



Dear Friends,

One of my greatest joys since joining the Museum in 2022 has been witnessing the remarkable growth in public engagement, particularly the extraordinary turnout for our Community Days and culturally specific celebrations—and seeing what these gatherings truly mean to our community. Recently welcoming nearly 1,500 visitors for *Polish Heritage Day*, *Viva Puerto Rico!*, and *AAPI Heritage Day* has me reflecting on the local impact of a nationally important museum.

While the New Britain Museum of American Art is recognized nationally for its extraordinary collection and exhibitions, our most meaningful impact is often felt much closer to home—in the health, vibrancy, and sense of belonging experienced by our neighbors here in New Britain.

The Museum's commitment to our neighbors is visible in the many ways we collaborate with the City and serve residents directly. Through partnerships celebrating Borinqueneers Day and Juneteenth, for example, we create opportunities for our community to gather in pride, reflection, and joy. Through subsidized school tours for New Britain students, we ensure that young people encounter original works of art at a formative age, often for the very first time. Through Free New Britain Saturdays on the first Saturday of every month and monthly Access for All Community Days offering free admission to all visitors, we continue to reduce barriers to access and invite everyone to see themselves reflected here.

Some of the most powerful moments at the Museum are full-circle moments. Residents today openly celebrate their cultures, histories, and identities inside the very institution established generations ago to ensure broader access to the arts. These gatherings are joyful and deeply human. They affirm belonging. They create connections across generations. They remind us that museums are not simply places to view art, but places where people can feel seen and valued.

That sense of belonging is especially visible during the annual New Britain and Berlin Student Art Shows, which welcome approximately 1,200 students and family members annually into the galleries. For generations, displaying artwork at the Museum has become a rite of passage—a moment of pride. Seeing one's own artwork exhibited in a museum of national stature sends a powerful message to a child: *your existence matters here*.

Our campus itself also serves as a cultural anchor at the edge of Walnut Hill Park, one of New Britain's most heavily used public spaces. The Museum contributes to the vibrancy, safety, and identity of this shared civic landscape, offering residents and visitors alike a place where art, nature, and community intersect. The presence of world-class art in New Britain instills a powerful sense of civic pride—that this city and its

people are part of a community connected to cultural resources and artistic experiences of the highest caliber.

At the same time, the Museum draws tourism that supports nearby restaurants, retail, hotels, and services. Our programs and events create opportunities for local artists, educators, musicians, and creative professionals.

The Museum's national reputation and local mission are inseparable. **A great American art museum should not stand apart from its community, but at the center of it—** serving as a place of learning, celebration, and connection for all while honoring the many ways people experience and define what it means to be American.

We are deeply grateful to the individuals, foundations, corporate partners, and government agencies whose generosity transforms an investment in art into an investment in people. Their support makes possible the kind of experiences and connections that extend far beyond our walls, as art quietly improves the lives of the community around it.

Warm Regards,



BRETT ABBOTT

Executive Director and CEO

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ON THE COVER: Louise Nevelson (Pereiaslav, Ukraine, formerly Russian Empire), 1899–1988, New York, New York), *Dream House XXIII* (detail), 1972, painted wood, 70 5/8 × 29 × 16 7/8 in., On loan from the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York: Gift of the American Art Foundation. 96.124

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