



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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ALAN BUTKOVITZ
City Controller
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August 27, 2014

Dr. William R. Hite, Jr.
Superintendent
School District of Philadelphia
440 N. Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19130

Dear Dr. Hite:

Since 2006, my Office has exposed the Philadelphia School District's lack of oversight of its artwork collection which has a replacement value of \$8 million. Over the years, we have revealed items of artwork that were missing, pieces that were deleted from the records without adequate information, duplications in the inventory, and some that were incorrectly coded in the records as to the correct location.

While there's been an overall lack of accountability of the District's artwork, it's even more disheartening that many of these great pieces are hidden from the public, behind locked doors. This includes the more than 200 pieces with a replacement value of \$3.8 million located in a storage facility. Many of these pieces, some I have included with this letter, are by Philadelphia artists who lived, studied or made a direct impression and provided inspiration to the art community in our City.

Some of these artists include the following:

- Walter Elmer Schofield – born in Philadelphia and initiated his formal studies in 1889 at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.
- Henry Ossawa Tanner – African-American artist who after attending the Robert Vaux School decided he would become a painter; eventually enrolled at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1880.
- Antonio Martino – born in South Philadelphia in 1902, his formal training included instruction at Philadelphia's Spring Garden Institute of Art; eventually painted many scenes of Roxborough and Manayunk.
- Laura Wheeler Waring – completed studies at Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1914 and created portraits of known figures from the NAACP; eventually became the head of the department of art and music at Cheyney University.

It is recommended that the District review opportunities to partner with art institutions located in the City to display the artwork for all to enjoy. This could include coordinating efforts with institutions connected to the City of Philadelphia such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art or the Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent.

Additionally, the District should explore opportunities to merge current marketing efforts with the City's tourism agencies and its art sector. In the City of Baltimore, the Walters Art Museum has been displaying reproduction paintings in public, outdoor places such as the zoo and city hall to increase awareness for the art and the museum. This open-air exhibition was originated in Detroit and there have been similar ventures in Delaware, Michigan and Ohio.

These opportunities could also lead to generating much needed new revenues, where a portion of the money could be remitted back to the District's General Fund.

Thank you for your consideration into this matter, as all initiatives should be explored that would allow this historical art collection to be enjoyed by everyone.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Butkovitz', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the signature.

ALAN BUTKOVITZ
City Controller

cc: Bill Green, Chairman, School Reform Commission
Charles Croce, Executive Director, Philadelphia History Museum