

FROM:

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TO:

Grzegorz Szrajber
Marszałek Województwa Łódzkiego

Urząd Marszałkowski
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Poland

Wednesday, 23 February 2022

Honorable Grzegorz Szrajber, Marszałek Województwa Łódzkiego,

I am writing in my capacity as President of CIMAM, the International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art, an Affiliated Organization of ICOM, the worldwide International Council of Museums. An important part of CIMAM's work is the Museum Watch Committee, which responds to critical situations around the world that impact on a museum's ability to realize its mission and maintain its codes of practice. This committee has brought to my attention the situation concerning one of the very first museums of modern art worldwide, your legendary Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź. We understand that the contract of its current Director, Jarosław Suchan, has only been temporarily extended. I am therefore writing to you now on behalf of CIMAM to express our deep concern about this worrying situation, which places the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź in an extremely precarious position.

Last year I had the pleasure of visiting the Museum Sztuki with many of my colleagues from CIMAM on the occasion of our annual global conference. This conference – also organized with your support, for which once again, on behalf of myself and the entire Association, I would like to thank you very much – was an invaluable opportunity to meet, discuss, and exchange experiences with museum professionals from all over the world. At that time, we were able to directly experience and admire the extraordinary intellectual and artistic work that Jarosław Suchan and his colleagues have been delivering for many years with their development of the collection and curation of world-class programs. Those museum professionals attending the conference that had not visited the museum for a number of years were particularly impressed by the complete modernization and reconstruction of both the old museum seat (ms1) and the new building (ms2).

There was already strong international awareness of the vision and professionalism of the new team. Under the management of Jarosław Suchan, over the past 15 years, the museum has not only once more become one of the most important institutions in Europe, but also a leading partner in several international collaborations. One of Suchan's most significant achievements is the

international promotion of the Polish avant-garde (especially the work of Władysław Strzemiński and Katarzyna Kobro) and its introduction into the canon of Western art history through bold and innovative interpretation.

Many years of research into the Polish avant-garde, as well as Jarosław Suchan's professional contacts and professional credibility, have resulted in, among other things, the organization of Kobro and Strzemiński exhibitions in such renowned institutions as Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid, Centre Pompidou in Paris and Moderna Museet in Malmo. Jarosław Suchan's personal dedication also led to the inclusion of Katarzyna Kobro's sculptures within the permanent exhibition at MoMA in New York – probably the most visited gallery in the world. In turn, the *States of Life* exhibition in Beijing, organized through his initiative, was the largest ever presentation of a Polish artist in Asia. Many people within the global museum community cite his work as a leading example of how national art histories can be integrated into international narratives.

Thanks to his work, in the eyes of 20th-century art historians around the world, Poland now stands for the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź and as you are aware, this recognition has resulted in the museum receiving a number of national and international accolades and awards. One example of this is the personal invitation for Jarosław Suchan to join the BIZOT Group (2020) – an organization comprising directors of the world's most important museums, from the Louvre and the British Museum to the Hermitage, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Paris's Centre Pompidou.

Many of us remember, as I am sure you do, the very difficult times in the museum's recent history. Following on from the decades of vibrancy and international profile under the leadership of its legendary director, Ryszard Stanisławski, the 1990s and early 2000s saw the near disappearance of this institution from the map. Provincialization and a dramatic lowering of curatorial standards led to a loss of credibility in the eyes of the public and other partners.

Jarosław Suchan has managed to rebuild the museum's reputation and credibility and reset the museum on a strong path of future development and ambition. We know, and the history of this museum proves it, how much depends on the director of an institution: their vision, knowledge, professionalism, experience, and personal contacts are integral to a museum's success. We are very concerned that a change in the position of Director at this point will undermine the position of the museum, which for over a decade has been successfully fulfilling its mission – both locally and internationally. We are convinced that extending Jarosław Suchan's contract for an appropriate term will ensure the stability needed to enable the strong trajectory of excellence and ambition to continue, and will allow time for a well-planned professional competition and succession strategy. The future of the Muzeum Sztuki is not only an issue for Łódź and Poland, but also for the international museum community.

Finally, on behalf of CIMAM, I would like to express our willingness to offer you any expertise we can provide as a group of museum professionals from all over the world. We remain at your

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disposal for any further correspondence, or for actions that may be helpful, such as proposing a representative to the jury for a future recruitment process. Your museum is globally significant and therefore we, as a global organization, are committed to it supporting its future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mami Kataoka', written in a cursive style.

Mami Kataoka
President of CIMAM
Director of Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan.

CIMAM – International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art, an Affiliated Organization of ICOM.

INTERNATIONAL
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OF MODERN ART