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Slashed Humanities Grants Redirected to Trump's 'Heroes' Sculpture Garden

We're tracking the impact of President Donald Trump's recent executive orders and policy changes on the arts.



U.S. President Trump arrives for the Independence Day events at Mount Rushmore National Memorial in Keystone, South Dakota, July 3, 2020. Photo: Saul Loeb / AFP via Getty Images.

Brian Boucher (<https://news.artnet.com/about/brian-boucher-244>) & **Margaret Carrigan** (<https://news.artnet.com/about/margaret-carrigan-38737>)

April 11, 2025

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- **Elon Musk's DOGE imposes massive cuts to federal arts agencies.**
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President Donald Trump's flurry of executive orders since returning to the White House is shaking up the art world.

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Restrictions on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives are already directly affecting national institutions including the Smithsonian, while other orders could lead to further challenges for artists seeking grants, sourcing materials, and looking to collaborate or exhibit across borders. Meanwhile, the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), helmed by Elon Musk, has made deep funding and staff cuts to key agencies that support museums and other arts initiatives.

These changes won't necessarily stop artists from making work or museums and galleries from showing work, but they could be forced to rethink how they operate. Below, we break down the biggest impacts. This list will be continually updated.

April 9, 2025: Canceled Humanities Grants to Fund "Heroes" Sculpture Garden Initiative

As part of a reorientation toward the Trump Administration's priorities to celebrate patriotic history, the Nation Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) now intends to direct funding to the president's proposed National Garden of American Heroes. The news, first reported by the *New York Times* (<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/10/arts/trump-garden-heroes-humanities.html>), comes just days after the federal agency canceled around 85 percent of its recent grants and placed 80 percent of its staff on leave following cost-cutting demands from DOGE. The NEH is one of the largest federal funding sources for museums, institutions, historical sites, and cultural research projects across the U.S.

Three attendees of an NEH advisory council meeting, who spoke under the condition of anonymity, said the NEH's acting chair, Michael McDonald, confirmed the agency would now prioritize projects that align with the White House's cultural agenda. In particular, this includes Trump's planned patriotic sculpture garden and the broader celebration of the 250th anniversary of American independence on July 4, 2026.

Attendees said McDonald—who was recently installed after Trump dismissed Shelly Lowe, the first Native American NEH chair whom President Biden had appointed—stated that approximately \$17 million from both the NEH and its sister agency, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), would be allocated to the Garden of Heroes. The estimated cost per statue was discussed as ranging from \$100,000 to \$200,000.

In January, just after taking office, Trump renewed the commission of a National Garden of American Heroes, a vision he proposed in his first administration after delivering an impassioned speech at Mt. Rushmore denouncing the vandalism and removal of Confederate statues. Before leaving office in 2021, Trump proposed a [diverse list of honorees](https://news.artnet.com/art-world-archives/trump-garden-american-heroes-garden-list-1938026) (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world-archives/trump-garden-american-heroes-garden-list-1938026>) for his planned heroes sculpture garden, including historical figures, artists, athletes, and conservative thinkers. The order also mandated that one-twelfth of the budgets of the NEH and the NEA, each with a \$207 million budget, be allocated to the project.

However, the garden was never funded by Congress during Trump's first term and the plans were revoked by President Biden in 2021. — *M.C.*

April 4, 2025: NEH Staff Put on Immediate Leave as Thousands of Grants Are Canceled

Staff at the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) were notified by email that they were being placed on immediate paid administrative leave. The announcement followed letters sent two days earlier to 56 state and jurisdictional humanities councils informing them that their NEH grants were being terminated.

A senior NEH official told *NPR* (<https://www.npr.org/2025/04/04/nx-s1-5352422/neh-staff-administrative-leave>) that among that 80 percent of the agency's staff, or around 145 workers, were placed on administrative leave, including people from the communications team, program officers, and directors. The official said a team from DOGE had been visiting NEH offices over the past couple of weeks. On April 1, NEH managers told staff members that DOGE had recommended reductions in staff of up to 80 percent.

More than a thousand NEH grants were also terminated by the Trump administration, including grants provided to every state humanities council for decades.

"Our funding is quietly sustaining the cultural infrastructure and educational infrastructure of our state," Caroline Lowery, executive director of the Oklahoma Humanities Council, told *USA Today* (<https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2025/04/05/trump-administration-cancels-humanities-grants/82865816007/>). "I think our absence will be felt once it's too late." The NEH supports vital projects like preserving oral histories of the Tulsa Race Massacre and Oklahoma City bombing, and its defunding threatens the preservation of U.S. history despite broad bipartisan support, according to Lowery.

The Japanese American National Museum (JANM) lost a \$175,000 NEH grant for its civics-focused teacher workshops on World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans, affecting a program that has reached over 21,000 students through more than 100 teachers from 31 states. "This is impacting many museums in the United States, especially cultural and ethnic museums," Japanese American National

Museum board chairman Bill Fujioka told the *Los Angeles Times*, adding that museum is facing the loss of \$2 million in grants not only through the NEH but also through the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences (IMLS), which was also shuttered by DOGE in March.

The NEH did not respond to a request for comment.

Founded in 1965 under the same legislation as its sister agency, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the NEH has awarded more than \$6 billion in grants to cultural institutions. Its latest \$26.6 million round of funded projects, announced the week before Trump took office in January, also included a \$300,000 grant to fund digitization efforts at the Louis Armstrong House Museum in Queens and another \$300,000 grant to fund an exhibition about common themes in American immigration history at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in Manhattan. Also among the recent awardees is Myriad Consulting and Training Incorporated, a nonprofit consulting firm that specializes in collections preservation and planning for small to mid-sized cultural organizations; the firm was awarded \$350,000 to establish a field conservation department, which would offer 20 free assessment consultations of digital art collections and an online training program to 48 museum professionals.

Historically, the NEH helped fund major projects such as the 1979 blockbuster traveling exhibition "Treasures of Tutankhamun," Ken Burns's 1990 T.V. megahit *The Civil War*, and several grants to support the preservation of and scholarship around the Dead Sea Scrolls.
—M.C.

April 4, 2025: 21 States Sue Trump Over Order to Dismantle Museum and Library Agency



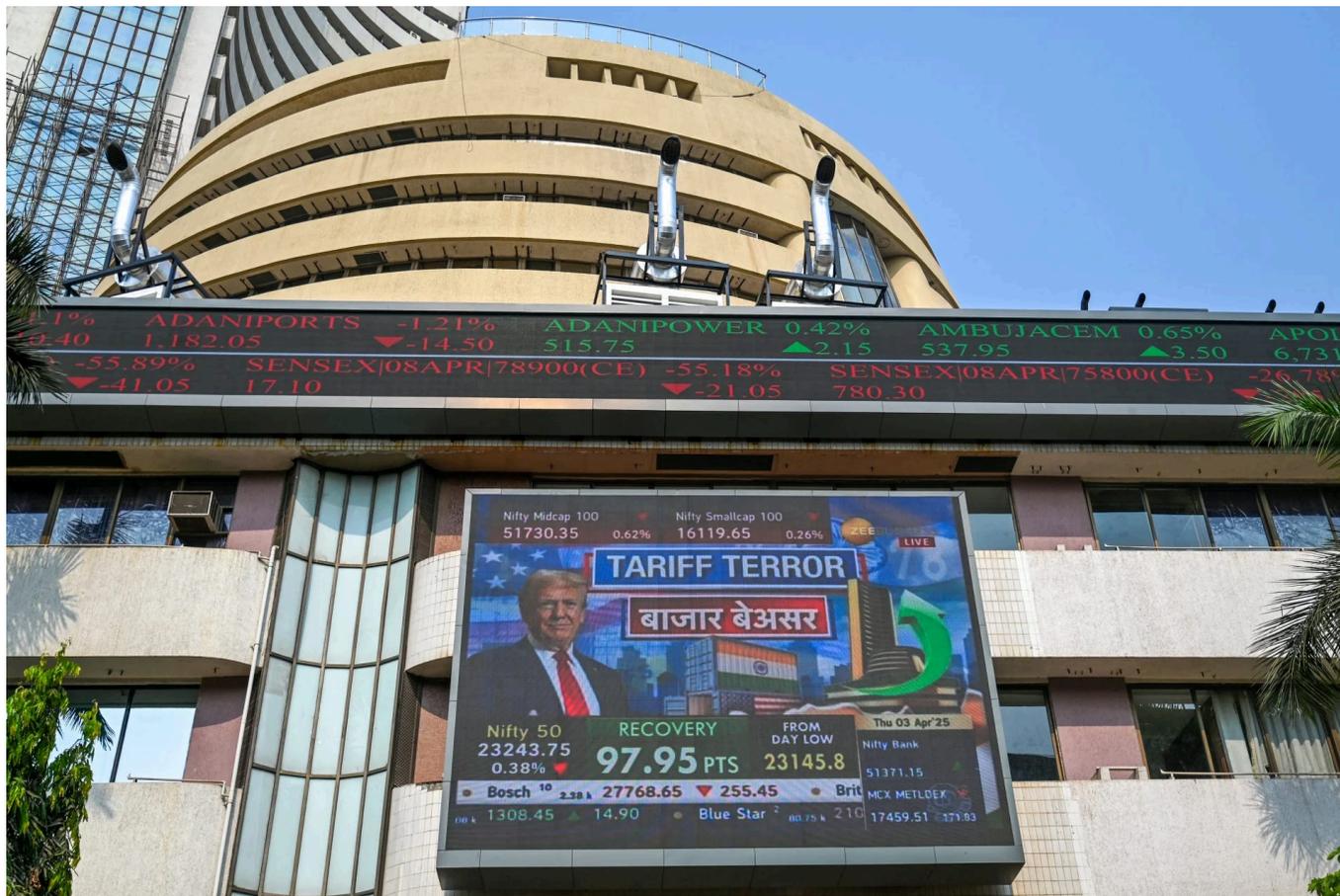
New York Attorney General Letitia James. Photo: David Dee Delgado / Getty Images.

Twenty U.S. states, led by New York, California, and Illinois, are suing President Donald Trump and his administration over attempts to dismantle Congressionally authorized agencies, including the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The lawsuit argues Trump's March 14 executive order to shut down IMLS and similar agencies violates constitutional separation of powers and federal law, as only Congress can eliminate such institutions. IMLS, which accounts for just 0.0046 percent of the federal budget, supports museums and libraries nationwide with critical grants. The suit claims Trump's actions threaten cultural access, small businesses, and public education.

"The Trump administration is launching another attack on vulnerable communities, small businesses, and our children's education," said New York Attorney General Letitia James, announcing the suit. "The agencies they are attempting to dismantle support workers nationwide, provide funding to help minority-owned businesses, and make sure our libraries and museums stay open so children can engage in lifelong learning." —B.B.

Read More: [Trump Administration Sued Over Gutting of Institute of Museum and Library Services \(https://news.artnet.com/art-world/ags-sue-trump-institute-museum-library-services-ims-2628543\)](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/ags-sue-trump-institute-museum-library-services-ims-2628543)

April 2, 2025: "Liberation Day" Tariffs Create Chaos in the Art Trade



A broadcast screen of the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) in Mumbai on April 3, 2025, depicts news of US President Donald Trump unveiling sweeping new trade tariffs. Photo: Punit PARANJPE / AFP via Getty Images.

The global art trade has been reeling from President Trump's "Liberation Day" tariffs, announced on Wednesday, April 2. The sweeping tariffs—fees assessed on imported goods—include a base level of 10 percent that will apply to most countries from April 5, with higher duties on around 60 other countries, including some of the U.S.'s biggest trading partners, from April 9.

For now, the list of goods to which U.S. tariffs apply does not include ([https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-prelim-title50-section1702\(b\)\(3\)&num=0&edition=prelim#:~:text=\(3\)%20which%20read%20as%20follows,controlled%20for%20export%20under%20section](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-prelim-title50-section1702(b)(3)&num=0&edition=prelim#:~:text=(3)%20which%20read%20as%20follows,controlled%20for%20export%20under%20section)) artworks. But other countries have targeted art in retaliatory tariffs on U.S. goods. That includes the U.K., which on Thursday afternoon dropped a 417-page [list of items](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67ee668c9eae202448299c5b/request-for-input-indicative-product-list.pdf) (<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67ee668c9eae202448299c5b/request-for-input-indicative-product-list.pdf>) that could be slapped with import taxes in response to Trump's 10 percent tariffs on U.S. imports of U.K. goods. Noticeably absent from Trump's new list are Mexico and Canada, with whom he has been aggressively sparring over trade since he got into office. In response to Trump's earlier 25 percent duties, Canada put a 25 percent tax on C\$30 billion (\$21 billion) worth of U.S. goods in March, and that includes paintings, drawings, photographs, and other decorative works.

The constantly shifting trade landscape, plummeting stock market, and rising tensions between the U.S. and dozens of countries are undermining art firms' ability to plan effectively. Art logistics companies have emphasized that specific regulations are not yet fully codified and that there may be further changes or clarifications. Interim recommendations to art firms include documenting all artworks accurately, since tariffs are determined by country of origin—the country where the artwork was physically created. If there are Delivered Duty Paid (DDP) shipments currently in transit, notify recipients immediately that additional customs duties may apply once the new tariffs are fully enforced. Some firms may prefer to delay shipments until the regulations are fully codified and clarified, in which case they may have to take on additional storage costs. —M.C.

Read More: [How Art Dealers Can Navigate Trump's Tariffs \(https://news.artnet.com/market/how-art-dealers-can-navigate-tariffs-2628124\)](https://news.artnet.com/market/how-art-dealers-can-navigate-tariffs-2628124).

April 1, 2025: NEH Faces Deep Cuts

The Trump administration is pushing for major cuts at the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), including a 70–80 percent staff reduction and possible cancellation of Biden-era grants. The latest in a series of cuts to agencies that support culture, the move follows the forced resignation of agency head Shelly Lowe in mid March, 11 months before her four-year term was up. Since then, there have been several visits to the agency from DOGE, helmed by Elon Musk.

On Tuesday, April 1, NEH managers told staff members that DOGE had recommended reductions in staff of approximately 180 people, according to the *New York Times* (<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/01/arts/trump-doge-federal-cuts-humanities.html>), which first reported the news. Its grant-making program may also be cut and grants awarded under the Biden administration that have not been fully paid out may be canceled.

The NEH, currently led by interim director Michael McDonald, did not respond to a request for comment.

The National Humanities Alliance (NHA)—a consortium of museums, universities, cultural organizations, and state councils including the American Antiquarian Society and the College Art Association of America—[issued a statement \(https://nhalliance.org/nha-statement-neh-doge-threats/\)](https://nhalliance.org/nha-statement-neh-doge-threats/) condemning the actions, noting that the agency's 2024 budget of \$211 million amounts to a rounding error in the U.S. budget. "NEH staff ensure that small and large organizations alike have access to federal funds. Moreover, they are tireless in their efforts to ensure that U.S. tax dollars are spent well," the statement said. "Cutting NEH funding directly harms communities in every state and contributes to the destruction of our shared cultural heritage."

Trump took aim at funding for the NEH and NEA repeatedly during his first term, prompting repeated [public outcries and protests \(https://news.artnet.com/art-world/rally-new-york-trump-cuts-culture-funding-913241\)](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/rally-new-york-trump-cuts-culture-funding-913241). However, the agencies survived and even saw slight budget increases between 2016 and 2020, thanks to congressional support that overruled the president's efforts to cut federal arts funding. —M.C.

March 31, 2025: Entirety of Institute of Museum and Library Services Staff Placed on Administrative Leave

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in Washington, D.C., abruptly halted operations after all staff were placed on 90-day paid administrative leave by Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency. Employees were barred from the premises, had to surrender government property, and lost email access. The news comes after President Donald Trump signed an executive order the previous week, "Continuing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy," which called for the IMLS to be "eliminated to the maximum extent consistent with applicable law" within seven days.

Established in 1996, IMLS brought together the Institute of Museum Services (founded in 1976) and the Library Programs Office (part of the Department of Education since 1956) and has broadly had bipartisan support since then. Congress appropriated between \$230 million and \$457 million for the agency between fiscal years 2016 and 2024; \$280 million was requested for fiscal year 2025. In a call to salvage the Institute, the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) pointed out that IMLS accounts for just 0.0046 percent of the overall federal budget.

"Placing the entire staff on administrative leave raises questions as to whether the agency will be able to fulfill its legal obligations to disperse congressionally appropriated funding, leaving museums, libraries, and communities across the country at risk of losing vital resources," the AAM said in a statement. "This move continues to undermine the will of the American people—96 percent of whom want

to see federal funding for museums maintained or increased—and prevents American taxpayer dollars from reaching America's communities.” —B.B.

Read More: [DOGE Has Decimated the Institute of Museum and Library Services \(https://news.artnet.com/art-world/doge-decimates-institute-museum-library-services-impls-2626543\)](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/doge-decimates-institute-museum-library-services-impls-2626543)

March 28, 2025: Trump Targets Smithsonian Institution and Its Museums on Ideological Grounds



The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. Photo: Alan Karchmer. Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.

On Thursday, March 28, President Trump released an Executive Order, [Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/restoring-truth-and-sanity-to-american-history/) (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/restoring-truth-and-sanity-to-american-history/>), that targets funding for museums and programs at the Smithsonian Institution that he deems have “promoted narratives that portray American and Western values as inherently harmful and oppressive.”

Specifically, the order cites the Smithsonian American Art Museum's ongoing exhibition, “[The Shape of Power: Stories of Race and American Sculpture](https://americanart.si.edu/exhibition/67675/sculpture-shape-of-power) (<https://americanart.si.edu/exhibition/67675/sculpture-shape-of-power>),” as promoting a “divisive, race-centered ideology.” The major show brings together 82 historical and contemporary sculptures by 70 artists to interrogate how the medium has served as creative expressions of identity, resistance, and liberation. Works by Edmonia Lewis, Robert Lugo, Isamu Noguchi, Augusta Savage, and Virgil Ortiz are included.

The order also takes issue with the National Museum of African American History and Culture for suggesting that “‘hard work,’ ‘individualism,’ and ‘the nuclear family’ are aspects of ‘White culture;’” and the Smithsonian American Women’s History Museum for its plan to celebrate “the exploits of male athletes participating in women’s sports.” (The latter refers to transgender women; Trump denies their existence and refers to them as men.) It is unclear where these claims emerge from.

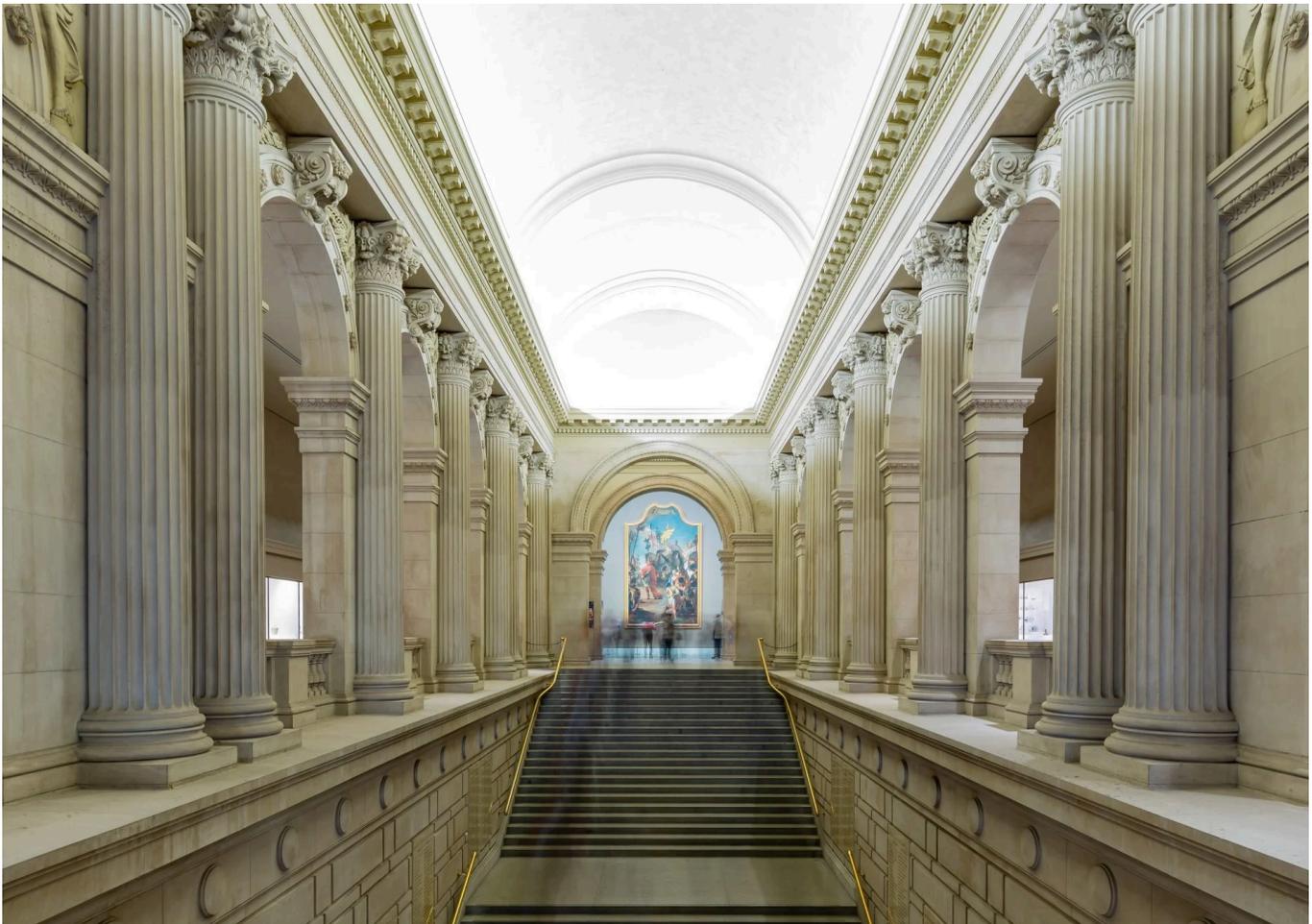
In a letter addressed to its staff, Smithsonian secretary Lonnie Bunch reiterated the institution’s commitment to “telling the multi-faceted stories of this country’s extraordinary heritage,” while working with its Board of Regents, which includes Vice President J.D. Vance. The V.P. is tasked with enforcing the executive order by advising the president on how to “remove improper ideology and will populate the Smithsonian’s board of regents with sympathetic figures. Lindsey Halligan, a former Fort Lauderdale property lawyer, is charged with co-piloting the initiative with Vance.

The Secretary of the Interior, meanwhile, will investigate whether public memorials and monuments have been “removed or changed to perpetuate a false reconstruction of American history, inappropriately minimize the value of certain historical events or figures, or include any other improper partisan ideology” and take action to reinstate them. This presumably refers to monuments to Confederate generals and other advocates of racist government systems that came in for scrutiny as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement. —*B.B.*

Read More: [This Florida Insurance Lawyer Is Helping Trump Vet the Art at the Smithsonian \(https://news.artnet.com/art-world/lindsey-halligan-trump-smithsonian-executive-order-2626200\)](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/lindsey-halligan-trump-smithsonian-executive-order-2626200).

Read More: [Smithsonian Museum Director Placed on ‘Indefinite’ Leave Amid Pressure Campaign \(https://news.artnet.com/art-world/director-national-african-american-museum-on-leave-2627356\)](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/director-national-african-american-museum-on-leave-2627356).

March 17, 2025: Trump Calls For the Gutting of the Institute of Museum and Library Services



Interior view of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo: Shutterstock.

President Trump issued an Executive Order, [Continuing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/continuing-the-reduction-of-the-federal-bureaucracy/) (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/continuing-the-reduction-of-the-federal-bureaucracy/>), on Friday, March 17, directing severe cuts to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), which provides resources to museums and libraries in all 50 states and U.S. territories. The order calls for IMLS (along with organizations such as the United States Agency for Global Media, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, and the Minority Business Development Agency) and other “unnecessary” organizations to be “eliminated to the maximum extent consistent with applicable law” within seven days.

Established in 1996, IMLS brought together the Institute of Museum Services (founded in 1976) and the Library Programs Office (part of the Department of Education since 1956). Congress appropriated (<https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2024-05/imls-appropriations-history-2016-2025.pdf>) between \$230 million and \$457 million for the agency between fiscal years 2016 and 2024; \$280 million was requested for fiscal year 2025. In [a call to salvage the Institute](https://www.aam-us.org/2025/03/17/urgent-act-now-to-save-imls/) (<https://www.aam-us.org/2025/03/17/urgent-act-now-to-save-imls/>), the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) pointed out that IMLS accounts for just 0.0046 percent of the overall federal budget.

According to AAM's advocacy page, IMLS supports “aquariums, arboretums, art museums, botanical gardens, children's museums, culturally-specific museums, historic sites, history museums, military museums, natural history museums, nature centers, planetariums, railway museums, science and technology centers, zoos, and more.” In the fiscal year 2024, among the many recipients of the IMLS' Museums for America grants—some amounting to as much as \$250,000—were the Cleveland Museum of Art; the Denver Art Museum; the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston; the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art New Museum, and Studio Museum; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

The decision reflects “a troubling pattern of diminishing support for the arts and humanities, devaluing cultural institutions, and jeopardizing the livelihoods of those who sustain them,” said Artists at Risk Coalition executive director Julie Trébaud in a statement to the press. “This is a direct attack on artistic freedom and a disservice to future generations.” —*B.B.*

March 12, 2025: Black Lives Matter Mural Demolished Under Threat of Federal Funding Cuts



Crews dismantling the Black Lives Matter Plaza street mural on March 11, 2025 in Washington, D.C. Photo: Chip Somodevilla / Getty Images.

A controversial Black Lives Matter protest mural in Washington, DC, erected in a tense moment between president Donald Trump and Washington, D.C.'s Democratic mayor Muriel Bowser after the police murder of George Floyd in June 2020, is being demolished. Republicans threatened to withhold millions in federal funding if the mural was not removed and the site renamed. Bowser had dubbed the intersection of 16th Street and I Street "Black Lives Matter Plaza."

Bowser announced last week that the mural would be removed after Republican representative Andrew Clyde of Georgia filed legislation threatening to withhold millions of dollars in federal funding unless the city removed the mural and renamed the stretch of pavement "Liberty Plaza."

In a statement on X, Bowser acknowledged the mural's historic significance, but acknowledged that losing funding would be disastrous.

"The mural inspired millions of people and helped our city through a very painful period, but now we can't afford to be distracted by meaningless congressional interference," he wrote. "The devastating impacts of the federal job cuts must be our number one concern. Our focus is on economic growth, public safety, and supporting our residents affected by these cuts." —B.B.

Read More: [Say Goodbye to Washington, D.C.'s Black Lives Matter Mural \(https://news.artnet.com/art-world/say-goodbye-washington-dc-black-lives-matter-mural-2619518\)](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/say-goodbye-washington-dc-black-lives-matter-mural-2619518)

March 3, 2025: 26,000 Artworks at Risk as Trump Administration Makes Deep Cuts to Key Government Office



Alexander Calder's sculpture, *Flamingo* created in 1974, stands in Federal Center Plaza in Chicago, Illinois. Photo: Getty Images.

The Trump administration is making deep cuts to staff at the General Services Administration (GSA), a government organization responsible for preserving over 26,000 public artworks, including historic pieces dating back to the 1850s. A memo dated March 3 said the cost-cutting efforts were spurred by Elon Musk's DOGE. At least five GSA regional offices were closed, and over half of its fine arts and preservation staff were placed on leave, pending termination. The sudden layoff notices left dismissed workers with little time to inform commissioned artists and contractors working on projects.

A staffer told the *Washington Post*, which first reported the news, that the dismissals have already left artworks in limbo. That includes a 1941 Gifford Beal painting, "[Tropical Country](https://archive.ph/o/9aBfZ/https://www.loc.gov/item/2013634538/) (<https://archive.ph/o/9aBfZ/https://www.loc.gov/item/2013634538/>),” which has been temporarily removed from the Interior Department building for restoration. The conservator now doesn't know who to reach at the GSA or whether he'll be paid for his work. “There's been no planning or accounting or consideration for that,” the staffer told the Post. “It's supremely shortsighted.”

The move also threatens federally housed works, such as Alexander Calder's iconic *Flamingo* (1974) in Chicago and Michael Lantz's *Man Controlling Trade* (1942) in Washington, D.C.

The federal art collection under GSA's management functions as a distributed museum, with artworks displayed in courthouses and federal buildings across the U.S. Some of these works are part of the buildings, such as Ben Shahn's "[The Meaning of Social Security](https://archive.ph/o/9aBfZ/https://art.gsa.gov/artworks/637/the-meaning-of-social-security?ctx=081f77d75912457fa1953ff66a048db0ce6561d8&idx=3) (<https://archive.ph/o/9aBfZ/https://art.gsa.gov/artworks/637/the-meaning-of-social-security?ctx=081f77d75912457fa1953ff66a048db0ce6561d8&idx=3>)” (1942), a fresco on the wall of the Wilbur J. Cohen Federal Building in Washington. The U.S. government continues to add to its collection through the Art in Architecture Program, which devotes 0.5 percent of estimated construction costs for a federal building toward commissioning new artworks. Since 1974, the GSA has commissioned over 500 works by artists like Sam Gilliam, Ellsworth Kelly, and Maya Lin.

The GSA also oversees the care of the works in the federal collection, which is managed by small teams located in 11 regions across the country, plus a central office in Washington.

According to the *Post*, former GSA staffers said the agency is also ending its lease for a Virginia storage facility housing hundreds of artworks, including pieces sponsored by the Depression-era Works Progress Administration (WPA), a New Deal program responsible for some of the nation's most iconic artworks. Over the years, federal watchdogs have worked to recover misplaced WPA art, some of which was sold on eBay.

The GSA downsizing measures come as the Trump Administration said it would [sell off 50 percent](https://apnews.com/article/gsa-federal-buildings-doge-fbi-doj-aa123e9c3b12e38c8fa511c2a727f880) (<https://apnews.com/article/gsa-federal-buildings-doge-fbi-doj-aa123e9c3b12e38c8fa511c2a727f880>) of its federal buildings, including properties like the Justice Department and FBI headquarters. On March 4, the administration published a list of hundreds of “noncore” buildings that could be sold; the list was then deleted, with plans to republish. —M.C.

February 24, 2025: Art Museum of Americas Cancels Shows of Black and LGBTQ Artists



The Organization of American States Headquarters in Washington D.C. Photo: Daniel Slim / AFP via Getty Images.

The Art Museum of the Americas, which is run the Organization of American States, has canceled two upcoming shows following cuts to its funding. One, titled “Before the Americas,” featured work by Black artists across the Americas and the other highlighted queer artists from Canada. The news was first reported by Hyperallergic (<https://hyperallergic.com/992061/show-on-artists-of-african-descent-loses-funding-amid-trump-dei-crackdown/>) and confirmed by the Washington Post (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/art/2025/02/26/art-museum-of-americas-cancels-shows-trump-dei-orders/>).

The cancellations come as Trump cracks down on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives. Cheryl D. Edwards, who curated the “Before the Americas” show, told Hyperallergic the museum received an email noting that the Trump administration determined it qualified as a “DEI program and event” and said the government withdrew some funding for it that former President Joe Biden had set aside.

In a February 28 statement, Artists at Risk Connection strong condemned the funding withdrawal as “part of a broader, deliberate campaign to suppress historically marginalized voices, dismantle DEI initiatives, and exert ideological control over cultural institutions.”

“Defunding these programs is not just a budgetary decision—it is a strategic effort to erase these communities from our cultural and historical institutions,” said Julie Trébault, ARC’s executive director.

“Before the Americas” was scheduled to go on view in March with a roster including Wifredo Lam (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/wifredo-lamparis-pompidou-337035>) and Elizabeth Catlett (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/elizabeth-catlett-brooklyn-museum-2541047>). Lam, a Cuban painter, will be featured in an upcoming retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art. Catlett, an American and Mexican sculptor, will have a retrospective at the National Gallery of Art opening in March. The show was also set to include works by Martin Puryear, who represented the U.S. (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/martin-puryear-represent-us-venice-biennale-1332374>) in the 2019 Venice Biennale, and celebrated artist Amy Sherald (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/amy-sherald-american-sublime-sfmoma-2602520>), best known for her portrait (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/amy-sherald-american-sublime-2550217>) of former first lady Michelle Obama.

It's unclear if the two shows could have progressed without funding. The OAS, which derives its authority from an intergovernmental body of around 30 member states, oversees the Art Museum of the Americas, though the U.S. has no direct control over its operations other than how much funding it provides to it. However, the U.S. government remains the OAS's largest funder (contributing 50 to 60 percent of its budget), and as such wields significant influence, often using the organization for diplomatic leverage. —A.S.

February 20, 2025: Hundreds of Artists Protest NEA Grant Changes



The National Endowment for the Arts headquarters in Washington, D.C. Photo: Graeme Sloan / Sipa USA / Alamy Live News.

Less than two weeks after the National Endowment for the Arts updated its grant guidelines, and canceling its Challenge America grant opportunity, some 463 creatives have signed a letter to the NEA asking it to roll back the restrictions, the [New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/18/arts/nea-artists-letter-trump-restrictions.html) (<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/18/arts/nea-artists-letter-trump-restrictions.html>) reported (<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/18/arts/nea-artists-letter-trump-restrictions.html>). The letter was spearheaded by theater director Annie Dorsen, who told NPR (<https://www.npr.org/2025/02/18/nx-s1-5301179/artists-protest-nea-restrictions-trump-executive-orders>) that she sent the letter to the organization on Tuesday.

"We oppose this betrayal of the Endowment's mission to 'foster and sustain an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States,'" the letter reportedly reads.

Among the most prominent signatories is Holly Hughes, one of four artists who had their NEA funding denied in 1990 amid criticism from conservative politicians of the time. Other signers include Pulitzer Prize-winning playwrights Jackie Sibblies Drury, Lynn Nottage, and Paula Vogel.

"In some ways this just feels like déjà vu all over again," Hughes told the *Times*. "These funding restrictions are a good barometer for who is the easy punching bag in American culture at the moment."

The letter asks the NEA to reverse the changes to its guidelines which were made to comply with executive orders from President Donald Trump regarding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives and those that "promote gender ideology."

"Trump and his enablers may use doublespeak to claim that support for artists of color amounts to 'discrimination' and that funding the work of trans and women artists promotes 'gender ideology' (whatever that is)," the letter reportedly said. "But we know better: the arts are for and represent everybody."

A spokesperson for the NEA told Artnet News by email that no person at the NEA had received the letter by the afternoon of February 20.

"However, Presidential executive orders have the full force and effect of law and within the Executive Branch must be implemented consistent with applicable law," they said. "The National Endowment for the Arts is a federal agency and will fully comply with the law." — A.S.

February 14, 2025: Stonewall National Monument Website Drops Transgender and Queer References



A demonstration against the removal of the word "transgender" from the Stonewall National Monument website outside of The Stonewall Inn in New York on February 14, 2025. Photo: Spencer Platt / Getty Images.

Following Trump's [January executive order](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal-government/) (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal-government/>) announcing that the U.S. will only recognize two sexes, the National Park Service has deleted transgender and queer references on the Stonewall National Monument [website](https://www.nps.gov/ston/index.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/ston/index.htm>). All mentions of "LGBTQ+" (seen on [an archived version](https://web.archive.org/web/20250212021949/https://www.nps.gov/ston/index.htm) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250212021949/https://www.nps.gov/ston/index.htm>) of the site from February 12) now read "LGB."

The first U.S. monument dedicated to LGBTQ history, the 7.7-acre New York landmark encompasses the Stonewall Inn, Christopher Park, and adjacent sites including Christopher Street, where the 1969 Stonewall riots unfolded. The series of demonstrations, triggered by a raid in June 1969, would spark further political activism and organization that fueled the gay liberation movement in the 1970s.

In a joint statement on Instagram, Stonewall Inn and its charity, the Stonewall Inn Gives Back Initiative, voiced their "outrage" over the removal of transgender mentions from the monument's website. The Stonewall Inn also staged [a protest](https://www.instagram.com/p/DGCHTyMs6XG/) (<https://www.instagram.com/p/DGCHTyMs6XG/>), at noon on Friday.

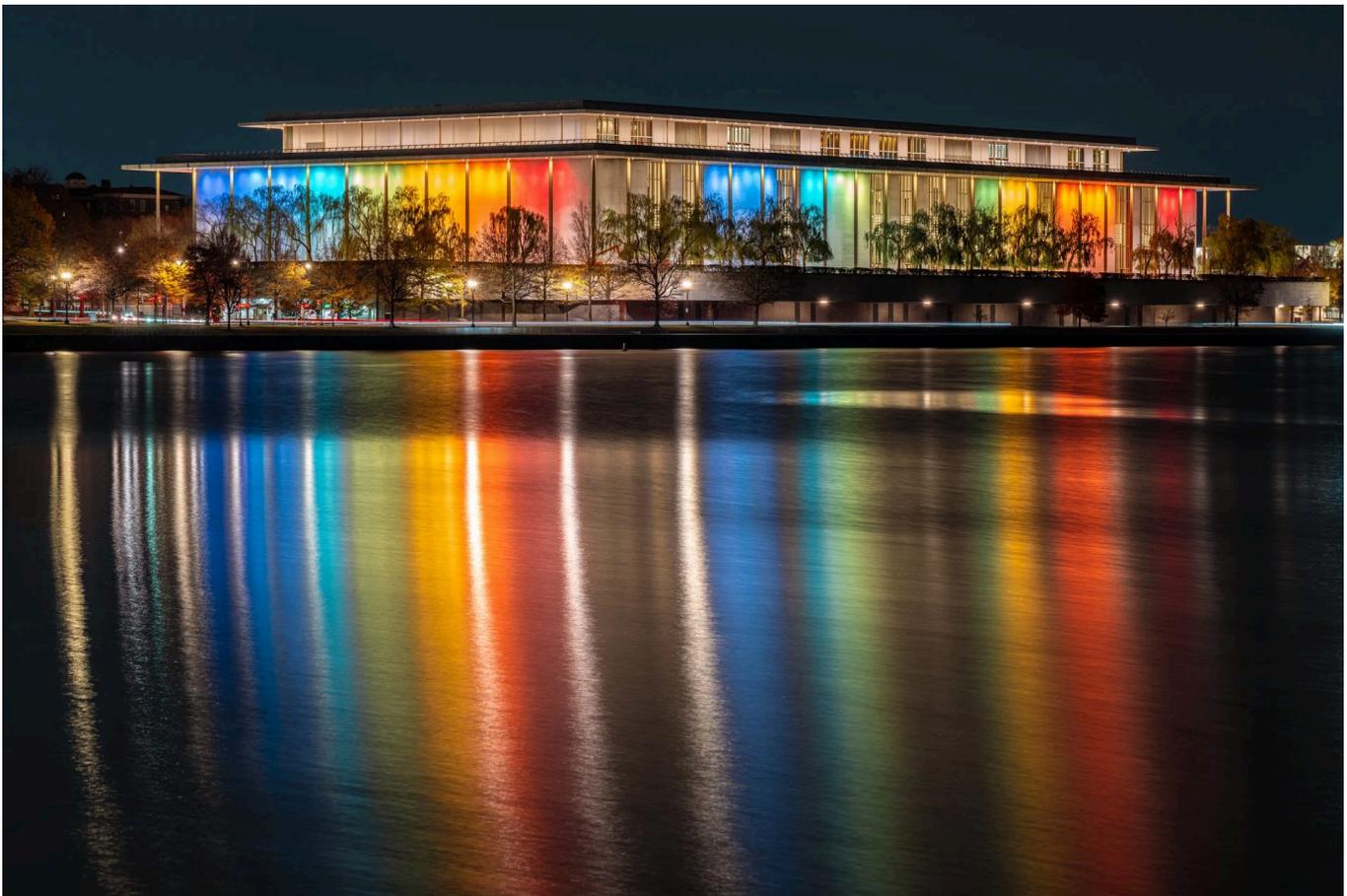
"This blatant act of erasure not only distorts the truth of our history, but it also dishonors the immense contributions of transgender individuals—especially transgender women of color—who were at the forefront of the Stonewall Riots and the broader fight for LGBTQ+ rights," they wrote, before highlighting the work of activists [Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera \(https://news.artnet.com/art-world/new-york-public-monument-transgender-activists-1560364\)](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/new-york-public-monument-transgender-activists-1560364).

"We demand the immediate restoration of the word 'transgender' on the Stonewall National Monument website. We will not stand by while the legacies of our transgender siblings are erased from history books."

A statement from the National Parks Conservation Association, an independent nonprofit organization that advocates for the protection and preservation of the U.S. National Parks, [called \(https://www.npca.org/articles/6779-parks-group-responds-to-removal-of-transgender-contributions-at-stonewall\)](https://www.npca.org/articles/6779-parks-group-responds-to-removal-of-transgender-contributions-at-stonewall) the erasure a "petty, vindictive action."

"You cannot erase the history of Stonewall by erasing a letter. You cannot erase trans people by erasing a letter," said LGBTQ activist Mark Segal, an ambassador for change at the organization. "Stonewall, including all of us in the LGBT community who fought back that historic night and have continued to fight for 55 years, cannot and will not be erased. We will continue to fight, we will continue to be visible and persevere, and I urge all in our community to remember this day as the beginning of the second Stonewall rebellion." —A.S.

February 12, 2025: Trump Elected Chairman of Kennedy Center



The John F. Kennedy Center of the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Photo: J. David Ake / Getty Images.

On February 12, 2025, Trump was "unanimously" elected chairman of the Kennedy Center after ousting longtime president Deborah Rutter and appointing several allies, including former ambassador Richard Grenell as interim head. The new board also includes Susie Wiles, White House chief of staff; Dan Scavino, White House deputy chief of staff; and Usha Vance, the second lady. Trump's influence could significantly shape its programming and funding priorities in the years ahead.

Established in 1971, the Kennedy Center is the nation's premier performing arts venue. While largely funded by private donations and ticket sales, it also receives federal funding through the National Park Service, part of the Department of the Interior.

Announcing his appointment on [Truth Social \(https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/113992617804848860\)](https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/113992617804848860), Trump declared his vision to “make The Kennedy Center a very special and exciting place!” He also stated, “I am pleased to announce that Ric Grenell shares my vision for a golden age of American arts and culture and will be overseeing the daily operations of the center. No more drag shows, or other anti-American propaganda—only the best.” He added that his primary motivation was to end “drag shows specifically targeting our youth.”

His takeover has triggered high-profile resignations. TV screenwriter and producer Shonda Rhimes [stepped down \(https://deadline.com/2025/02/shonda-rhimes-kennedy-center-trump-1236287351/\)](https://deadline.com/2025/02/shonda-rhimes-kennedy-center-trump-1236287351/) from the board, Grammy award-winning soprano Renée Fleming [resigned \(https://operawire.com/following-trump-takeover-renee-fleming-resigns-from-kennedy-center/\)](https://operawire.com/following-trump-takeover-renee-fleming-resigns-from-kennedy-center/) as special advisor, and musician Ben Folds [left his role \(https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/politics-news/ben-folds-resigns-nso-trump-1236134722/\)](https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/politics-news/ben-folds-resigns-nso-trump-1236134722/) as artistic director of the National Symphony Orchestra, which primarily performs at the center.

“I depart my position proud of all we accomplished to meet that ambition,” Rutter said in a parting [statement \(https://www.politico.com/news/2025/02/12/donald-trump-kennedy-center-00203910\)](https://www.politico.com/news/2025/02/12/donald-trump-kennedy-center-00203910). “From the art on our stages to the students we have impacted in classrooms across America, everything we have done at the Kennedy Center has been about uplifting the human spirit in service of strengthening the culture of our great nation.” —A.S.

February 9, 2025: Fauci Exhibition Scrapped by Department of Government Efficiency

Funding for a planned exhibition on physician-scientist Anthony Fauci at the National Museum of Health and Medicine has been canceled by Elon Musk's DOGE.

On February 7, DOGE [terminated \(https://x.com/DOGE/status/1887972340446683576\)](https://x.com/DOGE/status/1887972340446683576) more than \$180 million worth of contracts at the Department of Health and Human Services, including a \$168,000 contract for an exhibition dedicated to the nation's leading infectious disease expert. According to a screenshot shared on X, these funds were intended to cover project management, fabrication, and design consultation costs.

Fauci was the former director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, where he served from 1984 to 2022. From January 2020, he was one of the leading members of the White House Coronavirus Task Force under President Trump, which was succeeded by the White House COVID-19 Response Team under Biden, for whom Fauci also served as chief medical advisor.

During the pandemic, Fauci's recommended COVID restrictions such as masking drew the ire of conservatives; post-pandemic, he remained a controversial figure to Republicans, who continued to [levy extreme allegations \(https://www.cnn.com/2024/06/03/politics/fauci-testimony-house-hearing-covid-19/index.html\)](https://www.cnn.com/2024/06/03/politics/fauci-testimony-house-hearing-covid-19/index.html) against him. Fauci, who has [received death threats \(https://www.cbsnews.com/news/dr-anthony-fauci-on-pandemics-partisan-critics-and-the-psyche-of-the-country/\)](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/dr-anthony-fauci-on-pandemics-partisan-critics-and-the-psyche-of-the-country/) for years, has had to hire his own personal security after Trump [revoked \(https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/fauci-security-protection.html\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/fauci-security-protection.html) his federal security detail last month.

Before leaving office, Biden [preemptively pardoned \(https://www.newsweek.com/anthony-fauci-pardon-gain-function-covid-china-2018478\)](https://www.newsweek.com/anthony-fauci-pardon-gain-function-covid-china-2018478) Fauci, as well as [several others \(https://news.artnet.com/art-world/hunter-biden-presidential-pardon-2578504\)](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/hunter-biden-presidential-pardon-2578504) who could be targeted by the Trump administration. —M.C.

February 6, 2024: National Endowment of the Arts Updates Grant Guidelines



Rally participants denounce proposed cuts to funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities in 2017 at New York's City Hall. Photo by Albin Lohr-Jones/Pacific Press/LightRocket via Getty Images.

After the chaos caused by the Office of Management and Budget memo ordering a “temporary pause” on grants, loans, and funding for federal financial assistance programs in late January, the National Endowment of the Arts moved to update its grant guidelines for the fiscal year of 2026. “The updated guidelines are in response to recent directives,” the NEA said in [an announcement](https://www.arts.gov/news/press-releases/2025/updates-national-endowment-arts-fy-2026-grant-opportunities) (<https://www.arts.gov/news/press-releases/2025/updates-national-endowment-arts-fy-2026-grant-opportunities>).

The new guidelines encourage projects that celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence by America's Founding Fathers. Plans for the anniversary are significant to Trump, as outlined below.

“Under the updated guidelines, the NEA continues to encourage projects that celebrate the nation's rich artistic heritage and creativity by honoring the semiquincentennial of the United States of America (America250),” the NEA said. “Funding priority will be given for projects that take place in 2026–2027 that celebrate and honor the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. This can include incorporating an America250-related component or focus within a larger project.”

The NEA also canceled its Challenge America grant opportunity for FY 2026 “to focus NEA staff resources on the Grants for Arts Projects category.” The program is dedicated to supporting projects that extend the reach of arts to underserved communities. —A.S.

Read More: [NEA's New Grant Rules Imperil Funding for Arts Programs in Underserved Communities](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/cancelled-nea-grants-for-underserved-audiences-2606683) (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/cancelled-nea-grants-for-underserved-audiences-2606683>).

February 1, 2025: Trump's Tariffs on Mexico, Canada, and China



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Photo by Dave Chan / AFP via Getty Images.

Before his inauguration, Trump committed to implementing a 25 percent tariff on imports from [Mexico](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/imposing-duties-to-address-the-flow-of-illicit-drugs-across-our-national-border/) (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/imposing-duties-to-address-the-flow-of-illicit-drugs-across-our-national-border/>) and [Canada](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/imposing-duties-to-address-the-synthetic-opioid-supply-chain-in-the-peoples-republic-of-china/) (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/imposing-duties-to-address-the-synthetic-opioid-supply-chain-in-the-peoples-republic-of-china/>) once he took office. On January 29, Trump's commerce secretary pick Howard Lutnick, suggested the two countries could avoid these tariffs by curbing the [alleged spread of fentanyl](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/imposing-duties-to-address-the-situation-at-our-southern-border/) (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/imposing-duties-to-address-the-situation-at-our-southern-border/>) into the United States. The tariffs mean U.S. galleries representing artists from Canada and Mexico might encounter import-export challenges.

The tariffs took effect on Saturday, February 1, setting off a trade war with Canada, a close ally of the United States. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has enacted retaliatory 25 percent tariffs on a range of U.S. goods as he and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum agreed to strengthen bilateral relations to respond to the U.S. tariffs.

By Monday morning, Trump had paused the tariffs on Mexico for one month after Sheinbaum agreed to [deploy 10,000 National Guard troops](https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/04/world/americas/mexico-troops-border-deal-trump.html) (<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/04/world/americas/mexico-troops-border-deal-trump.html>) to its northern border to enhance security and curb the trafficking of drugs. Later in the day, Trump reached a [similar deal](https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-says-americans-may-feel-pain-trade-war-with-mexico-canada-china-2025-02-03/) (<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-says-americans-may-feel-pain-trade-war-with-mexico-canada-china-2025-02-03/>) with Trudeau.

If Trudeau's retaliatory tariffs go into effect after the pause ends, artists could be affected. The tariff on paper products, for one, could likely directly affect the cost of paper used by American printmakers, photographers, and book publishers.

Meanwhile, President Trump has also proposed broad-ranging tariffs between 10 percent and 60 percent on Chinese goods, in addition to the existing 7.5 percent tariff on paintings imported from China. Other trading partners, such as the United Kingdom and the European Union, might also face tariffs up to 20 percent.

Edouard Gouin, head of art shipping and logistics firm Convelio, expressed concerns about possible long-term effects of tariffs on the art industry. He warned that such measures could have "Brexit-like implications" for U.S. trade. He highlighted that new art shipping tariffs could elevate already high shipping costs that have persisted since the pandemic. —A.S.

Read More: [What Trump's Threatened Tariffs Could Mean for the Art Trade \(https://news.artnet.com/market/trump-tariffs-art-market-2604546-2604546\)](https://news.artnet.com/market/trump-tariffs-art-market-2604546-2604546).

January 29, 2025: White House Renews Plans for "Heroes" Sculpture Garden



Wesley Wofford, *Harriet Tubman: The Journey to Freedom* in Philadelphia. Photo: Albert Lee, courtesy of the city of Philadelphia.

In an [executive order \(https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/celebrating-americas-250th-birthday/\)](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/celebrating-americas-250th-birthday/) planning for the 250th anniversary of the day the Founding Fathers declared independence from Britain in 1776, Trump has renewed his vision for the commission of a National Garden of American Heroes.

While the idea is not new to Trump, it reinstates two previous executive orders from his first term as president that were revoked by President Biden in May 2021, canceling the plans for the garden.

Trump envisioned the sculpture garden in his first term in response to the removal of Confederate statues during racial justice protests. The garden would include sculptures of figures, curated by Trump himself, including Davy Crockett, Billy Graham, Whitney Houston, Harriet Tubman, and Antonin Scalia.

However, the garden was never funded by Congress during Trump's first term and into Biden's presidency. Now, with Republican control of both chambers of Congress and much stronger party unity rallying behind him, Trump may have greater success in completing his cultural project.

Meanwhile, Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, R-Fla., has introduced a bill to provide funding to carve Trump's face into Mount Rushmore, an idea the president himself floated (https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/10/politics/donald-trump-mt-rushmore-kristi-noem/index.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com) during a 2017 rally in Ohio. —A.S.

January 27, 2025: Plan to Freeze Federal Funding Released—Then Rescinded

A memo (<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/25507011-omb-memo-on-temporary-pause-of-financial-assistance-programs/>) from the Office of Management and Budget was released on January 27, calling for a “temporary pause” on grants, loans, and funding for federal financial assistance programs. The order was set to go into effect the next day.

In a [fact sheet](https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/01/omb-q-a-regarding-memorandum-m-25-13/) (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/01/omb-q-a-regarding-memorandum-m-25-13/>) issued by the White House on January 28, it clarified that the order exempted “any program that provides direct benefits to Americans,” such as Social Security and Medicare, but otherwise encompassed “programs, projects, and activities implicated by the President’s Executive Orders, such as ending DEI, the green new deal, and funding nongovernmental organizations that undermine the national interest.”

The New York Times compiled a [sprawling list](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/01/28/upshot/federal-programs-funding-trump-omb.html) (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/01/28/upshot/federal-programs-funding-trump-omb.html>), of more than 2,000 programs that would have been affected, including those by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the National Archives and Records Administration, as well as the Department of Education’s Arts in Education grant and the Department of the Interior’s Pacific Northwest and Hawaiian Islands Arts grant.

Just as swiftly as it was released, the controversial memo was [rescinded](https://www.cnn.com/2025/01/29/politics/white-house-rescind-federal-funding-freeze/index.html) (<https://www.cnn.com/2025/01/29/politics/white-house-rescind-federal-funding-freeze/index.html>) by the OMB on January 29, following rulings by [two](https://www.npr.org/2025/01/28/nx-s1-5277029/trump-memo-halt-funding) (<https://www.npr.org/2025/01/28/nx-s1-5277029/trump-memo-halt-funding>) [judges](https://www.npr.org/2025/01/31/nx-s1-5282410/trump-spending-freeze-blocked-federal-judge) (<https://www.npr.org/2025/01/31/nx-s1-5282410/trump-spending-freeze-blocked-federal-judge>) to halt the freeze. While the directive was rescinded, said White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt, the administration plans to continue efforts to “end the egregious waste of federal funding.” —A.S.

January 20, 2025: Trump Dissolves Arts Committee Previously Restored by Biden



Lady Gaga was tapped by Biden to co-chair the arts committee. Photo: Ronald Martinez/Getty Images.

In his first [executive order](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/initial-rescissions-of-harmful-executive-orders-and-actions/) (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/initial-rescissions-of-harmful-executive-orders-and-actions/>) of his second term, Trump revoked multiple directives from his predecessor, including disbanding the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. Republican President Ronald Reagan established this influential cultural committee in 1982 to advise him on cultural policymaking and continued through the presidencies of each of his successors—until Trump.

During the administration of President Bill Clinton, the PCAH launched a major initiative called Save America's Treasures that sought to preserve historical sites. Under President George W. Bush, it promoted youth arts programs. President Barack Obama's PCAH similarly advocated for arts education by bringing arts programs to struggling schools.

By the time Trump began serving in his first term, the members of the committee resigned in protest to his policies, and the committee was dissolved.

Biden used an executive order to reinstate the committee in 2022, tapping pop star Lady Gaga and film producer Bruce Cohen to co-chair the group. The committee includes art world luminaries such as Nora Halpern, vice president of leadership alliances at Americans for the Arts; Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya, a renowned artist and curator; and collector Kimberly Richter Shirley.

Trump rescinded Biden's order, killing the PCAH again, signaling a significant shift in how the president might approach federal cultural policy from his predecessors. It's possible that the dissolution could reduce advocacy and support for the arts on a national level. —A.S.

January 20, 2025: Shuttering of DEI Offices



Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture. Photo: Smithsonian.

Perhaps the biggest splash Trump's orders have made in art world headlines (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/trump-executive-order-dei-national-museums-2602475>) is the shuttering by the Smithsonian Institute and the National Gallery of Art of their DEI offices following this executive order from his first day back in office.

Trump, in the order (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-radical-and-wasteful-government-dei-programs-and-preferencing/>), called the DEI initiatives of political rival and former president, Joe Biden, "illegal and immoral" as he said that "Americans deserve a government committed to serving every person with equal dignity and respect."

The order mandates the Office of Management and Budget, with the Attorney General and the Office of Personnel Management, identify and terminate DEI programs across federal institutions. Employees are also encouraged to report any ongoing DEI-related activities.

The fact that the Smithsonian complied with the executive order came as a bit of a surprise to the art world as the institution is technically a distinct entity of the United States separate from the executive branch of government and not governed by it, even if some of its employees are federal employees. —A.S.

Read More: [The Smithsonian Shuttters Its Diversity Office Following Trump Executive Order \(https://news.artnet.com/art-world/trump-executive-order-dei-national-museums-2602475\)](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/trump-executive-order-dei-national-museums-2602475)

January 20, 2025: Review of Federal Architectural Policies



Federal Hall in Manhattan in 2012. Photo by Yair Haklai, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en>) license.

For the second time, Trump has signed an executive order for “[promoting beautiful federal civic architecture \(https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/promoting-beautiful-federal-civic-architecture/\)](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/promoting-beautiful-federal-civic-architecture/).” The returning president previously [signed a similar order \(https://news.artnet.com/art-world/trump-executive-order-beautiful-architecture-1933330\)](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/trump-executive-order-beautiful-architecture-1933330) in his first term, but there are key differences between the two documents.

In the 2020 order, Trump cited Ancient Greek and Roman architectural influences, as well as the Renaissance and American Federal styles, for a historical argument for classical and traditional architecture. Trump expressed concern that modernist architecture, such as Brutalist buildings, had led to unappealing federal buildings. The order established a presidential council to oversee federal architectural decisions.

The new order, which is much shorter and thus potentially broader in its effect, does not indicate a preference for classical or traditional architecture or directly establish any new councils or entities to oversee architectural decision-making. Instead, it tasks the General Services Administration with conducting a 60-day review of its architectural policymaking that emphasizes garnering public input into the architectural decision-making process.

The tone of the two orders is noticeably different, with the latest iteration taking a more pragmatic approach focusing on the possibility of revising the federal architectural process rather than making ideological arguments about the beauty of classical architecture. —A.S.

January 20, 2025: Trump's Visa and Immigration Policies



President Donald Trump signs executive orders in the Oval Office on January 20, 2025 in Washington, D.C. Photo: Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images.

While none of [these](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/protecting-the-american-people-against-invasion/) (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/protecting-the-american-people-against-invasion/>) orders (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/protecting-the-meaning-and-value-of-american-citizenship/>) directly address the arts, their combination may have significant implications for artists, particularly those from international backgrounds, and could affect how such artists show and sell work in the United States.

The “[Protecting the American People Against Invasion](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/protecting-the-american-people-against-invasion/) (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/protecting-the-american-people-against-invasion/>)” order emphasizes stricter immigration enforcement. This increased scrutiny could lead to more visa denials or delays for international artists seeking to work or perform in the U.S., potentially limiting opportunities for cultural exchange and collaboration.

The “[Protecting the Meaning and Value of American Citizenship](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/protecting-the-meaning-and-value-of-american-citizenship/) (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/protecting-the-meaning-and-value-of-american-citizenship/>)” order focuses on reinforcing the privileges of U.S. citizenship. This may result in more stringent naturalization criteria, affecting artists aspiring to become U.S. citizens. Additionally, it could influence the eligibility of non-citizen artists for certain grants or residencies.

And the third order mandates enhanced vetting procedures for foreign nationals. Artists from countries identified as higher risk might face prolonged background checks or entry denials, disrupting international tours, exhibitions, or collaborations.

And a [fourth order](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/additional-measures-to-combat-anti-semitism/) (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/additional-measures-to-combat-anti-semitism/>), “Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism,” targets pro-Palestinian protests on college campuses. Artists and art students have often had significant roles in pro-Palestine protests that [have erupted on U.S. college campuses](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/art-) (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/art->

[students-faculty-university-protests-2474916](#)), since the war in Gaza began, including at the [School of the Art Institute of Chicago](#) (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/art-institute-chicago-pro-palestine-protestors-arrested-2481994>). —A.S.

Min Chen and Adam Schrader contributed reporting.

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