

*“For the Benefit of all the People, Forever”* – Cleveland Museum of Art Mission Statement, 1892

Dear Colleague,

Since opening its doors in 1916, the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) has existed “for the benefit of all the people forever.” In fact, that statement is written into the deed for the land. It serves as the bedrock on which the institution was built, reflecting our founders’ belief that museums provide a place for conversation, for inspiration and for creating wonder and meaning in people’s lives.

Today, one hundred years later, that idea reverberates with new and poignant resonance, and for that reason, we wish to reaffirm our commitment to all visitors, including students and educators - you are welcome here. Through programs, events, and exhibitions, the museum creates an environment for open dialogue education, and cultural experience.

Art is a window into history and culture, and it can offer a path to tolerance and understanding. Artists remind us that problems can have more than one solution and that questions can have more than one answer. Spanning 6,000 years of humanity, the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art helps us consider the myriad possibilities that art suggests for the benefit of everyone. In 2017, it is important that we listen to each other with creativity, compassion, and open mindedness.

We stand behind our mission because:

1. A picture says what words alone cannot; numbers and words can never capture the full experience of being human. We need paintings, photographs, sculpture, songs, plays, and dance to help us do that.
2. Art is for all the people, forever. As an institution that collects, presents, researches, and supports the arts, we do this because we believe that art represents the cultural heritage, the texture, the creative problem solving, and the expression of human experience. As an encyclopedic museum, we create conversations across place and time – a second century Chinese scholar and a second grader, an exiled artist and a recent immigrant, Pablo Picasso and a high school student just learning to paint, an engineering student and a master architect. CMA’s collection opens up the possibility to explore new perspectives and new ways of seeing.
3. Museums provide a place for respite, for experience beyond the everyday, creating space for awe and wonder in our lives. By inviting “the people” to make the museum their own, we give value to these experiences as a right for all. A third grader told us, “I know [the museum] is a special place and an important place. It feels different than school. And when someone asks me for my opinion in the museum, I know that my opinion matters.” Through our programs, we value the voices we hear as we create open dialogues.
4. In a climate where truth, honesty, listening, and respect for difference often are not being given their rightful value, the experiences and conversations we can provide are more important than ever. Art allows us to see things and imagine things we would not be able to otherwise. As we face today’s challenges and uncertainties, we need to be able to imagine

solutions that do not yet exist. CMA and its collection can inspire great ideas and foster sense of hope, community, and possibility. We invite you to join us in the conversation.

Along with this letter you are receiving information about planning a visit to the museum as well as some of the exciting and dynamic outreach programs that are available. Please share this information with colleagues and feel free to be in touch.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cyra', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Cyra Levenson

Director of Education and Academic Affairs