



July 25, 2016

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### PRESS RELEASE

## The Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art Falls Short of its Mission by Cancelling Site Specific Installation about the Environment

The National Coalition Against Censorship has issued a statement in response to the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Arts (MOCA) halting of an environmental artwork.

The Virginia MOCA originally commissioned Olek, a Polish activist and artist, to cover the large bronze statue of the Neptune on Virginia Beach with crochet so as to address ocean conservation and the human impact on the environment. In a last minute addition--to clarify the message -- Olek added a gas mask. Refusing to allow this modification, the museum cancelled the whole project.

Following the removal, NCAC tried to suggest a compromise, which would address the museum's concerns about safety, while allowing the expression of the artist's vision. The Virginia MOCA refused any such concession.

NCAC's statement stresses the importance of public artwork that inspires much-needed public dialogue on current political topics. "Our goal as a free speech organization is to ensure that the conversation continues, especially where urgent issues such as climate change, global warming, and the health of our oceans are being addressed. Virginia MOCA had every chance to make a substantial statement about these issues by allowing Olek's work to go forward, but they were unwilling to take the necessary steps. This is disappointing especially after the Museum took such a strong position in another recent controversy concerning work by Mark Ryden in a current exhibition." said NCAC director of programs Svetlana Mintcheva.

NCAC's statement requests that, going forward, the museum "hold firm to its mission to stimulate 'critical thinking and dialogue throughout the Hampton Roads community'."

[READ THE FULL STATEMENT HERE](#)

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*The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) is an alliance of 50 national non-profit organizations dedicated to defending freedom of thought, inquiry and expression.*