

מוזיאון ישראל, ירושלים
the israel museum, jerusalem
متحف إسرائيل، أورشليم القدس

James S. Snyder
Anne and Jerome Fisher Director



July, 2014

Mrs. Sonja Lahnstein-Kandel
Harvestehuder Weg 89
20149 Hamburg
Germany

Via e-mail: lahnstein.sonja@step21.de

Dear Sonja:

June was a telling month for us, in a way mirroring the sea change that has overtaken the Museum with increasing strength since the completion of our renewal four years ago. Doug and Mike Starn were just completing *Big Bambú: 5,000 Arms to Hold You*; and James Turrell and his technical crew had just arrived to fine-tune *James Turrell: Light Spaces* before its opening in advance of our 2014 International Council, in an ensemble with *Unfolding Worlds: Japanese Screens from the Gitter-Yelen Collection* and *Unstable Places: New in Contemporary Art* – mixing mediums, cultures, and periods, and yet all focusing on light and space in resonant ways.

And then our International Council got underway, with 240 participants from 18 countries (a record!), with 20% more participants than the preceding year and with 25% attending for the first time and with a lot of new and younger faces that could not offer a more gratifying indication of the Museum's vitality as we face our future. Our Council guests once again pronounced this to be the best Council ever – a comment that continues to be deeply appreciated each and every year.

This time of year of course also provides the occasion for the publication of our annual *Israel Museum Journal*, highlighting a progression of benchmark achievements and other accomplishments of the preceding year that offer an opportune time to report to our International Leadership.

Attendance

Our attendance for 2013 peaked at 967,000 visitors – just shy of the 1,000,000 mark that we might well have surpassed, had Jerusalem's record-breaking snowstorm in December, 2013, not closed the Museum – and all of Jerusalem – for nearly a week. This result placed us at #63 on The Art Newspaper's 2014 "World Museum Attendance Survey," with only sixty-two museums topping the 1,000,000 mark.

p.o.b. 71117, jerusalem 91710
tel. 972-2-670-8801, fax 972-2-670-8080
jsnyder@imj.org.il

Mrs. Sonja Lahnstein-Kandel
July, 2014
Page 2

Given Israel's population and tourism demographics – drawing fewer than 3.0 million tourists each year – our visitor statistics stand out notably. And all of this surely says something about the Museum's growing status as a destination, as does the international media's continuing focus on the Museum in gratifying ways – with our current exhibition *Face to Face: The Oldest Masks in the World* having been The Art Newspaper's pick of the month in April, in the company of major exhibitions at MoMA in New York, Tate Modern in London, and the Grand Palais in Paris. And with *Big Bambú*, while its massive installation was underway in May, having been picked up as Photo of the Day in newspapers worldwide.

Museum Programs

Our annual *Journal* highlights a year of exhibitions and programming that could not be more exemplary of the way in which we have elevated content to become the focal point of all that we do, organizing our exhibitions into clusters that encourage an appreciation for the resonances across time and place that are the trademark of the Museum's universal character. *Herod the Great: The King's Final Journey* stood out in 2013, both for its record attendance of 452,000 visitors and also for its message about an imperial modus operandi that put the aesthetic mark of empire on provincial Judea, while also enabling the flourishing of the region's own culture, creating a Golden Age in Second Temple Judea that would be unsurpassed. At the same time, our concurrent exhibitions, among them *I Am Gabriel: A Scroll in Stone from the Time of Herod* and *Displaced Visions: Émigré Photographers of the 20th Century*, each offered a counterpoint to Herod's imperial hubris, reflecting on the prophetic angst of ancient times and the geo-political angst of our own times.

With 2014 already underway, we are continuing to extend our efforts to stretch our curatorial vision to its limits, currently presenting: *Dress Codes: Revealing the Jewish Wardrobe* – which looks at 200 years of costume of the Jewish world and how it absorbed influences from cultures around it and also exerted influence on those cultures – coupled with *Face to Face*, presenting twelve of the only known thirteen examples of these artifacts which offer the first evidence of settled communal life, each from sites barely twenty-five miles from Jerusalem. Ten of these rare artifacts were loaned generously by Judy and Michael Steinhardt well over a year in advance of the exhibition, in order to allow for invaluable research and analysis. And, in our Upper Floor Galleries, our ensemble of *Unfolding Worlds* from the extensive Japanese Art holdings of Kurt Gitter and Alice Gitter-Yelen, *James Turrell*, and *Unstable Places* all explore the phenomena of painted, framed, and projected light and how it shapes, manipulates, and even distorts one's sense of the experiential space around you. At the same time, in our Billy Rose Art Garden, the Starns' monumental *Big Bambú* uses 10,000 bamboo poles and 50 miles of climbing rope to create an experiential metaphor for how chaos becomes the interconnected order of our lives.

These and many other exhibitions and programs throughout the year demonstrate our growing focus on presenting curatorial and creative enterprise with a level of production – and a sensitivity to the primacy of the objects themselves – that draws praise from lenders and visitors alike and can therefore be a source of great pride for all of us.

Mrs. Sonja Lahnstein-Kandel

July, 2014

Page 3

Operating Results and Capital Development

Expenditures for operations, exhibitions, and programs totaled \$31.7 million in 2013, as compared with \$28.4 million in 2012, and were matched by sustained and growing levels of income from all sources, producing our 12th consecutive break-even year and marking a performance that continues to be without parallel among cultural institutions in Israel. In our third full year following renewal of our campus, and with the Museum's public and programmable spaces doubled in size, it is notable that our operating costs have grown by only 25%, which is an achievement in itself. And admissions and related income grew by 25% over the preceding year, reflecting a doubling in income from these sources over the preceding ten years.

Having concluded our endowment campaign in memory of Teddy Kollek in 2011, our total endowment now stands at \$180.0 million, as compared with total funds of less than \$40.0 million before our 30th Anniversary endowment campaign began in 1995 and representing more than a quadrupling of these funds – with payments on pledges still coming in – and supporting roughly 15% of our overall needs, as compared with 4% in 1995. And finally, at \$180.0 million, total endowment for the Museum is six times our operating budget, distinguishing us among our peers worldwide.

Director's Circle

Each and every accomplishment described in our *Journal* testifies to the fundamental importance of our Director's Circle. Since its founding in 1999 to secure our core operations through unrestricted annual gifts of \$100,000 or more, it continues to be central both to our current success and to our confidence in our future planning. From six Founding Members, the Director's Circle now comprises forty-six individuals, families, and foundations, and with the recent addition of Lisa and Ivan Kaufman, Great Neck, NY; Stephen Riady Foundation, Singapore; Barbara and Richard Rothschild, New York; and Robbi and Bruce Toll, Rydal, PA.

This group's annual support covers more than 15% of our core needs each year. And, together with the income from our growing endowment, these two sources of assured support now address over 30% of our annual operating needs – tripling their joint contribution to the Museum's operating fund over the past decade.

As we approach our 50th Anniversary in 2015, we are fortunate to be able to turn our attention from the kind of intensive capital development that has produced the results that we are experiencing today, so that we can focus instead on developing our cultural currency – on collection building and on filling gaps and improving the strength of our holdings across all of the Museum's collecting areas. Our *Journal* is filled with examples of the fruits of these ongoing efforts, with regard both to singular gifts and to gifts of entire collections, and I only mention here a select few – one from each curatorial wing – that stand out during this past year.

Mrs. Sonja Lahnstein-Kandel
July, 2014
Page 4

In Archeology, the Louis and Carmen Warschaw Collection adds to our notably comprehensive holdings a remarkable selection of over 700 objects embracing the history of the ancient Land of Israel from Prehistory to the Crusades. In Jewish Art and Life, our joint purchase with The Metropolitan Museum in New York brings to us a rare 15th Century handwritten copy of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, which is one of the greatest surviving examples of Northern Italian High Renaissance Hebrew manuscript illumination and which is also perhaps the first example of an object of such rarity being acquired jointly by two institutions. And, in the Fine Arts, our purchases of Piet Mondrian's *Composition with Double Line*, 1934, and of Alina Szapocznikow's *Femme de ménage (Cleaning Lady, 1965)*, were made possible with funds raised during our selective deaccessioning of early gifts to our Modern Art collection exactly to enable the purchase of singular works that would fill gaps in our holdings.

With our 50th Anniversary on our horizon, we are strengthening this focus on collections – an agenda that must be at the heart of any museum's mandate. And again, and almost without saying, the underlying security provided by our Director's Circle and by the efforts of our International Leadership remains vitally central, affording us the privilege of so critical a focus in advance of our 50th milestone year.

Together with all of our International Leadership, you continue to be central to this picture, for which you deserve our deepest appreciation.

With gratitude and affection,



James S. Snyder
Director

P.S. Please let us know if you have not yet received your 2014 *Journal*, and we will be happy to forward another copy to you.