



September 12, 2011

Open letter to the MOCHA community:

The Museum of Children's Art (MOCHA) was founded as a place where children from all backgrounds could come together to make and celebrate art. MOCHA provides a safe place for children to express themselves through art, and produces programs that are intended to foster insight and understanding.

Our gallery is a multiuse space. Every week, hundreds of children utilize the space for drop-in art, school field trips, birthday parties, camps, and other events. Most children that visit MOCHA are between the ages of 5 and 9, and many children enter our gallery without the supervision of their parents.

With the exhibit *A Child's View from Gaza* it was our intent, as it is with all our exhibits, to foster insight and understanding. We understand that, sadly, violence is a part of many children's lives, and we remain committed to showing artwork that depicts the diverse realities of childhood across the world.

However, as an organization that serves a large and diverse community, we tried to balance this with the concerns raised by parents, caregivers and educators who did not wish for their children to encounter graphically violent and sensitive works during their use of our facility. MOCHA is a facility that must be accessible for our entire community. Although we worked to develop a way to separate the most violent images in the exhibit from our main studio spaces, we ultimately came to the conclusion that MOCHA is not currently set up to effectively accomplish this.

Recognizing this, the MOCHA Board of Directors decided to cancel this exhibit. It is important to note this was not a judgment of the art itself or related to any political opinions. The Board determined that MOCHA simply did not have the space or staffing to accommodate the exhibit in a way that both respected the gravity of the material and our mission to serve all children.

We regret that we did not make this determination earlier. Our next step will be to thoroughly evaluate our exhibit policy so that we can ensure all exhibits—including those of a violent or sensitive nature—are handled in a way that promotes constructive dialogue and ensures that children and adults of all backgrounds feel comfortable visiting MOCHA. We will be developing this policy in the next month, and will then invite all of our partner organizations, including the sponsors of *A Child's View from Gaza* the Middle East Children's Alliance (MECA) to participate in our exhibits in keeping with this policy.

This experience has reminded us, yet again, of the power of children's voices and visions and of the unique role that art can play in our community. We remain committed to ensuring that art, in all its forms, remains a vibrant part of our lives.

Respectfully,

Hilmon Sorey  
Chair, MOCHA Board of Directors  
board@mocha.org