September 30, 2020

Los Angeles County Museum of Art
5905 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, California 90036

Dear Elaine Wynn, Tony Ressler, and Michael Govan,

On September 9, 2020, Worth Rises, a national advocacy organization dedicated to exposing and challenging the gross corporatization of our prison system, and Color Of Change, the nation’s largest digital racial justice organization, issued a letter to LACMA’s Board of Trustees calling for the removal of board member Tom Gores, the billionaire CEO of Platinum Equity, a Beverly Hills-based private equity firm. We, the undersigned 215 members of the arts community, urge LACMA to publicly support activists’ appeals and disavow the unethical extraction of capital from economically-distressed communities by demanding that Tom Gores immediately resign from its Board of Trustees.

In 2017, Platinum Equity acquired Securus Technologies, one of the largest and most exploitative prison telecom corporations in the already woefully unethical prison industry. The corporation rakes in more than $700 million per year charging egregious rates for phone calls from prisons, jails, and immigrant detention centers—funds that are primarily siphoned from impoverished families and Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities of color, further constricting the urgent resources of marginalized people. As the CEO of Platinum Equity, Tom Gores wields unique control over Securus’ operational practices.

Under his control, Securus charges families as much as $25 for a 15-minute phone call with their incarcerated loved ones and, on average, approximately 40% more than its largest competitor. Their extortionary rates and unscrupulous practices inflict undue financial and emotional harm on those directly impacted by mass incarceration. By price gouging a crucial lifeline between incarcerated people and their undeniably important networks of familial support, Securus pilfers from families (particularly women and children of color), propels many into debt, and leaves both family members and their incarcerated loved ones inhumanely isolated. Securus’ impact extends further still; their predation undermines the successful reentry of people upon release by limiting their access to support, jeopardizing public safety, and feeding a bloated and brutal prison industrial complex that owes its roots to the toxic legacies of chattel slavery.

Echoing the artists, art workers, curators, scholars, and theorists who catalyzed the successful removal of Safariland CEO Warren Kanders from the Whitney Museum of American Art Board of Trustees, those who are advocating for the removal of BlackRock CEO Larry Fink from the
Museum of Modern Art Board of Trustees, and those members of the P.A.I.N coalition working
to disentangle opioid money from the endowments of numerous public institutions, we condemn
the artwashing that has poisoned the wells of our cultural centers. While the pre-existing power
structures reinforcing these conditions are deeply rooted—and their unearthing reveals painful
truths about our institutions’ indebtedness to colonialism, structural racism, and mass
incarceration—reform through accountability is both urgent and necessary. Our institutions face
an overdue moment of critical reckoning, from which LACMA is not immune.

At this crucial moment, we extol the museum to honor the truth of its own words. In a statement
issued in response to the extensive protests that followed the horrific murder of George Floyd by
police, a museum spokesperson declared: “We stand with our community in rejecting racism, in
mourning, and in demanding justice for the deaths of countless African Americans who continue
to be targeted by systematic violence. We recognize that museums cannot claim neutrality in
addressing the horrific issues that have plagued our society for centuries.” It is imperative that
LACMA examine its own breach of neutrality as it pertains to the diverse communities it wishes
to serve. In doing so, the Board of Trustees must repudiate the rotten entanglements of racism,
police brutality, and state-sanctioned violence by renouncing Tom Gores.

Sincerely,

Julie Adler  Brice Bischoff  Veronica Corzo-Duchardt
Njideka Akunyili Crosby  Hannah Black  Michaela Daly
Carlos Alejandro  Theodore Boyer  Kyle DeWoody
Sasha Ali  Andrea Breiling  Leslie Dick
Rhea Anastas  Sarah Bremner  Denise Domergue
Matthew Anderson  Tanya Brodsky  Kimberly Drew
Shagha Ariannia  Savannah Brown  Zackary Drucker
David Aronoff  Tommy Burns  Sam Durant
Colleen Asper  Francisco Cantú  Ken Ehrlich
Alejandro Avakian  Kelsie Capitano  Charlie Ellis
Mark Ayala  Spencer Carmona  Brenda Escobar
Janani Balasubramanian  Justin Cavin  Cayetano Ferrer
Eugenia Barbuc  Alison Chen  Gabrielle Ferrer
Kelly Barrie  Srijon Chowdhury  Alison Ferris
Elizabeth Whitney Bedford  Donna Chung  Ciarán Finlayson
Grainne Belluomo  Kayla Cloonan  Colleen Flanagan
Nevena Binney  Barnett Cohen  Nicole Fleetwood
Lee Biolos  Jessica Cook  Jason Flom
Sandow Birk  Jean Cooney  Luke Forsyth
Lara Schilling
Marty Schnapf
Lara Schoorl
Inga Schunn
Julia Schwartz
Paul Mpagi Sepuya
Nicolas Shake
Wendy Sherman
Jessica Simmons
Jessica Smolinski
Thea Smolinskio
Laura Solomon
Laura Solomon
Ella Strauss
Rachel Summers
Camilla Taylor
Molly Tierney
Keith Tolch
Mongo Toole
Sebastian Tovar
Chloe Truong-jones
Artika Tyner
Jason Underhill
Andrew Urchin
Kara Vaggio
Rodrigo Valenzuela
Beatriz Vasquez
Mark Verabioff
Christian Viveros-Fauné
milo ward
Genevieve Ward
Roger White
Sarah Williams
Chris Wilson
Gosia Wojas
Audrey Wollen
Jemima Wyman
Rosha Yaghmai
Elaine Yang
Christopher Yin
Stephanie Ziemer