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**SUSAN L. TALBOTT TO RETIRE AS DIRECTOR AND C.E.O. OF
WADSWORTH ATHENEUM MUSEUM OF ART**

Susan L. Talbott announced Friday she will retire as Director and C.E.O of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art after completing a \$33 million renovation—the keystone of her transformation of one of Connecticut’s historic treasures into a welcoming 21st-century art museum.

Talbott, who took over the museum in 2008, told the Board of Trustees that in order to ensure a smooth transition for the institution she will leave after upgraded and expanded galleries reopen Fall 2015.

“I’ve experienced great professional and personal satisfaction in advancing the nation’s oldest art museum and bringing its world-renowned collection to the next level,” Talbott said. “Looking ahead, I am eager to explore a different chapter in my life and career, and can do so assuredly, knowing the museum is stronger and poised for continued success in the future. I am proud of all we have accomplished.”

Taking charge of a museum that needed repair and modernization, Talbott first tackled deferred maintenance and restoration of the Wadsworth Atheneum’s historic buildings. Spurred by Talbott’s directorship, the state of Connecticut awarded the Wadsworth Atheneum the remaining funds needed to complete its \$33 million renovation, increasing public gallery space by more than 25% without any new construction. Talbott’s forward-thinking renovation significantly increased efficiencies via the installation of a proprietary power plant and new HVAC system, as well as a state-of-the-art storage facility. In addition to upgrading the physical, brick and mortar museum, Talbott also built a strong, competent staff of curatorial and administrative professionals, strengthening the core of personnel charged with continuing forward momentum into the future.

“The Wadsworth Atheneum has benefited enormously from Susan’s outstanding leadership and proactive engagement with the community,” said David W. Dangremond, President of the Board of Trustees. “She has brought the museum and its collections to national and international prominence through astute acquisitions and acclaimed exhibitions. It is with great pride and thanks that we wish Susan well as she continues to share her talents as a widely-known innovator and advocate for the arts.”

Talbott also took steps early in her tenure to increase and diversify the visitor pool while working to retain the museum’s core supporters, deepening the museum’s roots and broadening its reach into the local community. In spite of the museum’s full-scale renovation, Talbott kept doors open to visitors and increased programming, attracting large numbers of Hartford area children and families for the first time while bolstering loyal membership. Talbott’s successful Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) doubled attendance at museum programs such as First Thursdays and Second Saturdays, the latter of which has provided free admission to more than 22,000 visitors since 2009. Another CEI effort Talbott led was an art and writing initiative, which sends educators into Hartford classrooms to introduce fourth-grade students to the museum’s collection that spans centuries of world history.

“I am extremely proud of Susan Talbott’s commitment to arts in education,” said Yvette Melendez, Chair of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. “Susan understands how children can thrive when they have the opportunity to integrate the arts into their learning, and she has made the Atheneum a welcoming place for all families. Under her innovative leadership, the broader community now has the opportunity to savor its treasures and thousands of students have had the chance to experience the arts in new and meaningful ways.”

Talbott has been a champion for significantly expanding the museum’s collections, overseeing the acquisition of nearly 500 artworks during her tenure. Major acquisitions under Talbott’s leadership include: a generous gift from her friend and internationally renowned artist Richard Tuttle, titled, “Formal Narration”; the 2014 purchase of Artemisia Gentileschi’s masterpiece, “Self-Portrait as a Lute Player,” which will be unveiled to the public for the first time in 2015; a major bequest of Arts and Crafts furniture and decorative art by collector Stephen Gray; and purchases of important works by Georgia O’Keeffe, Martin Puryear, Sean Scully, Kiki Smith and Kara Walker. A seasoned curator herself, Talbott organized the 2011 exhibition, “Patti Smith: Camera Solo,” which travelled to other museums.

In addition to her efforts to reach the local community, Talbott transformed the Wadsworth Atheneum into an internationally-acclaimed institution. An executive committee member of the French Regional American Museum Exchange (FRAME), Talbott's connections resulted in the 2013 blockbuster exhibition, "Burst of Light: Caravaggio and His Legacy." Thanks to Talbott's ties in the global art community, the Wadsworth Atheneum was recently recognized by The European Fine Art Foundation (TEFAF) with a highly-sought after grant to restore its Spanish masterpiece by Francisco de Zurbarán, "St. Serapion." Talbott also has been an active member of the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), serving on its board.

"Susan Talbott's deft leadership has propelled the venerable Wadsworth Atheneum back to its role as a national and international leader for museums," said Richard Armstrong, Director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation. "The renovations and re-organization accomplished under her direction, as well as distinguished additions to the collection, make her tenure especially praiseworthy."

Perhaps Talbott's most lasting legacy at the Wadsworth Atheneum is her impact on the museum's financial stability. Under her judicious management, budgets were consistently balanced and funds were raised from private and public sources, increasing the museum's endowment from \$84 million to \$101 million and strengthening the institution's financial position.

After her retirement from the museum, Talbott plans to pursue other opportunities in the art field, including consulting and organizing exhibitions. The Wadsworth Atheneum will launch a search for a new director in 2015.

Susan L. Talbott

Since 2008 Susan L. Talbott has served as Director and C.E.O. of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, where she has been a driving force for a \$33 million renovation, community engagement, the building of collections, and fiscal growth. Before coming to the Wadsworth Atheneum, Talbott held the positions of Director of Smithsonian Arts at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. (2005 to 2008), and Director of the Des Moines Art Center from 1998 to 2005. Talbott also oversaw the Visual Arts program at the National Endowment for the Arts from 1989 to 1992, and began her museum career in New York as Assistant Director and Director of Programs at the Queens Museum, and then as Director of two branches of the Whitney Museum of American Art during the 1980s. Talbott has achieved

national recognition as a director, curator and through her implementation of community engagement programs in all of her directorships. Talbott is a Harvard University Fellow and an alumna of the Art Museum Director's Program. She has received the Distinguished Service Award from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Alumna Achievement Award from her alma mater, Pratt Institute.

About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

Founded in 1842, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is the oldest continually operating public art museum in the United States. The museum's nearly 50,000 works of art span 5,000 years, from Greek and Roman antiquities to the first museum collection of American contemporary art. The Wadsworth Atheneum's five connected buildings—representing architectural styles from Gothic Revival to modern International Style—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Conn. Since 2010 the museum has been undergoing a major, \$33 million renovation, slated to be complete 2015. Hours: Wednesday – Friday: 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; First Thursdays: 11 a.m. – 8 p.m. Admission: \$5 – 10; discounts for members, students and seniors. Public phone: (860) 278-2670; website: thewadsworth.org.

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