

Dear Milwaukee Art Museum Workers,

I am writing to you to express my support for your effort to unionize in order to win a just and fair workplace. The Milwaukee Art Museum is a regional and national icon that represents the city of Milwaukee. As a working artist in Milwaukee, I see how the museum's position in the community is crucial to the Milwaukee art scene, from independent galleries, freelancing artists, to other museums and to the Milwaukee art community at large. The experience of going to the museum is very important to myself, as an artist and a museum attendee. Without the support of museum workers, we will have no museums to have those moments of discovering and contemplation. When you spend the time observing moments between staff and guests you understand the importance of supporting the MAM workers. For example, when a security guard points a guest in the direction of the new placement of their favorite artwork; when you overhear the admissions staff describing the new exhibitions with excitement to an out of town visitor; and when the maintenance staff rushes across the museum to clean up a spilled coffee.

Part of MAM's responsibility to the art world (as well as the Milwaukee community at large) is to pay a livable wage to all its workers. Many of these workers are artists themselves. I was once one of these museum workers. I was not able to make a livable wage as a worker at MAM, which caused me to look for work elsewhere. It is a wonderful opportunity to work at a prestigious institution like the Milwaukee Art Museum, but one cannot survive on prestige alone. Low wages, limited benefits, and precarious scheduling place an undue burden on families and the larger Milwaukee community. They also stifle the expression of young artists who work at your institution, who are integral to the continued survival and development of the art world in general.

MAM's responsibility to the art world is two-fold: it must protect and display historic and contemporary works of art, and it must ensure that the workers who are actually tasked with protecting and displaying these works of art are fairly paid, receive sustaining benefits, and do not have to worry about layoffs, favoritism, or other workplace ills.

I am proud to support MAM workers in their desire for union representation. Your efforts will strengthen the museum: your positions bring art to the public, your knowledge protects the art and presents it in professional ways, and your expertise allows the daily operations of the museum to run smoothly.

Sincerely,  
Maeve Jackson