

Camargo Foundation Statement on the Passing of Trustee Barbara Hunt McLanahan



Image: Courtesy of the Children's Museum of the Arts

June 26, 2019 – The Board of Trustees and staff of the Camargo Foundation mourn the loss of our longtime board member and beloved friend, Barbara Hunt McLanahan. Barbara was a driving force in our organization, the very heart of our board, and the light that illuminated the path to where we are today. We are devastated by the news of her passing and we offer our deepest sympathies to her husband Michael and daughter Jade, and all of her family members. Barbara's impact on the Camargo Foundation as an organization, on each Trustee and staff member individually, and on the hundreds of Fellows and Residents who have benefited from their residencies, cannot be measured. Her inspired leadership as Chair of the Board since 2017 and her extraordinary generosity leave a tremendous legacy that we will strive to honor by continuing to fulfill a mission she so crucially helped to refine.

Barbara has dedicated her career to nurturing and showcasing artists through her wide-ranging accomplishments as a curator and arts administrator in the U.S. and UK. Her position as the Executive Director at the Children's Museum of the Arts (CMA) in New York perfectly reflected her steadfast belief in the transformative power of art and commitment to making art accessible to all. As she put it in a 2016 interview, "Side-by-side, non-judgmental art making encourages the celebration of individual identity, alongside empathy and respect for difference, for others who look different and who express themselves differently." A humanist, activist, nurturer, arts patron, cultural catalyst, and so much more, Barbara will be deeply missed by the many organizations and people she has touched in her life.

Born in Germany and raised in the UK, Barbara studied at the Universities of Kent and Manchester and launched her arts career working at Camerawork Gallery + Darkroom in London (1992–96). She moved to New York in 1997 to work at Visual AIDS (1997–2000). She served much-admired tenures at Artists Space (as Executive Director, 2000–13) and the Judd Foundation (Executive Director, 2006–13), before joining the CMA in 2013. Throughout her illustrious career, she made time to volunteer and shared her time and expertise with too many organizations and individuals to count. She sat on the boards of the African and Asian Visual Arts Archive (AAVAA), Leisure Services Committee for the Royal National Institute for the Blind in the UK, and the Satellite Academy’s Arts Benefit All Coalition Alternative (ABACA), and she also participated in Godzilla, a coalition of Asian-American artists and curators. As a panelist and lecturer at museums, conferences, and universities all over the U.S. and the UK, she spoke consistently about strategies for emerging artists, promoted diversity and inclusion in the arts, and championed less commercial paths, such as artist-run alternative spaces. For her many achievements, she was named Chevalier of L’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the Republic of France in 2006.

We are grateful for the boundless love and energy Barbara poured into the Camargo Foundation, despite her busy life as a leading arts professional, tireless nonprofit mentor, and devoted mother and wife. Barbara’s involvement with the Camargo Foundation began with her role as a board member of the Jerome Foundation, our sister organization based in St. Paul, Minnesota. Both organizations were founded by Jerome Hill, the American artist and philanthropist. She served nine years on the Jerome Foundation board, and during that period also became a Trustee of the Camargo board. Barbara assumed a leadership role almost immediately, and as Board Chair, she skillfully guided the Camargo Foundation through its recent restructuring and resurgence, helping to lay the groundwork for the foundation to grow, fundraise, and continue to provide artists, thinkers, and scholars the time, space, and freedom to think and create. As we mourn Barbara’s loss, we try to take heart in remembering her playful spirit, her enthusiasm for good causes, her love of her family, her commitment to supporting artists and the arts, and her enduring impact on the cultural realm at large.

Again, we would like to extend our deepest condolences to Barbara’s family, and also to her staff at the Children’s Museum of the Arts, her colleagues with whom she so graciously shared her wisdom and warmth, her friends, and everyone who had the great fortune to know her and witness her stunning life.

In lieu of flowers, her family has set up the Barbara Hunt McLanahan Memorial Fund at Children’s Museum of the Arts. Donations will support Arts for All Initiative, a program for children with disabilities. Please send your donation through the museum’s website, CMANY.org. A memorial will be held in September.

Press contact in the U.S.:

Cathy Lang Ho
cho@camargofoundation.org

Press contact in France & Europe:

Muriel Rose
mrose@camargofoundation.org

The Camargo Foundation
www.camargofoundation.org