



Hon. Marquis A. Harrison
Chairperson
Minah Whyte
District Manager

CITY OF NEW YORK MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10

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March 31, 2025

Max Hollein
Marina Kellen French Director and Chief Executive Officer
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10028

RE: Community Engagement in Harlem-centric Exhibitions

Dear Mr. Hollein,

I am writing to formally urge The Metropolitan Museum of Art to deepen its engagement with Harlem's community boards when curating exhibitions that showcase the culture, history, and artistic contributions of Harlem's Black and Latino populations. While the Met has long been recognized as a steward of global art and history, meaningful representation demands that exhibitions not merely display cultural narratives but also involve the communities that have lived, shaped, and continue to define those narratives.

Harlem is not just a subject of historical and artistic interest, it is a living, breathing community with deep cultural legacies and contemporary vibrancy. However, too often, institutions curate exhibitions about Harlem and its people without engaging those who carry its stories. Community boards, as democratically elected bodies representing Harlem's residents, offer an invaluable conduit for ensuring authenticity, equity, and reciprocity in representation. Their involvement would enhance curatorial efforts, deepen public engagement, and affirm that Harlem's culture is not simply an artifact of study but a continuing legacy.

Beyond courtesy, this is an issue of cultural stewardship and institutional accountability. Representation in spaces like the Met shapes public perception, historical record, and access to opportunities for Harlem-based artists, historians, and cultural workers. A failure to include Harlem's community voices risks reducing its culture to mere spectacle, rather than honoring it as a lived and evolving identity. The Met has the power, and the responsibility, to ensure that Harlem's artistic and cultural contributions are told with integrity, by and with the very people who have created them.

I encourage the museum to establish a formal collaboration with Harlem's community boards, ensuring that exhibitions featuring Black and Latino culture from Harlem are shaped with input from those who hold these histories in their hands. This could include advisory panels, community partnerships, and shared decision-making in exhibition planning. Such an approach would set a new precedent for institutions engaging with historically marginalized communities in ways that are not extractive, but reciprocal and empowering.

Manhattan Community Board 10 voted unanimously in-support of this letter at the March General Board Meeting on March 5, 2025 with 31 votes in support, 0 Recusals and 0 Abstentions. We look forward to your response and the opportunity to discuss how the Met can take meaningful steps toward a more engaged and representative relationship with Harlem's communities.

In Solidarity,



Marquis A. Harrison
Board Chairperson
Manhattan Community Board 10



Kimberly McLaurin
Chair, Arts and Culture Committee
Manhattan Community Board 10

Cc:

Lativa McMath Turner, Chief Diversity Officer, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Norah Yahya, Senior Government Affairs Officer, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Natalie Omary, Associate Manager, The Metropolitan Museum of Art