

Low

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

May 21, 1979

The regular bimonthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Corcoran Gallery of Art was held at the Gallery on May 21, 1979, the last Monday in May being a holiday. The following members of the Board were present: Abranson, Alper, Avram, Sechhoefer, Bond, Boorstin, Brown, Daly, Dudley, Firestone, Folger, Freeman, Hall, Jacobsen, Jewett, Kinney, Koteen, Kreeger (Chairman), Lloyd, Logan, Marks, Middendorf, Nef, Ourissan, Saul, Scherer, Schwartz, Silverstein, Vanderpool, Warner (Mrs. B), Wilkinson, Woodward, and Yerkes. Also present were Mrs. Wood, Docent Chairman; Dr. Marzio, Director and Chief Executive Officer; Ms. Livingston, Associate Director; Mrs. Muccio, Director of Development and Membership; Ms. Goffe, Director of Finance and Planning; Dr. Nygren, Curator of Collections; Admiral Snead, Building Projects Director; and Mrs. Tilley, Executive Secretary.

After calling the meeting to order at 12:45 p.m., Mr. Kreeger welcomed Mrs. Lloyd to her first meeting as a Corcoran Trustee. The Board then approved the Minutes of the Board meeting of March 26 and the Executive Committee meetings of March 12 and April 16, 1979.

Development and Membership

In the absence of Development and Membership Committee Chairman FitzGerald, Mr. Saul reported that the current fiscal year was shaping up as the best in the history of the Gallery's development efforts, a result for which he gave particular credit to Mr. FitzGerald and Mrs. Muccio. Referring to the April 30, 1979 Development Report (attached), he noted that Corporate, Foundation, and government contributions were all well ahead of last year and even ahead of the higher budget goals set for this year. He mentioned also that matching funds for the recent \$100,000 Cafritz Foundation grant were already in hand. He pointed out, however, that these fine results were offset in part by an unexplained and drastic shortfall in Trustee giving, which currently stood at a record low figure of only \$39,000 in contrast to last year's total of nearly \$186,000. He said this shortfall was particularly regrettable since generous Trustee giving is one of the most important indicators for potential donors. Mr. Kreeger stressed the danger of complacency resulting from the recent Armand Hammer Foundation grant and other increased private sector funding, and reiterated the continuing vital necessity of substantial Trustee giving as a precondition of continued major outside funding. He then reminded Board members of the approaching end of the fiscal year and urged that pledges be turned in by August 31.

Appointment of Director of Finance and Planning

Mr. Kreeger referred to the recent sudden departure of the Gallery's Comptroller and the resulting critical problems for its budget and fiscal operations. He then called on the Director to report on steps taken to meet this crisis. Dr. Marzio pointed out that the increased level of Gallery fund-raising which had characterized the past year or two had meant a significant increase in accounting work, and that the magnitude of the grants received had necessitated more extensive and complicated fiscal and auditing records. In order to cope with this increased workload and responsibility, he said, it had been decided to transfer Ms. Goffe from her post as Administrative Dean of the Art School to the newly-created position of Director of Finance and Planning for the entire Corcoran. He stated that Ms. Goffe had already established an excellent accountability system for the School, and that in her new post she would be expected similarly to bring to the Gallery a new standard of fiscal orderliness and financial forecasting capability. He then introduced Ms. Goffe to the Board. Ms. Goffe explained that she had been in her new position for only two weeks, but that certain progress had already been made in the following areas: (1) the delayed financial statement and the draft 1979/80 budget would be available for presentation to the June meeting of the Executive Committee and the July meeting of the Board; (2) the vacant accounting position had already been filled with a well-qualified person; (3) the Executive Committee had approved the hiring of a grant administrator to assist with the heavy workload of grant applications; and (4) the Gallery audit, also delayed by the Comptroller's departure, would begin in July, for completion in September or October. She added that there was no cash flow problem at the present time. Mr. Kreeger wished Ms. Goffe well in her new position.

Report of the First Vice President

On the subject of Trustee committee assignments, Mr. Jewett reported that a number of reactions had been received to his letter of May 9 circulating a new list of committee assignments, some from chairmen seeking to recruit new Trustees to their committees and others from Trustees desiring committee assignments other than those listed. He expressed the hope that at least some of these requests could be accommodated.

Speaking in his capacity as Chairman of the Nominating Committee, he reported that Life Trustee James Biddle had resigned from the Board, giving as his reason that he had moved his residence to Pennsylvania and would be unable in the future to devote to the Corcoran the time and attention it deserved. Mr. Jewett said that Mr. Biddle's departure would leave one Life Trustee vacancy, in addition to the four existing Term Trustee vacancies. He stated that the Nominating Committee had already received several suggestions for the Life Trustee vacancy and would make its recommendation to the next Board meeting. He then proposed the name of Mrs. James Biddle for appointment as a Term Trustee for the period ending January 1981. This nomination was unanimously approved by the Board. Mr. Kreeger then read Mr. Biddle's letter of resignation, following which the Board approved a motion of regret over the resignation and appreciation for Mr. Biddle's many valued services as a Corcoran Trustee.

Mr. Jewett reported that the Audit Committee had met with the Gallery's Auditors, who had examined the Corcoran's books and found everything in order. They had also submitted a number of suggestions regarding new procedures which were being considered by the Audit Committee. He added that the Gallery was in the black, while the School had a current deficit of \$13,000.

Art School Report

In the absence of Dean Thomas, Ms. Goffe described the School graduation held on May 3, in which 38 students had received diplomas in the presence of 500 guests and three distinguished speakers, including U.S. Senator Pell. On the same occasion the Bernstein gift, in support of student exhibitions, was accepted by the School. The graduation ceremony had been followed by a reception and the opening of the final student exhibit. She reported that there would be two summer sessions this year, as well as the usual Maine summer workshops. She noted also that the April 20 Art School/Friends Open House had been a success, with over 400 guests in attendance.

Mr. Daly then described plans for a School benefit event in October in the form of a "Surprise Party", the main attraction of which would be the chance to win door prizes of substantial value. He said that Trustee assistance was expected and would be much appreciated, particularly to help with the organization of ticket sales, upon which the success of the event would depend.

Committee Reports

Mrs. Vanderpool said that the report of the Works of Art Committee would be covered later in the meeting by the report of the Associate Director. She did, however, appeal for better attendance at Committee meetings.

Mr. Folger reported that the Investment and Finance Committee had met earlier this month with Riggs Bank officials to review the Corcoran's investment portfolio, which he said was prospering normally. He stated that the Endowment Fund continued at about the 3.2 million dollar level and was producing approximately an 8% return. Mr. Kreeger noted the importance of keeping idle funds at a minimum.

In the absence of the Chairman of the Building and Grounds Committee, Dr. Marzio reported that no reaction had yet been received to the Gallery's most recent grant application to the Kresge Foundation for air conditioning assistance. He stated that contact had recently been made with Pittsburgh Plate Glass, which appeared to have some interest in the problem now facing the Corcoran of installing heat-resistant glass in the skylight areas in order to conserve energy. He said PPG was currently studying the problem and, while no commitment had been made, might be willing to assist the Gallery in this critical area.

Speaking for the Special Events Committee, Mr. Wilkinson reported that he was leaving the Chairmanship of this Committee to take over the newly-constituted Public Relations Committee. He added that he was being replaced by Mrs. Alper as Chairman and Mrs. Bechhoefer as Vice Chairman of the Special Events Committee.

As Chairman of the Women's Committee, Mrs. Dudley reported that the Committee was ending its 25th Anniversary observance with the presentation to the Gallery of a major painting by Joan Mitchell. She reported also a gift of \$20,000 from Mrs. Sarnoff to the School, of which \$5,000 would be for sculpture studio equipment and the remainder for scholarships. In conclusion she said the Committee was planning a benefit fashion show on September 12. Mr. Kreeger praised the Women's Committee and its many contributions to the Corcoran, and expressed special appreciation to Mrs. Sarnoff for her generous gift.

In the absence of the President of the Friends of the Corcoran, Mrs. Bechhoefer reported the success of the Friends' Acquisition Evening on May 11, which had resulted in the acquisition of a painting by Washington artist Willem de Looper. Mr. Kreeger, citing figures provided by the President of the Friends, stated that membership had now arisen to 726, toward a membership goal of 1,000.

Mrs. Wood, Docent Chairman, reviewed recent and planned activities of the Docents, and read excerpts from appreciative letters written by both children and teachers concerning the Gallery's Architecture Tour. She reported a shortage of Docent volunteers, due in large part to competition from various Smithsonian-related museums. She urged that those volunteers serving the Gallery as Docents be accorded more recognition by the Corcoran. Mr. Kreeger commented that he had received several letters commending the Docents for their fine work.

Reporting for the Education and Shop Committee, Mrs. Warner said that the Corcoran Shop was continuing to break even.

In the absence of the Chairman of the Art School Committee, Mr. Schwartz, referring to Mr. Daly's earlier remarks on the planned "SurPrize Party", reported that plans were also going forward for a second Beaux Arts party to benefit the School, to be held probably in early December. He said that the Committee had asked the School to compile comparative income/outgo figures on the Corcoran and other art schools around the country. He stated also that a report on long-term goals and objectives of the School would be ready for presentation probably in the Fall.

Report of the Associate Director

Ms. Livingston reported that the recent Sotheby Parke Bernet auction of Corcoran European paintings had been a great success, bringing in a total of \$641,170 as compared with the pre-auction estimate of \$495,000. She added that other items still remaining to be sold might bring in another \$40-50,000. She cited several sales records which had been broken during the auction, and commended

all concerned for the organization and handling of the event, including the excellent catalogue. On the initiative of Mr. Hall, the Board passed a motion expressing its gratitude to Dr. Marzio, Ms. Livingston, Dr. Nygren, and other members of the staff for the deft and successful handling of the deaccessioning and auctioning of these Corcoran paintings.

Ms. Livingston then reviewed current and future exhibition activities. In the latter category she mentioned the June 11 opening of "Art Inc.", an exhibit of American paintings by Israeli artist Avigdor Arikha in the Modern Painters series, opening on June 14. She also mentioned upcoming shows of recent acquisitions of drawings and photographs, and the July 21 opening of exhibits of work by Frederic Church and his contemporaries. She reported that the Works of Art Committee would review the Gallery's 1979-80 exhibition program at its next meeting on June 8.

Looking ahead to the Fall, Dr. Nygren stated that an exhibition of graphics by George Biddle was planned for that time, based on a collection of 125 prints given to the Corcoran by the artist in 1957. He added that Mr. Biddle had also donated to the Gallery a number of paintings and drawings of his own authorship or from his collection. Dr. Nygren said that the Biddle prints would be catalogued. Dr. Marzio remarked that the National Endowment for the Arts grant for the Biddle exhibit would have to be matched and perhaps supplemented; he mentioned also that the Church exhibition mentioned above was still unfunded.

Referring to the May 11 Friends' Acquisition Evening, Ms. Livingston said that the earlier and welcome decision of the Friends of the Corcoran to contribute to the funding of the new curator post for Washington area contemporary art had reduced the resources available to them this year for art purchase, resulting in the acquisition of a fine but less expensive painting by Washington artist de Looper. She said the Friends' acquisition program should return to normal next year, and that in the meantime the decision of the Women's Committee to acquire the Joan Mitchell work for the Gallery had helped to compensate for the shortage of Friends' purchase funds.

Ms. Livingston called attention to the Attendance-Admissions Report for FY 1978-79 (attached) and in particular to the increased Gallery attendance figures for March, April, and May. She said an effort would be made to strengthen contributions at the door now that the admission charge had been abolished. In conclusion she announced that the new Curator of contemporary art for the Washington region, Ms. Clair List, would be presented to the Trustees at the next Board meeting.

By way of an afterword, Dr. Marzio told the Board that he felt a certain frustration over what he regarded as the inadequacy of communication between Trustees and Gallery/School. He expressed the thought that there should be more day-to-day Trustee input, over and above Board and Committee meetings, in the institutional functioning of the Corcoran, but said he was unsure as to how to achieve this result. He asked for suggestions from members of the Board.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:00 P.M.

Niles W. Bond
Secretary