A Code of Ethics
for Art Museum Directors
As Adopted by the
Association of
Art Museum Directors

The position of a Museum Director is one of trust, involving great responsibilities. It is the moral obligation of a Museum Director, in implementing the policies of his governing board, to accept and discharge these to the best of his ability for the benefit of his institution and the public. It is assumed that, in all his activities, he will act with integrity and in accordance with the highest moral principles; that he will assiduously avoid any and all activities which could in any way compromise him or the institution which he directs. It is further assumed that, in all undertakings within his jurisdiction, he will be personally responsible for the highest standards and excellence of performance. Through his own professional integrity he will set an example to his staff, to whom he should communicate the contents of this Code of Ethics, in substance and detail, upon assuming the position of Director, and to each member of his professional staff hired subsequent to that occasion before the latter’s acceptance of employment by the museum.

The members of the Association of Art Museum Directors, maintaining that the position of a Museum Director is dependent upon his professional competence and integrity, and that it requires impartiality and a sense of public responsibility, especially in the area of museum acquisitions, declare that it should be unprofessional for a Museum Director:

(A) to use his influence or position in the art world for personal gain. He should not traffic in works of art for monetary reasons, nor be party to the recommendation of works of art for purchase by museums or collectors in which he has any undisclosed financial interest; nor should he accept any commission or compromising gift from any seller or buyer of works of art. If he himself is a collector he should exercise extraordinary discretion to assure that no conflict of interest arises between himself and the concerns of the museum. If such an occasion should arise, it must be resolved by granting the museum’s governing board the first option to acquire the work or works of art in question;

(B) to give, for a fee or on a retainer, any certificate or statement as to the authenticity or authorship of a work of art, or any statement of the monetary value of a work of art, except where authorized by and in accordance with the lawful purposes of his own or other non-profit institutions concerned or government agencies;

(C) to knowingly acquire or allow to be recommended for acquisition any art objects which have been stolen or illegally imported into the United States in contravention of the applicable laws of the countries of origin or exporting countries and/or contravention of international treaties and international conventions.

Infractions of these canons of professional conduct, when duly established, will render a member of the Association of Art Museum Directors subject to discipline by reprimand, suspension, or expulsion from the Association.