA show, and went on to have quite a career as an artist. Just an example of the missed opportunities for young Toledo artists without the museum's annual area artists show. It means something to be shown at the Toledo Museum of Art — it can really change one's life!

It's exciting to see the changes at the museum — how is the Community Gallery coming along?

All the best,
Penny Gentieu

I received no response to my email.

Then two days later, the deaccession of three French Impressionist paintings was announced by museum. I received this mass email from Adam Levine:

Important announcement from The Toledo Museum of Art

From: "The Toledo Museum of Art" <artmail@toledomuseum.org>

Date: 04/08/2022 10:44AM

Dear TMA Supporters,

The Toledo Museum of Art (TMA) is distinguished by the quality of its collection — we are known the world over for having artworks of singular aesthetic merit. As Edward Drummond Libbey put it in 1912: “Let the multitudinous array of the mediocre be relegated to the past and in its place be found the highest quality, the best examples and the recognition of only those thoughts which will stand for all time.”

It should come as no surprise then, given the rigorous pursuit of quality Edward Drummond Libbey imagined for our institution, that both he and his wife, Florence Scott, made expressly clear in their wills that artworks purchased with funds left by them may be sold so long as the proceeds are used to purchase other artworks. The Libbeys imagined TMA as an organization that would consistently upgrade its holdings, and I write to you **today** about a transformative deaccessioning effort currently being undertaken by your museum.

Deaccessioning refers to the practice of removing artworks from the permanent collection, usually to sell them. Artworks are deaccessioned only following rigorous review. Many of you have supported us for decades, and you know that deaccessioning has been a routine part of TMA's history and collecting practice. Indeed, thoughtful deaccessioning is considered normal and proper collections care by the American Alliance of Museums, the Association of Art Museum Directors and the International Council of Museums.

At Sotheby's May *Impressionist & Modern Evening Auction*, the Toledo Museum of Art will undertake its next deaccessioning campaign. TMA will sell three artworks: Paul Cézanne's *Clairière* (**The Glade**); Henri Matisse's *Fleurs* (**Flowers**); and Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Nu s'essuyant* (**The Bather**). After review by outside experts, our curators, me, the Art Committee, and the unanimous endorsement of our Board, we determined that the three artists who made these works were better-represented by other examples in TMA's collection. The Toledo Museum of Art has never sought to have multiple examples by the same artist—fewer than 11% of the

artists in our collection are represented by two or more paintings; masterpieces by Cézanne, Matisse, and Renoir will remain regularly on view on our walls.

The three paintings being sold will provide the Museum with more than \$40 million, greater than the total corpus of the current Libbey Funds supporting our art purchases. We will use these proceeds to create a new acquisition endowment, effectively doubling the Libbey Funds and leveling up of our ability, in perpetuity, to broaden our collection with the highest quality works of art. In this deaccessioning effort, you can see, we are following the Libbey's example in more ways than one.

These expanded funds will allow us to diversify our collection, seeking beauty without bias. Quality is the hallmark of TMA's collection, and quality does not discriminate. There are whole cultures, chronologies, and geographies not represented in our collection; there are demographics that are under-represented; and in all the foregoing cases, there are exceptional artworks that can help us tell a truly global art history. Many of have seen what this can look like in our reinstalled Cloister with the integration of non-European material from the Middle Ages; the proceeds from this sale will accelerate our ability to tell stories like those featured in the Cloister, helping us advance our vision of becoming the model museum in this country for our evolved commitment to quality and our authentic culture of belonging.

Thank you for your ongoing support. The future is exciting at your Toledo Museum of Art.

Sincerely,
Adam Levine

On April 22, I wrote a blog post, <https://artistsoftoledo.com/2022/04/22/goodbye-matisse-renoir-and-cezanne/>, and sent it to the board members. I got an immediate response from a board member, Dr. Durrant, the head of the Toledo Public School System, thanking me for the history. The next morning I got an email from Adam Levine that he cc'd to the others, saying that I should have talked to him first, that his door is always open, that didn't we have a good meeting in the past, that he would have explained to me about Mrs. Kelvy before I made it public. What would he ever have told me about Mrs. McKelvy that would justify the sale of her painting? It was an attempt to censor me.

About Mrs. McKelvy's collection: "She always considered that one day her collection would be the heritage of all of us in this community." – Otto Wittmann, Director, 1964

The museum's collection, a gift from the past, is the cultural heritage of the people of Toledo. It should be cared for, not sold. Stewardship is the promise that what one generation builds, the next will care for and carry forward.

GOODBYE MATISSE RENOIR AND CÉZANNE

A tribute to the Mrs. McKelvys of the Toledo Museum of Art
From the introduction of The Collection of Mrs. C. Lockhart McKelvy
Written by Otto Wittmann, Director, Toledo Museum of Art, 1964

Margaret Gosline McKelvy was one of Toledo's great benefactors, yet she was so modest and so reticent that few knew all that she did for the community in which she lived. Her joyous and lively interest in the arts and people expressed itself in two ways that profoundly affected this community through its Art Museum. Her father, William A. Gosline, Jr., who was President of the Museum from 1934 to 1947, had taught her to love and collect art. She had the courage to acquire only works of art she liked and always considered that one day her collection would be the heritage of all of us in this community. Her acquisitions were planned to supplement the collections of the Art Museum yet they remain a very personal expression of her strong and sure taste. Her collection will strengthen and enrich the Art Museum, giving pleasure to all who visit it.

Mrs. McKelvy liked young people and helped many to obtain the education necessary to pursue a useful life. In the arts she gave scholarships to promising young artists, so that they could become technically proficient. Many became art teachers, and are now benefiting countless children through their teaching. With typical modesty, Mrs. McKelvy gave these scholarships either through the Museum, as Gosline Scholarships, honoring her father, or through the Toledo Board of Education, as Gilmartin Scholarships, honoring Elizabeth C. Gilmartin, former Supervisor of Art Education in Toledo's public schools. Few knew the name of the donor.

Mrs. McKelvy was a lifelong resident of our community, served on the boards of many charitable institutions in addition to being a Trustee of this Museum. The delightful and personal collection of works of art given to the Museum by Mrs. McKelvy is recorded in this catalogue. Her pictures and objects will give pleasure to many. Her generous and lighthearted spirit will live on in these works of art and in the hearts of all those whom she helped, and who are now helping others to learn from and enjoy the arts.

A collection of valuable French Impressionism and other French art made from a woman's point of view, Mrs. McKelvy used her critical feminine eye to collect art with the intention of giving it to the Toledo Museum of Art. And now the museum is selling her Renoir.

Check out Mrs. McKelvy's bequeathed collection that was published in this booklet by the Toledo Museum of Art in 1964: [The Collection of Mrs. C. Lockhart McKelvy \(link\)](#)

Shown is a UPI article about the museum's 1990 Impressionism show, which got the second highest attendance of any show in the history of the Toledo Museum of Art. But they are going to sell three of these most popular paintings for a 12th century object from Southeast Asia, perhaps, according to the museum's Brand Strategy Director, Gary Gonya.

The Great Art Heist of 2022

Goodbye, Matisse, Renoir, and Cézanne. The new director of the Toledo Museum of Art, Adam Levine, tells us that you are no good for the museum anymore, that we have too many of you, that you are not even that good, that you don't serve the community fairly, even though you are so popular, that people go to see you first when they visit the museum, and 6,700 people came to see you in the Impressionism show on the Saturday after Thanksgiving one year.

Matisse, Renoir, and Cézanne brought the community together. The Matisse, Renoir, and Cézanne are great works of art that the Toledo community loved and made us proud of our Toledo Museum of Art. They are part of the fiber of the museum that is us, the diverse and artistic Toledo community that makes up the Toledo Museum of Art.

LeMaxie Glover at work, Blade photo, courtesy of Karen Glover

Mrs. Margaret McKelvy, LeMaxie Glover's benefactor, bequeathed The Bather by Pierre Auguste Renoir to the Toledo Museum of Art. It was part of her curated personal collection of French art.

"She always considered that one day her collection would be the heritage of all of us in this community." – Otto Wittmann, Director, 1964

And now they are getting rid of a major painting from her collection under the guise of diversity.

Could it be that the new museum director is using us, making half of us feel ashamed that we have so much French and European art, and planting the seed that the other half needs to question whether or not French and European art really speaks to them, as if it should only speak to people of French and European descent? Could it be that it is the director who cannot relate to the art in our art museum, since his expertise is in ancient art, anthropology, and mathematics?

If it were not for Mrs. McKelvy's generous support of LeMaxie Glover, our local art community would not be as diverse as it is today. Our museum has always been progressive and welcoming to every person in this community, no matter what ones' personal heritage.

LeMaxie Glover was influenced by the impressionistic work of Renoir, as were many art students in Toledo. LeMaxie Glover learned his craft and his art at the Toledo Museum of Art School of Design, and Mrs. McKelvy gave him a scholarship to Cranbrook Academy of Art. McKelvy was an important patron of Glover's. In return, LeMaxie Glover was not only one of Toledo's best sculptors, but he also served unselfishly as an art teacher at Woodward and Scott High Schools for many years, helping generations of Toledo youth appreciate and create art.

Pugilist, LeMaxie Glover 1967, terra cotta. Collection of Karen Glover. Photo by Penny Gentieu

As if they need to sell our masterpieces in order to buy more art, anyway.

It makes a good story in *Art News*.

The museum can buy more diverse art without selling their French Impressionist masterpieces, with the \$4 million that they can spend on art every year from the income of the Libbey endowment alone. Many Toledoans treasure the masterpieces in our museum. Selling off these paintings to get a quick \$40 million to buy “diverse” art (with their eye on a 12th century object from Southeast Asia) is foolish. They could do a fundraiser. The museum curators often add one hundred or more artworks each year. Do they really have sell our venerable, valuable French Impressionist masterpieces from important collections to buy more art? They will be losing the support of the bequeathing community.

Perhaps in the future, donors should loan, instead of bequeath their great works of art to the museum, so when a new director comes along and wants to deaccession it, the artwork can be given to another museum that might appreciate it, without the first museum getting to cash it in. I wonder how Mrs. McKelvy’s heirs feel about the museum’s deaccessioning of her Renoir. At least if it’s going to be monetized, Mrs. McKelvy’s many descendants should benefit, not the new museum director who is actively diminishing her legacy and erasing the museum’s rich history.

In his April 8 letter to museum members about the sale of the three paintings, Adam Levine went into detail about the Libbey Endowment Fund but didn’t even mention Mrs. McKelvy, whose Renoir was given directly by her, and not bought with the funds of the Libbey Endowment, as were the other two paintings.

It must be a very touchy subject these days among Toledo’s wealthy patrons who are thinking about bequeathing art. Because the artwork is wanted today, but “get it the hell out of here” tomorrow, as their memory will be. (That is, depending on the whim of the new museum directors, who are not Toledoans, and will probably be getting the hell out of here as soon as they can, too. Lately, since 2005 or so, directors of the Toledo Museum of Art tend stay around for only seven years.)

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

OPEN LETTER TO THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART TRUSTEES

April 29, 2022

Dear Honorable Trustees of the Toledo Museum of Art:

What are you doing to our museum? As members and visitors, you now racially profile us by zip code and categorize us by age. Our art is profiled through subjective categorization with your study determining that “a collections audit indicated the greatest imbalances exist across gender, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, nationality and geography, and material/medium.”

Please explain how you determine the sexual orientation of a painting? If you did another audit to look into the sexual preferences of the artists that are already in the museum, I'm sure you would find a lot of diversity.

A few decades ago, the museum stopped doing their great Saturday classes for about 2,500 Toledo public school children, a very diverse group by the way, and then wondered why young people were not coming to the museum. And so they started a 24-47 membership category. Short lived because the members got older. So they switched their focus from age to race.

So many categories, and statistics show an imbalance, so you deaccession our best paintings and use them as currency. Fast and easy money when you sell the famous ones. Why don't you do a fundraiser instead? Or are you just trying to make a point at the expense of our valuable French Impressionist paintings?

Perhaps you don't appreciate the gifts the museum has been given because you didn't have to pay for them. And after a great donor and supporter of black, white, and even female local artists, such as Mrs. C. Lockhart McKelvy is dead, say 50 years or so, you don't need to remember her, either. In fact, why bother remembering the 110th anniversary of the opening of the new building, because it fell on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day this year, a day which you opened the museum on a Monday, for maybe the first time ever. The museum's anniversary was not in the program; it was not to be remembered or embraced, it could not be part of the communal memory. It somehow was a conflict of interest, you couldn't figure out how to honor the museum on Martin Luther King Day, as if they can't go together. So fervent you are to push away your history, because it's just too white, like the building that you apologize for being so off-putting.

Somehow, a press release was leaked to a TV station, who did announce the museum's anniversary that day. But it seems you made sure that no one who worked at the museum that day knew, or let on that they knew, that little fact, in the museum's effort to promote "diversity." (I was there that day, and I asked about their anniversary, and nobody knew.) So our history gets pushed down the memory hole. We are told that we need a realignment. We need "unconscious bias training" and experts are brought in. We need to sell our masterpieces because, face it, they are just too white. Too French!

But isn't all of this just overcompensation for Director Adam Levine's infamous George Floyd memo mistake? Could it be that Levine is running amok and that we are just too nice to say, hey, stop it! I think it's obvious to many that this wild publicity stunt that draws world attention to Adam Levine is a stepping stone for his next position, and that we will be left with a museum collection that doesn't actually speak to our community or reflect the museum's own rich history.

We just had a director whose program was visual literacy — how to look at art. And now we have a director who tells us what art we should be relating to, according to our genetics and personal heritage. Wow! He's telling us that if you are black, you shouldn't relate to our French Impressionist paintings, since they were done by white European men. Even though the Impressionist movement was such a historical artistic break-through, and has led to other important movements, and that these paintings are so accessible and have influenced all kinds of artists regardless of the color of their skin.

Unfortunately for Levine's attempt to imply that somehow the museum is not inclusive and diverse is the overwhelming proof of the museum's longstanding history of inclusion and diversity.

Adam Levine is using us like an anthropology project, and he's applying some heady mathematics. Not to mention psychology, writing this to us in his April 8 announcement of the deaccessioning: "As Edward Drummond Libbey put it in 1912: 'Let the multitudinous array of the mediocre be relegated to the past and in its place be found the highest quality, the best examples and the recognition of only those thoughts which will stand for all time.'"

As if our three beloved, popular, and very valuable, paintings, that until very recently hung on the walls, paintings that people came to see, are being deaccessioned because they are mediocre. Yet they will bring \$62 million. And Toledoans are so nice, letting Adam Levine remake the museum because of ethnic and sexual orientation results from an audit (to draw attention away from his memo mistake). He conveniently erases our progressive and inclusive history, projecting a sense of shame on us for having our magnificent French Impressionist collection, which he projects on the museum itself. As if the museum cannot buy art fast enough to make up for the so-called diversity inequities. But actually that has been what the museum has been doing for the past many years, if you look at the new art and the shows. There have been ethnically diverse shows covering the world since the beginnings of the museum.

We were always taught to only buy art that we love. It takes courage, as Otto Wittmann said of Mrs. McKelvy's collection. But today, the museum seems to have forgotten that principle. Instead, they do audits and make graphs; they profile and compartmentalize. They tell us what to like on the basis of our background or age or sexual orientation, that certain art should speak to us when other art should not. Instead of bringing us together, they pull us apart, and needless to say, love of art doesn't have anything to do with it.

Adam Levine should not be selling off our three French Impressionist masterpieces by MATISSE, RENOIR, AND CÉZANNE to raise even more money in the name of diversity when we just had a major fundraiser in 2017 that brought in \$43 million, not to mention the numerous endowments the museum already has for buying art, and the Art Ambassadors, the Georgia Welles Apollo Society, and the Libbey Circle who also buy new art.

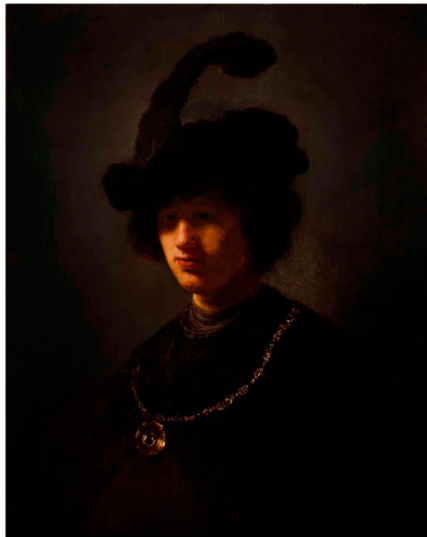
Let's save these three great French Impressionist paintings. Let's not allow our great collections to be used by the director to get attention in the art world, to make his statement – all in the name of damage control. Our museum is already inclusive and diverse and it does not need to be rebranded.

Please do what the Baltimore Museum of Art Trustees did exactly 18 months ago, on October 28, 2020. Take these paintings off of the auction block.

Respectfully,
Artists of Toledo

One of the several comments on this blog post of the letter:

The first place I go when I arrive at the museum is to see our incredible impressionist paintings. Other than my own home, that gallery is my favorite place in the city. Toledo has a bad reputation with people that don't know much about our city. When I tell people from other cities and countries about the wonderful things Toledo has to offer, bragging about our world class museum is the first thing I speak of. And the first thing I tell them about the museum is about our impressionist collection. I love name dropping the artists in that collection. I love telling them about specific pieces of art and watching their faces awaken with surprise to find out we are blessed with such incredible works. After telling them of specific pieces, such as The Bather, I've had people that never wanted to step foot in Toledo drive for five hours just to see it!



REMBRANDT PAINTNGS IN THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART COLLECTION



VAN GOGH PAINTNGS IN THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART COLLECTION

QUESTIONS FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

June 11, 2022

“The Toledo Museum of Art has never sought to have multiple examples by the same artist,” Adam Levine told museum supporters as to why the museum deaccessioned three paintings by Cézanne, Matisse and Renoir in April 2022. Above are two examples of what the Museum has two of: two Rembrandts and two Van Goghs.*

Questions about the deaccession of our Cézanne, Matisse, and Renoir paintings from the museum’s collection

To rationalize the deaccession of the paintings by Cézanne, Matisse and Renoir, Adam Levine told museum supporters that the paintings were inferior, and that the museum never sought to have more than one example of any given artist. He said that the Libbeys would want them to rid the museum of these paintings because they were mediocre, quoting Edward Drummond Libbey himself: “Let the multitudinous array of the mediocre be relegated to the past and in its place be found the highest quality, the best examples and the recognition of only those thoughts which will stand for all time.”

Those were lies. The paintings were not mediocre, and Libbey’s quote was taken out of context. The museum has always intended to have multiple examples of certain important artists. The Toledo Museum of Art is a teaching museum. These paintings were a big part of a small but strong collection of French Impressionist art, historically significant as marking the beginning of modern art, and the Toledo Museum of Art and the people of Toledo were so lucky to have them. Seems like it was for the money, and an eager buyer who wanted to buy our famous French Impressionist paintings from our collection, that made our museum officers want to sell them.

Many people objected to the deaccession, including Pulitzer Prize winning art critic Christopher Knight of the Los Angeles Times who wrote this May 6, 2022 article: *COMMENTARY: AN OHIO MUSEUM IS HOLDING THE BIGGEST SALE OF ARTWORK YET. IT’S UNCONSCIONABLE.*

The Blade wrote three articles prior to the sale, including an April 25, 2022 editorial written by the editorial board, *TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART SHOULD KEEP ITS TOP TIER.*

I published on this website an Open Letter to the Toledo Museum of Art Trustees that I sent to board members by email.

The day before the sale, The Blade ran an article by Jason Webber, *CONTROVERSY SURROUNDS TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART SALE OF THREE PAINTINGS.* In the article, the Toledo Museum of Art’s 2019-2020 interim director, John Stanley, who is retired now, spoke for the museum, saying he thought the deaccession was a “brilliant idea,” saying something to the

effect of, what do those people who object to it know about art anyway, and “this is the world we live in.”

Then the night of the auction, we find out that the Cézanne and the Matisse were sold to the same buyer for a total of \$57 million. What are the odds?

If that is not weird enough, to top it off, we discover John Stanley’s connection to a Las Vegas casino regarding French Impressionist paintings, and the owner of the casino, who collects them. John Stanley was COO of the Institute of Fine Arts, Boston when the museum rented 21 Monet paintings to the Bellagio. The owner of the casino, Steve Wynn is well-known as a collector of French Impressionist paintings. (This *Vanity Fair* article, Steve Wynn, *Uncrowned King of Las Vegas*, mentions his masterpieces by van Gogh, Matisse, Picasso and Renoir.)

Meanwhile, Adam Levine is going overboard to make up for his 2020 George Floyd memo mistake, in which he published a memo he wrote to his staff advising that the museum was remaining neutral. Now, two years later, it seems he still can’t do enough to make up for it, but is the Toledo community being played, perhaps as a convenient distraction?

So we have to ask...

Who bought the paintings the museum deaccessioned last month? Did the buyer have any contact with anyone working at or associated with the museum before the decision was made to deaccession them or before they were sold?

What were the “market realities” that made Adam Levine “pull the trigger,” as described in Christopher Knight’s May 6, 2022 L.A. Times article, Commentary: An Ohio museum is holding the biggest sale of artwork yet. It’s unconscionable.?

Why is John Stanley on the “Art Committee,” when he is not a curator, and his educational background is in business and finance and not in art? Who else is on the “Art Committee?” Isn’t John Stanley retired, as reported in The Blade’s September 8, 2021 article about his 1.5 million gift to the museum? Is he a paid consultant, and if so, what for? Does he live in Toledo or New York, or somewhere else?

Our famous French Impressionist paintings thrown out the door.

How did the museum decide to deaccession exactly those three paintings out of all the 30,000+ artworks that the museum has on display in our museum and in storage? Is selling artwork for the money an approved ethical reason to deaccession? How did all three deaccessions happen to be French Impressionist oil paintings exclusively? Was someone interested in the paintings before the museum put them up for sale?

Will the new museum officers be determining the one best painting of every artist that the museum has in its collection, and deaccession all others? Will it depend on outside interest of the possible sales of culled artworks? Will the museum curators be doing the same kind of collection

culling with our collections of prints, drawings, photographs, books, sculptures, furniture, and ceramics?

Why did they decide to keep the late period big bronze figure sculpture of Renoir's, but get rid of the late period Renoir painting of the nude white woman? Because they were so similar, or was it for some other reason?

Will the new Robert and Sue Savage Community Gallery be curated by outside curators? Will it be for serious professional local artists, or will it be for neighborhood outreach projects? Will it only be for people who live in the two-mile outreach radius that the museum is concentrating on, as outlined according to the museum's strategic plan, Program 3 listed under Objective 1? (Toledo Museum of Art Strategic Plan, /OBJECTIVE 1: Transition to Active Community Outreach and Engagement – "TMA will maintain a focus on the two-mile radius immediately around the Museum." /Program 3: Engage Local Artists.)

The New York Philharmonic requires musicians to audition behind a curtain, so that the reviewers or judges don't know the race or the sex of the performer; the musicians are chosen on their artistic merits. Can the museum share with us the results of the survey they made of the classifications and rating systems of the artwork in our collection? How do they determine the sexual orientation of the artist? Will they be requiring that information about local artists who want to show at the Robert and Sue Savage Community Gallery?

Are the new acquisitions going to be based on a quota system?

Will they be leveling up the museum's collection of paintings to have an equal number of paintings by women artists, since the museum has been so male-centric, and if so, will the percentages match the population's racial, poverty-level, and zip-code demographics of Toledo? Will they be buying, or selling, paintings to make it equitable?

According to Adam Levine in his April 8 letter to museum supporters, Important announcement from The Toledo Museum of Art, "We will use these proceeds to create a new acquisition endowment." Does that mean they are creating a new acquisition endowment with the approximate \$54 million they took from the paintings? For the two paintings that were originally purchased from the Edward Drummond Libbey Endowment, why isn't the money being returned to the Edward Drummond Libbey Endowment until such time that it is used to by new art, as is required? Did they talk to the family of Mrs. C. Lockhart McKelvy about the deaccession of her gift of the Renoir?

When the director says that they are going to draw less from the Libbey Endowment, does he mean that they are going to sell two of its most valuable paintings and create a whole new endowment, free of any of the restraints or ties to the past?

On January 17, 2022 this year, why couldn't the museum figure out how to celebrate its own 110th anniversary on the same day that you opened the museum on a Monday for MLK Day? If the leaders of the museum cannot feel comfortable honoring the museum's own history while at the same time wanting to honor Black history, then shouldn't we have better leaders? Shouldn't

the least we expect from Adam Levine or any director is that they show respect for The Toledo Museum of Art's own history? And shouldn't we also expect them at the very least to be good stewards of our best artwork and not to sell it off for the money, since it is a museum we are so lucky to have as Toledoans, and we want to keep our best artwork safe for future generations?

What percentage of the museum's expenditures on new artwork in the past 10 years went to buy "diverse" artwork?

According to probate court records, the museum has been taking upwards of \$500,000 out of the Libbey Endowments (\$300,000 from Edward's, and estimating that it is around \$200,000 from Florence's) over the past two years, granted for June 30, 2020 to June 30, 2022, on account of Covid, taking from the part of the endowment funds that are meant to be used only to buy art. They filed and received a temporary variance on the Endowments' rules, so they could use the money not to buy new art, but instead for expenses on "the direct care of art," since the museum is somehow suffering financially. How is it that the museum is deserving of that variance to use the Endowments' art acquisition money for expenses, when they have been hiring more employees, giving raises to employees, adding employee benefits, and sending employees off into the field to do things like to set up "art-making stations" in housing revitalization projects with developers? Why didn't they want to buy diverse art with that money?

Considering that the museum didn't use that variance money on art purchases as the museum expands "outside of its walls," (indicating that the museum has plenty of money), but they got the money for "direct care" of the artwork in their collection, but instead of caring for the artwork, they sold the museum's three great paintings out of a collection they are expected to care for, according to the fiduciary duty as the director and the officers of the museum, to set up a new endowment to buy new art, but why didn't they buy new art with the \$500,000 in the first place, without selling our three great paintings?

Don't they care about how it appears that they could be buying museum board members' votes, when there is a conflict of interest and ethical considerations regarding the museum doing business with board members? For example, buying insurance, accounting, managing investments, and other kinds of deals with various organizations, when the officers of the various organizations are directors on the board – how could the directors possibly vote no against any deaccession proposal, or anything that is recommended by the director, when financially, their businesses are so entangled with the museum? To be put in such a position, how are they expected to be loyal to both interests at once, if one interest is the organization they work for, and the other interest is the public interest, say if they thought in their heart that the paintings should not be deaccessioned, but then they don't want to rock the boat or interfere with the business relationships of their organizations doing business with the museum?

We should not tolerate the director and officers lying to us and selling our best art. They had a fiduciary duty first and foremost to care for these particularly important paintings that were a major part of our French Impressionist collection and our collection as a whole and keep them safe for future generations. That's what museums do.

AUGUST OPEN LETTER TO THE MUSEUM

August 8, 2022

A lot of brave Americans fought and died under the American flag... Toledo is Jeep country, after all. Have some respect.

Open Letter to the Board of Directors of The Toledo Museum of Art:

For the museum to buy a burnt flag to hang on the museum's wall, telling us they are collecting art that reflects our community, is disgusting.

Here is my blog post about how this acquisition is deeply offensive because the deceased donors from whom the funds were pulled to purchase it were veterans and a burnt American flag deeply dishonors them. Those donors are Marvin and Lenore Kobacker, Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Barber, three of which had served under the flag in World War II.

Additional issues I wish to address:

What about the remote stewards (workers) of our museum? Since when are the people who run the Toledo museum too good to live here? Along with the spokesman about the sale of the French Impressionist paintings, John Stanley, a retired temporary consultant without an art degree who came from New York who I am pretty sure does not live in Toledo, I'm referring to the Communications Manager who lives in Lansing, the Brand Director who lives in Boulder, the consulting curator of African Art, Lanisa Kitchiner, who works full time for the Library of Congress in Washington DC (who doesn't have an art history degree), and the consulting curator of Ancient Art, Carlos Picón, who is the director of the Colnaghi art gallery in New York and an ancient art dealer. I wrote a blog post about it, about our authentic story, and about the museum's treatment of the local artist community. The Remote Control of Our Museum Culture.

What about the \$54 million from the Cézanne and Matisse deaccessions that had been purchased with the Edward Drummond Libbey Endowment Fund? Shouldn't that have gone back to the Edward Drummond Libbey fund to be used on new acquisitions? Where did that money go? Is it in a new endowment as stated by Adam Levine in his April 8 announcement of the deaccessioning of the three French Impressionist paintings? If so, what is the name of the fund? And if so, why is it not back in the Libbey fund, and what financial institution handles that fund?

Will the museum and/or board members be making an investigation into the sale of the Cézanne and Matisse paintings that sold at auction collectively for \$59 million to the SAME buyer, as reported in Barron's Magazine (but not in The Blade for some reason)? What are the odds? Since this puts a cloud of corruption hanging over the museum in regard to the possibility that the sale was prearranged with the buyer, the museum and board should investigate and make public the buyer to clear the museum's reputation, if that would be the case, since our museum should be beyond reproach. What valuable paintings will be the next to hit the auction block? These outrageous deaccessions of valuable historic paintings that were literally taken off the museum walls and sent to the auction house, an action rationalized by the museum director's lies to the

public, and the huge amount of money made by the sale – that for us not to know who bought the paintings, or whether or not the sale was prearranged, is unacceptable. Is our collection being used as a catalog for future collectors? It's a good way to hide backroom deals. It's a good way for our museum to be robbed of its great artworks.

Why has the radius of the museum's community outreach and interest shrunk to only 2 miles, when the area that the museum serves is vastly larger? In 2014, the museum claimed that their reach was a 150-mile radius, when they increased the area of the Toledo Area Artists Exhibition to reach out to the major cities such as Detroit, Cleveland and Columbus. Before that, our community was defined by the 95-year old annual show as being 17 counties in Northwest Ohio and two counties in Southeast Michigan. The two-mile outreach defined now is not even 1/6th of the city of Toledo, not to mention the other many counties surrounding Toledo. Why isn't the community equally represented on the Belonging Committee? In the museum's latest manifesto about plans for community "belonging" there is nothing at all about the new local artists gallery that was heralded in The Blade in June 2021, for which Robert and Sue Savage donated \$200,000 to renovate a gallery space that would have their name on it. A photo was taken with the mayor, director, and Robert and Sue Savage to memorialize the commitment. Are artists not a fundamental part of the art museum? Why aren't local artists invited to "Belong?"

In summary, there should be a special oversight looking over our museum right now. Our museum does not belong to outsiders, nor to just a fraction of the community, it belongs to ALL of us, the entire Toledo community. The people who run the museum ought to live here! That people who run the museum are "too good" to live here robs our city of culture, progress and money. Our museum is not a vehicle for outsiders to mold into something for their own personal benefits and gains. They are ripping us off! Conflicts of interest should be disclosed on every level, from the purchase to the sale of artworks, to the business relationships of the board members with the museum; from communications involving the museum and the press, to the curation of our community stories. There must be full disclosure for every move the museum makes. The people who run the museum have a fiduciary responsibility to our Toledo institution, and lying to the public is a breach of their fiduciary duty.

Thank you for your time. I hope you are having a good summer.

Sincerely,
Penny Gentieu

Subject: Toledo's broken promise to the Cezanne Exhibition in Chicago

Tue, Aug 16, 2022 at 10:33 AM

To: Randy.Oostra@promedica.org, mikethaman123@gmail.com, cabt49@sbcglobal.net, dekwelles@gmail.com, saradehoff@gmail.com, lmcduffie@ywcawo.org, dckrock@eastmansmith.com, Judith.Herb@utoledo.edu, jnapoli@toledowalleye.com, Sharon.Speyer@huntington.com, twinston@toledoport.org, rdurant@tps.org, Brian.Chambers@owenscorning.com, Allan Block <ablock@blockcommunications.com>, margytrumbull@gmail.com, smitra@welltower.com, jcintronvega@lucasmha.org, Pat_Bowe@andersonsinc.com, Mike.Hylant@hylant.com, Rita Mansour <rmansour@mcdonald-partners.com>, harley@premierstl.com, safpalmer1@gmail.com, jsecor3@gmail.com, sdtaylor@taylorauto.com
Cc: mayor@toledo.oh.gov, letters@theblade.com, Robert.Savage@savageandassociates.com
Bcc: "Moline, Katie" <katie.moline@toledo.oh.gov>

Dear Board Members,

What was so urgent with the timing of the deaccession of our three French Impressionist paintings that made you pull our *Cezanne Avenue at Chantilly* that was promised to the Art Institute of Chicago's Cezanne retrospective and is included in their catalog?

The Cezanne show opened two days before the May 17 auction, and closes on September 5. For a museum that strives to be a good example for all museums in the country, I wonder how breaking a commitment to this show is justified. What was the hurry?

Please see my new blog post: [Toledo's broken promise to the Cezanne Exhibition in Chicago](#)

Sincerely,
Penny Gentieu

Together I sent five letters to the museum trustees and board of directors, some copied to Toledo government, from April to September, but received no response. Then we sent a detailed letter to the museum cancelling our membership. Our letter was not answered; rather, our membership fee was refunded.

From: Penny Gentieu Date: 09/01/2022
To: membership@toledomuseum.org

Toledo Museum of Art:

We are deeply distressed by the current leadership of the museum.

When we signed up for membership, we were expecting to receive an Art Matters Magazine periodically, which seems now to have been cancelled. This alone, not to mention all the other sad events concerning the museum that have happened over the past year, makes us want our membership fee back.

We consider it corrupt that three famous French impressionist paintings were sold, two bought by the same buyer. John Stanley, who is a member of the art committee, who has no curatorial credentials, was involved in Boston's scandalous French impressionist loan of 21 paintings to Steve Wynn's Bellagio casino. Steve Wynn, who owns casinos in Las Vegas, is famous for collecting French Impressionist paintings. His connection with John Stanley should be investigated.

Our Cezanne painting was supposed to have been in the Cezanne retrospective at the Chicago Institute of Art, which opened the day before our other Cezanne painting was auctioned off in May. The Cezanne show is over next week— what would ever make the museum pull out of this important commitment — we think it reeks of corruption and bad leadership. Was it because the museum got a sudden offer for the paintings and it was “now or never?” Our painting appears in the Cezanne show catalog, which was printed in 2022, so apparently the museum pulled it from

the show after that to accommodate the sudden sale. Shameful circumstances surround the deaccession of our valuable paintings, which need to be investigated.

Not long after the tragedy of the French impressionist paintings, you bought a painting with an actual burnt American flag as the background. As patriotic Americans who have the deepest respect for our country and our flag, we find this purchase appalling. There are many fine Americans who fought and died for this flag, but the Toledo Museum of Art, under your new leadership, wants to display a burnt American flag painting in our once highly honorable and respectful museum of art. The Libbeys must be rolling over in their graves about what is going on at the museum.

The museum used to serve the entire city and region, but now the focus is only on a 2-mile radius, and we no longer feel welcome.

Your meager shows in the past couple years leave much to be desired. We can only assume that Art Matters Magazine has been discontinued because the museum has nothing worthy to say.

We've sent four letters to the Trustees in the past five months, and were hoping that they would start turning things around, but apparently not.

Therefore, we are cancelling our membership, and we want our money back, because we do not like what is going on at the museum.

Signed.

Three weeks later Jenny Wensink, the former Director of Development sent us a refund check for the entire amount and their new *Art Matters Magazine* with a note:



It is notable that between 2020 and 2024, as shown in the IRS 990s, the “Director of Development” was replaced at least four times. (See, Highest Paid Employees on the 990’s and the museum’s website for current Director of Development.) Also, membership dues dropped 25% in the same fiscal year that we cancelled our membership.

The Blade published my guest editorial on March 18, 2023

SATURDAY ESSAY ■■■■■■

Toledo Museum of Art has lost direction

By **PENNY GENTIEU** *The Blade*
3-18-2023

In 2021, Adam Levine, the new director of the Toledo Museum of Art, announced that he was increasing the museum's annual budget by \$2 million while at the same time reducing the amount of money taken from the Libbey Endowment.

The rules of the Libbey Endowment are such that the money must be used in whole or in part for the exhibition of art, with at least 50 percent of every dollar spent on the purchase of works of art for the purpose of public exhibition. To reduce the draw from the Libbey Endowment means they can buy less art and put up less shows. Their plan warned us of a break from the founding principles. Two years later, there is no doubt they are completely unplugged.

The shows have become sparse and less impressive, and they sold off three French Impressionist paintings for \$59.7 million. Then they purchased a burnt American flag painting with different money, pooling funds from three deceased donors who served under our American flag in World War II.

Toledo broke their commitment to the Art Institute of Chicago to loan their only remaining Cezanne painting for the Chicago Cezanne Exhibition that opened within a week of the Sotheby's sale of our other Cezanne and two more French Impressionist paintings.

This and other circumstances surrounding the sale need to be investigated.

The museum no longer has children's Saturday classes, which over a school year brought together 2,500 children in the basement museum school that also educated University of Toledo art students and other community members. Now the halls are empty.

It is ironic that executive director Adam Levine claims to have burst "outside their walls" building art making stations for housing devel-



Gentieu



THE BLADE

Adam Levine, the Edward Drummond and Florence Scott Libbey director and CEO of the Toledo Museum of Art, stands in the cloister at the museum.

opments within a 2-mile radius of the museum. Most teaching efforts are funneled into Lucas Metropolitan Housing, when they should be educating the entire community.

When the museum talks about community, local artists are not included. In June, 2021, the museum announced that a new gallery was being renovated to host solo shows for local artists.

That gallery was quietly launched on Feb. 24, 2023 with a show for high school students. Apparently the gallery is now for student and amateur art shows that used to hang in the basement corridors.

It is tragic that the Toledo Area Artists Exhibition was ended in 2014. For nearly a century, it helped countless artists achieve their goals. The shows played a prominent role in the careers of nearly every successful artist in or from Toledo. The demise of this annual show hurts our very DNA.

Before the changes, the museum had the best educational system of any museum in the country. It was the hub of a robust local artist community that for many years had monthly local shows, and for 95 years had the prestigious annual jur-

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Mail your letters to Readers' Forum, The Blade, 541 N. Superior St., P.O. Box 921, Toledo, OH 43697-0921. You can send letters through The Blade's website at toledoblade.com/letterstoeditor, fax letters to 419-724-6191, or email them (plain text only, no attachments) to letters@theblade.com.

ied show for local and regional artists. The TAA show was a big draw that brought people to the museum from all over.

Museum art purchases were chosen by art connoisseurs for their quality and encyclopedic representation of the world. Now we have a director who expects art to serve his political agenda and fill quotas.

The museum's mission is to educate and exhibit world-class art to the public. It always had many shows going on at once and events of public interest. They used to publish newsletters, catalogs, and magazines that kept the public informed of all their goings on. But now, there is little information and nothing of any quality seems to be happening at the museum.

They are hiring many new employees, some who live out-of-town. They reinterpret our collection and rearrange paintings to talk to each other.

The secret of the success of our great art museum was that a large percentage of the budget was always spent on art and shows and education.

The new direction is less about art and more about money and politics.

Penny Gentieu is a photographer who writes a blog about the historic artists of Toledo and the Toledo Museum of Art, artistsoftoledo.com.

The museum responded by asking *The Blade* to issue corrections, none of which were issued, because what I wrote was either factual or my considered opinion based on facts. See the [museum's list of corrections and my response here](#).

Randy Oostra, chairman of the board of TMA wrote this Letter the the Editor in response to my editorial. It wrongly states that my editorial is not based on facts, but fails to mention what it is that is not factual. He claims that the museum is doing well, but when looking at the last three IRS Form 990s, three years after editorial was written, why wasn't the museum serving the Toledo public, a revelation that for all those years, the museum's number of annual visitors remained less than one-third of what it had been, pre-pandemic. perhaps because it was building its "international relevance" at the expense of the Toledo public: financial growth decouple from public engagement, a disconnect between visitors and revenue.

To the editor: Toledo Museum of Art in a strong position

MAR 24, 2023

12:00 AM



I write as chairman of the Toledo Museum of Art and on behalf of its full board of directors to say that we could not be more enthusiastic about the museum's direction.

We understand that there may be confusion regarding some aspects of the museum's operating model, but a recent guest essay in *The Blade* ("[Toledo Museum of Art has lost direction](#)," [Saturday](#)) was without factual basis. The museum is in a strong position, doing exceptional work for its community, and developing a level of international relevance not seen in decades.

Under Adam Levine's leadership, TMA weathered COVID and emerged stronger. He and the pathway on which he has put the museum has our full support.

We are honored to have this magnificent institution as a cornerstone of our community.



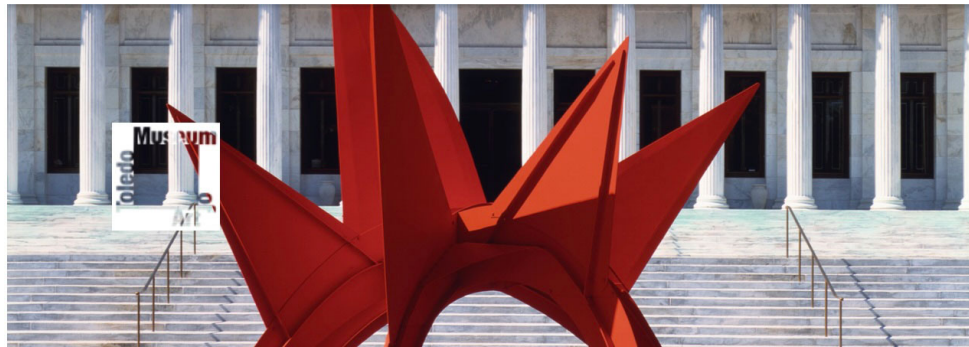
Penny Gentieu

Saturday Essay: Toledo Museum of Art has lost direction

We are excited about the changes we have seen so far and fully support our ambitious plans for the future.

Randy Oostra

Adam Levine emailed this statement regarding my editorial to the museum membership – telling thousands of people, that my editorial was predicated on myriad factually inaccuracies, gaslighting and not stating even one item he claims to be inaccurate:



[View this email in your browser.](#)

Dear TMA Members,

I am writing you today to address an editorial that ran in The Blade this weekend. The essay was critical of the Museum and its direction, in no small part because it was predicated on myriad factual inaccuracies. The Museum is as financially healthy as it has ever been; our curatorial team has tripled while our exhibitions budget has nearly doubled; and art classes, including on Saturdays, are going strong with attendance set to reach pre-COVID levels and scholarships up nearly 350% thanks to our partnerships with a dozen community organizations. For those seeking further clarification on any point in the editorial, I or a member of the Museum team are at your disposal to answer whatever questions you might have.

You will see letters from others addressing this editorial in the days ahead, but I wanted to affirm to you that TMA is not just on the right track—we are innovating approaches that are becoming a model for others. This is made possible by your support, which is at historic levels and will continue to grow, I am sure, because of the extraordinary work our team is doing to connect with community and expand our international footprint.

Thank you for your steadfast support.

Yours,

Adam Levine

In 2026, the TMA IRS Form 990s show that membership support was not at historic levels, but had actually dropped by 25% after the sale of the three French Impressionist paintings. It continued to drop each successive year. Also shown in the 990s is that the exhibition budget did not “nearly double.” (See Request for Review, page 15.) When adjusted for inflation, 2023 program spending appears comparable to or lower than pre-pandemic levels despite claims of substantial expansion. In 2014, the museum had 12 exhibitions. The number gradually declined to nine in 2019 and to only five exhibitions in 2023. Note he mentioned the “international footprint” they were working on behind the scenes, while greatly reducing services to Toledoans.

Subject: The decline of the art museum

From: penny gentieu

Date: 4/6/23, 11:13 AM

To: Randy.Oostra@promedica.org, mikethaman123@gmail.com, cabt49@sbcglobal.net, dekwelles@gmail.com, saradehoff@gmail.com, lmcduffie@ywcawo.org, dckrock@eastmansmith.com, Judith.Herb@utoledo.edu, jnapoli@toledowalleye.com, Sharon.Speyer@huntington.com, twinston@toledoport.org, rdurant@tps.org, Brian.Chambers@owenscorning.com, Allan Block <ablock@blockcommunications.com>, margytrumbull@gmail.com, smitra@welltower.com, jcintronvega@lucasmha.org, Pat_Bowe@andersonsinc.com, Mike.Hylant@hylant.com, Rita Mansour <rmansour@mcdonald-partners.com>, harley@premierstl.com, safpalmer1@gmail.com, jsecor3@gmail.com, sdtaylor@taylorauto.com, mbauer@libbey.com

Dear Toledo Museum Board Members and City Council,

Attached is a guest editorial that *The Blade* ran on March 18 about the new direction of the museum. I wrote it, I hope you read it.

Also, I just wrote a new blog post about the relationship that local artists used to have with the museum, which is now completely severed. It is about the commonalities of four Toledo artists and their public art crucifixes. It is about how the museum helped them become who they were – all that is gone now, and why? Crucifixes of Artists of Toledo.

Also, last week it was announced that the museum got a grant to fund art-making experiences for senior citizens. [Toledo Museum Program Takes Art to Older Adults](#). A \$119,916 grant that they are funneling into only 2 senior centers in their 2-mile radius of interest for only 12 art making sessions all together, and if you do the math, that's \$9,993 each, and I'm sure the sessions wouldn't be for more than 2-3 hours. What a waste.

There are many seniors all over the city of Toledo and to isolate a small section of Toledo to pour \$119,916 into 2 senior centers for 12 art making sessions is divisive, strange, and unbelievable. Toledo has 14 Senior Centers, and most of them are out of luck, unwanted, isolated, lonely, poor and miserable. Survivors of the pandemic, but for what. To emerge into a world that literally doesn't want them anymore.

What do you think? I would love to hear from you.

Sincerely,
Penny Gentieu
Creator, artistsoftoledo.com

On Thu, Apr 6, 2023 at 1:02 PM Melden, Sam <Sam.Melden@toledo.oh.gov> wrote:
Ms. Gentieu,

Normally I don't respond to outlandish emails, but you asked, so I will tell you. What do I think? I think it is obvious you are more interested in hyperbolic falsehoods, no matter who they may insult, or confuse than you are with actually trying to improve a situation you think needs improved. Your comments about seniors in our community prove that unfounded hyperbole is your preferred tact. I think it is a shame that *The Blade* ran your editorial at all. You are clearly trying to insult the leadership of TMA. You are clearly trying to confuse everyone who will listen about the reality of TMA's current expression of their long held values and beliefs. Everyone is free to use their voice however they wish, to protest,

argue, and debate. I sincerely encourage you to use yours in a more productive and honest way. If that isn't of interest to you, feel free to leave me off your next email.

Thank you,
Sam Melden
Council Member

Sam Meldon was featured in the 2022 Toledo Museum of Art Annual Report, so he was a little biased.

Mr. Meldon:

And to think you are my district's city councilman. There are many people in Toledo who had a rough time during the pandemic and have had partners or parents who died. People who feel isolated, lonely, miserable, unwanted, cut off from the world. You might be addressing one.

You might have many others who feel the same in your district. Who see the art museum using a \$119,993 grant on just two senior centers right in their tiny two mile radius for an average of \$3,000 or \$5,000 per hour of service given to the seniors in their \$9,993 per session budget. Your relationship with your buddy Adam is more important to you than your constituents.

You shouldn't assume that because I'm a woman that I'm hysterical. My writings are actually factual if you care to look them up. If you would care to address something specific that I got wrong, I would be happy to discuss it with you.

I also tell you that the sidewalks in our district are a complete mess. For example, Sylvania between Talmadge and Corey. Terrible sidewalks. There are potholes all over the Corey Woods neighborhood. And fallen tree limbs and litter all over your district. Maybe you should concentrate on cleaning up the neighborhood.

Sincerely,
Penny Gentieu.

His reply:

On Thu, Apr 6, 2023 at 3:48 PM Melden, Sam <Sam.Melden@toledo.oh.gov> wrote:
Ms. Gentieu - Even when I disagree with my constituents I try my hardest to address their neighborhood concerns. To avoid this back and forth with everyone else CC'd, I will reach out with my Council Aide to begin checking into the particular issues you've raised.

Talk soon,
Sam Melden
Council Member

Subject: Re: The decline of the art museum
From: penny gentieu
Date: 4/6/23, 6:38 PM

To: "Melden, Sam" <Sam.Melden@toledo.oh.gov>

CC: Mayor <Mayor@toledo.oh.gov>, "Hobbs, John" <John.Hobbs@toledo.oh.gov>, "Cherry, Matt" <Matt.Cherry@toledo.oh.gov>, "Komives, Nick" <Nick.Komives@toledo.oh.gov>, "Williams, Vanice" <Vanice.Williams@toledo.oh.gov>, "Morris, Theresa" <Theresa.Morris@toledo.oh.gov>, "Whitman, Tiffany" <Tiffany.Whitman@toledo.oh.gov>, "Moline, Katie" <Katie.Moline@toledo.oh.gov>, "McPherson, Cerssandra" <Cerssandra.McPherson@toledo.oh.gov>, "Gadus, Theresa" <Theresa.Gadus@toledo.oh.gov>, "Sarantou, George" <George.Sarantou@toledo.oh.gov>

Nice of you to offer to clean up our neighborhood. It's about time.

As you have called me a liar without pointing out what it is I am "insulting" and "confusing" or what it is that is a "falsehood" in my email or my attached editorial — or in any of my blog posts for that matter, but I'm guessing you haven't read any of my website — since you are defaming me to the entire City Council and Mayor of Toledo without giving a reason, I challenge you to say what it is you object to.

I have a sterling reputation. I am a woman living in your district who has legitimate issues with the art museum, and for you to dismiss my issues by calling me a liar with no examples and no proof, then I'm not going to let that go.

I spent a lot of time researching and writing my last post about the commonalities of the artists of Toledo. I deserve to be heard and understood by all of you. <https://artistsoftoledo.com/2023/04/04/crucifixes-of-artists-of-toledo/>

My Blade editorial is factually correct. The blog post that the editorial is based on goes into more detail. <https://artistsoftoledo.com/2023/03/08/adam-levines-toledo-museum-of-art/> As do all the posts I have written about the museum. Check it out.

I'm only trying to make Toledo a better place to live for all of us. I only have the best intentions for the museum. If it wasn't for the museum, I wouldn't be who I am today.

I lived six miles away from the Museum and attended Toledo public schools. I went to the Saturday classes for all the years that it was open for me. It helped me have a successful artistic career in New York. I have work in the Art Institute of Chicago, and I have the Toledo Museum to thank. But now that opportunity has been taken away from most of the youth of Toledo.

I had a chance when I was growing up, but the poor kids living in my old neighborhood of Reynolds Corners no longer have that chance. And the local artist community has been ripped apart. I'm sorry if you think that's an exaggeration, but it's true. Read my entire website for the facts. *The Blade* thought my editorial was important enough to run.

Penny Gentieu

<https://artistsoftoledo.com/>

Apparently the defamation of my character by the museum's Chairman of the Board in *The Blade* and the museum director's email to thousands of members reached far and wide to do its damage to me — including to City Hall, and to my own city representative.

We then put our beautiful Toledo house up for sale and moved back to New York, where we were assured of being able to experience a robust civic cultural life in our later years, because, as artists, the satisfying retirement we hoped for was never going to happen by staying in Toledo.

Then, 18 months later, on February 5, 2025, I received a mysterious email from Florence Scott Libbey:

Subject: TMA
From: Florence Scott Libbey <florencescottlibbey@gmail.com>
Date: 2/5/25, 2:29 PM

Penny –

I follow your blog with interest. You really should be reaching out to national media – not just local. There is a story to be told.

I'm surprised you haven't noticed this...

[Auckland Art Gallery To Welcome Monet, Degas and Van Gogh Works for New Exhibition](#)

An email from a museum insider informed me, using an email address evoking the ultimate insider. Such a deeply symbolic and poetic way to find out about the undisclosed – to Toledoans – international tours of the museum's heavy hitters. How could I not respond? Is this what Randy Oostra was alluding to in his March 2023 Letter to the Editor, "international relevance" and what Adam Levine mentioned in his March 2023 email to the membership, an "international footprint?" Yet, the museum still did not announce it to the public, even though it was something of great magnitude that they were planning and spending their time working on all along. Something that took up so much time and effort, that they could not be bothered to get visitors back to the museum after the pandemic — attendance reported in 2022 to present, 2025 was only a mere one-third of the attendance before the pandemic.

I tried to get a list of the 57 paintings getting lent to New Zealand, by asking the museum director Adam Levine's secretary for a list. This is the reply:

From: Penny Gentieu
Sent: Wednesday, February 5, 2025 7:39 PM
To: Sandhya Holston <sholston@toledomuseum.org>
Subject: Requesting list of 57 paintings going to Auckland, New Zealand

Dear Ms. Holston,

I read today that the museum is sending 57 Impressionist and 20th century paintings to Auckland, New Zealand for a show. Please provide me with a list of the paintings that the museum is sending them.

Thank you,
Penny Gentieu

Subject: FW: Message from Penny Fw: Requesting list of 57 paintings going to Auckland, New Zealand

From: Adam Levine <ALevine@toledomuseum.org>

Date: 2/6/25, 4:32 PM

To: Penny Gentieu **CC:** Sandhya Holston <sholston@toledomuseum.org>

Dear Penny,

Thank you for reaching out and for your continued passion for the Museum. I was surprised that you had reached out to Sandhya, not least because several people from TMA have tried to make contact with you over the years to try and explain decisions with which you have seemed to disagree. You may recall how productive our meeting was early in my tenure when I told you about the creation of the Savage Community Gallery. My door remains open to discuss any concerns you may have.

As far as the specific request is concerned, based on your Facebook posts it seems your interest in the list of paintings is to allege that we are putting masterworks at significant risk by shipping them to New Zealand. This is not true.

As you may know, New Zealand has a remarkable museum infrastructure. Additionally, the Head of Exhibitions at the Auckland Art Gallery began her career as a curator at the Cleveland Museum of Art, just down the road, and knows our collection and our standards well. You also likely know that we ship works around the world regularly. Beyond the North America and Europe, we have lent our Gauguin to an important exhibition in Sao Paolo and our Hopper to an exhibition in Seoul just recently; we have lent to China, Japan, and Australia myriad times. Shipping artworks long distances is a risk we are well-accustomed to mitigating.

I should also say that we have selected only works for travel that are sufficiently stable, a determination made by our Conservation team, led by our Director of Conservation (recently joined from the Victoria & Albert Museum in London). We will be sending a physical courier with the works, which is standard practice, and we have taken the extra step of covering the paintings with a protective layer of glass.

I respect your interest in knowing the 57 works of art, and this information of course will be public domain since the works will be on display in New Zealand! I hope that you will respect that I won't be sharing that list with you presently because you continue to avoid engaging in direct dialog to address your concerns. It is reasonable to want to know artworks at TMA are being cared for, and I appreciate how much you care. In this email, I have addressed those concerns; sharing the list, I fear, would just be used to sensationalize your position that we are putting masterworks at risk—a position that is simply and wholly is not true.

I remain at your disposal for conversations about your concerns before you spread misinformation. I would request, though, that you refrain from posting Sandhya's email. She has a significant job, but these requests are not hers to address.

Best,
Adam

Adam's email stated: "several people from TMA have tried to make contact with you over the years to try and explain decisions with which you have seemed to disagree"

Simply not true! Who tried to contact me and when? I have never received an answer to any questions or any reply to my letters to the board of directors.

I got no response to the following two letters to the president of the board of directors, which I sent within 10 days of Adam Levine's letter.

Subject: Urgent Follow-Up: Further Concerns Over TMA's Disposition of Core Artworks and Lack of Transparency

February 16, 2025

Dear Ms. DeHoff,

I hope you are well. I am writing again as a deeply concerned citizen regarding the troubling decisions at the Toledo Museum of Art, and to follow up on my February 10 email—which, like my previous correspondence, has not received a response. I have reached out on numerous occasions, yet my genuine inquiries continue to be met with silence and, more recently, outright censorship.

I am particularly disturbed by recent developments regarding our museum's core collection.

I recently learned through a news report from New Zealand that TMA is loaning 57 Impressionist and 20th-century paintings—many are gifts from Edward Drummond Libbey and are featured in the museum's "Masterworks" book—to the Auckland Art Gallery while TMA's building undergoes renovations.

What is especially ironic is that Auckland is currently celebrating the recent bequeath of the art collectors, Julian and Josie Robertson with an exhibition called "The Robertson Gift: Paths through Modernity" Feb 9, 2024 – Feb 1, 2026, a collection of 15 paintings valued at \$190 million.

Yet by interjecting the TMA loan into the mix, the Auckland Gallery is, in effect, dwarfing the impact of the Robertson Gift, since just two or three paintings from the Toledo collection are worth more than the total Robertson bequest that Auckland professes to be so honored to be given, and the Toledo show, "A Century of Modern Art," consists of 57 bigger, better paintings.

Meanwhile, back in Toledo, the museum-going public is witnessing the shoving aside of the treasured Impressionist masterworks as the museum gets them out of sight, a core collection of gifts from Edward Drummond Libbey, and an important promise that has been broken.

Seems like all around the world, the gifts of generous museum donors are being dishonored.

In 2022, the day Director Adam Levine announced the sale of the beloved three famous Impressionists paintings, in the very same email*, he promised museum supporters that the other Cezanne, Matisse and Renoir paintings would always remain on view on the museum's walls. Now to send these paintings away under the guise of renovations when the museum boasts of 280,000 square feet of gallery space is a real betrayal, and alarms are going off that something is seriously wrong with the museum's stewardship.

Moreover, when I asked the museum for the complete list of the 57 paintings, Adam Levine dismissed my request, telling me that "this information of course will be public domain since the works will be on display in New Zealand!" (That is, if I want to hire a detective.) He said that sharing the full list would "just be used to sensationalize" my concerns. I should be talking to him directly instead of talking about this publicly, he said, in an attempt to shut me up.

This total lack of transparency, the efforts of censorship, coupled with sudden actions by the museum make me wonder, will we ever see these Impressionist paintings hanging on the walls of the Toledo Museum of Art again? After all, in just a few short years, the museum has sold three paintings, moved the other paintings from the prominent galleries in the main museum to the Glass Pavilion across the street, and now is sending this large collection to the other side of the world without any announcement, leaving museum supporters to find out from a news article from New Zealand; bringing light to a broken promise and the museum's total lack of transparency, all while the community is stunned over the closing of the Cloisters, and unbeknownst that the Impressionist paintings are on their way out. All of this underscores suspicion.

Considering that the museum promotes the idea that people want to see themselves on the walls, it seems that these French paintings have been banished because they are too European for the demographics of the two-mile radius of the museum that the museum is using to advance an agenda. Maybe it's all a guise to sell the valuable paintings, who knows?

Adam Levine certainly has minimized the importance of the Libbey Endowment to the museum by selling the three paintings in 2022 for \$59 million and making a private fund out of the money. The museum has lost all credibility of being trustworthy – the one thing a museum must NEVER lose, as at the Toledo Museum of Art the current leaders are the custodians of the wonderful gift of cultural heritage that came from Edward Drummond Libbey and Florence Scott Libbey.

It is telling that at the very same time of the January 29 announcement in New Zealand that didn't reach the Northern Hemisphere until a week later, TMA announced the closure of the Cloisters on January 30, with only three days' notice, announcing it on Facebook, spurring hundreds of impassioned comments from the community.

The Cloisters, consisting of ancient columns, capitals, and arches that were sourced from 12th to 15th century medieval sites in southwest France to evoke a medieval monastery cloister, collected and permanently installed into the museum over the span of five years, was the

highlight of the east and west wing expansion of 1933 and symbolizes the heart of the museum. It was just renovated and reopened in 2022. But now it's excised and relegated to the far east wing next to the Ancient court, replacing four nice little gallery rooms, just so the museum can put everything in alphabetical, oh, that is chronological order, a conveyor belt style loop design forcing visitors to look at art through a specific political prism. It sounds frankly hideous; hardly an idea worthy of gutting the museum. Adam Levine plans to use what's left of our superlative collection for his radical ideology that he plans to use to set as an example for all other museums to follow.

Radical plan to gut museum was only revealed this month, February 2025.

The plans to dismantle the beloved, fragile historic Cloisters and move it to the Wolfe Gallery were never publicly disclosed beyond whispers to select visitors and internal sketches shared with other museums at the 2023 symposium. And now, after the closure of the Cloisters, the museum states that the Cloisters will be moved to the footprint of the current Galleries numbers 3, 4, 5, and 6.

I ask that you ensure that our public heritage is not sacrificed at the whim of the current museum director who doesn't seem to like the museum and wants to change everything about it, right down to the "physical studs" of the building itself, as he was quoted saying in a recent Channel 11 news article.

"If our mission is to integrate art into the lives of people, then rehanging our collection is only half of the equation. The reinstallation offers us a chance to go back to the conceptual as well as the physical studs, rethinking the museum experience for the 21st century. We are developing exciting plans on this front that we believe can create different paradigms for engagement."
Adam Levine

There is nothing in the 2021 five-year plan about gutting the museum and redoing it down to the studs. Back in 2018 there were plans to renovate and money was collected for that but the plan seemed to be abandoned when the museum announced their five-year plan in 2021. What happened in-between was that the director Brian Kennedy resigned just one year short of his contract, leaving the museum in the lurch. After a year or two Adam Levine was hired. But right away Adam Levine made the blunder of telling people that the museum would stay neutral during the George Floyd demonstrations. Having to walk back his statement, ever since then the museum has been practicing self-flagellation — the DEI (DEAI) came in and made sweeping changes to the museum administration, adding layer upon layer of bloated bureaucracy, and here we are now, at the sacrificial alter offering up our entire museum, the gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, witnessing it becoming a shadow of its once self.

A collection created by donor funds and connoisseurship collecting, now it's done by identity politics, federal dollars, and the turning of the back on the founders by a director who stated publicly in a 2022 Forbes interview:

The superpower that an art museum has is when something goes up on the wall, it's considered good. We set the canon. —Adam Levine

Levine sold a Cezanne, Matisse and Renoir with the excuse that the museum never intended to have multiple examples by the same artist in their collection. But that is not true. I researched it – see my list of multiple paintings by the same artist; of the roughly 800 paintings in the TMA collection in 2022, 57 are by the same artist. Collecting these paintings was clearly intentional.

The Toledo Museum of Art has never sought to have multiple examples by the same artist- fewer than 11% of the artists in our collection are represented by two or more paintings; masterpieces by Cézanne, Matisse, and Renoir will remain regularly on view on our walls. –Adam Levine

He cut ties with the founder Edward Drummond Libbey by selling gifted paintings for \$59 million and not putting that money back into the Libbey Endowment but instead into a private fund. (see, April 8, 2022 email to museum supporters.)

“The three paintings being sold will provide the Museum with more than \$40 million, greater than the total corpus of the current Libbey Funds supporting our art purchases. We will use these proceeds to create a new acquisition endowment.”—Adam Levine

Contrary to this statement made in the Feb. 8, 2025 Toledo Free Press article, Patrons pay tribute to Cloister Gallery, he IS using taxpayer funds to put the wrecking ball to the museum that we know and love.

The museum did not provide details about the cost for moving The Cloister. The spokesperson wrote that TMA is privately funded and the project is one small part of the larger reinstallation that is being funded through individual and corporate philanthropy. —Doreen Cutway, museum spokesman and senior public relations manager

The museum went to the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority, the President and CEO of which is also the Secretary of the Toledo Museum of Art Board of Directors, Thomas Winston, asking them to install port authority facilities into the museum in the form of an HVAC system. The port authority eagerly agreed and posted a bond for the museum as a part of their .4 mill operating levy that was passed by voters on November 5. More money was asked from the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority and the Columbus-Franklin County Finance Authority for the total of \$24.89 million for a new HVAC system.

The museum has received many millions of dollars from Ohio and from the federal government in recent years, all grants are public record on the corresponding Ohio and federal websites. Grants that are hurting the fundamentals and founding principles of the museum.

The museum is probably taking advantage of the generous NEA Arts & Artifacts Indemnity Program to insure our 57 artworks for a billion dollars or more to send them off to New Zealand. Otherwise the loan wouldn't be feasible. And if that program is stopped, in the current political environment while our paintings are abroad? Oh well, it's mostly the work of old white men anyway.

As I noted above, in asking for the complete list of 57 renowned paintings going to New Zealand, Adam Levine refused to share it, saying he was afraid that I would use it to sensationalize my concerns. What is left for me to sensationalize? Adam Levine has provided all the sensationalism himself already.

I respectfully urge you, as Chair of the Board, to address these issues publicly. The Toledo Museum of Art is a treasured institution built and endowed by the Libbeys as a gift to the people of Toledo, and decisions of this magnitude must be made with full transparency and not just pushed on community using tactics like censorship and gaslighting. I ask that you halt the destruction of the Cloisters, cancel the loan to New Zealand and rehang the Impressionist and 20th century paintings. And then find new leadership that will provide proper stewardship and keep our museum intact.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,
Penny Gentieu

I did not receive a response. I wrote a blog post about Sara Jane De Hoff and Adam Levine on May 26, 2026, titled, "TMA's 40-year talking points."

I compiled a Timeline of Change at The Toledo Museum of Art, an index to the blog posts I've written contemporaneously about the museum changes between 2014 to 2026 that has further documentation for the Ohio Attorney General and reporters:

Timeline of Change at the Toledo Museum of Art (2014–Present)

<https://artistsoftoledo.com/timeline-of-change-at-the-toledo-museum-of-art-2014-present/>

Compilation of efforts and responses documented for inclusion in the Request for Review of the Toledo Museum of Art and the Libbey Will submitted to the Ohio Attorney General Charitable Law Section.

Penny Gentieu
artistsoftoledo.com
July 23, 2026