

# The Philadelphia Inquirer

## Hearing could reopen case of Barnes art move

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|By Robert Moran

A Montgomery County judge has ordered a hearing that could reopen the case of the Barnes Foundation's move from its home in Lower Merion Township to the Parkway in Philadelphia.

Orphans' Court Judge Stanley Ott on Tuesday ordered the Barnes Foundation and the state Attorney General's Office to explain March 18 why the case should not be reopened.

In 2006, Ott approved the move of the famed art collection of Renoirs, Cezannes, and Matisses that has been housed in Lower Merion since the 1920s.

The judge's move follows the filing of a petition Feb. 17 by Friends of the Barnes Foundation seeking to reopen the case based on statements from former state Attorney General Mike Fisher in the documentary film *The Art of the Steal*.

The petition accuses Fisher of misconduct for being involved in Lincoln University's decision to drop its legal opposition to the transfer of the art collection to a new museum in the city.

The petition noted that Ott was not aware of Fisher's actions nor of pledges of state funds for Lincoln University's capital campaign.

"I'm really thrilled that [the judge is] taking it seriously," said Evelyn Yaari, a petition signer and member of Friends of the Barnes Foundation.

Earlier this month, U.S. Rep. Jim Gerlach, whose district includes Lower Merion; and Montgomery County Commissioner Bruce L. Castor Jr. sent a letter to Gov. Corbett's general counsel, arguing for a reconsideration of state funding committed to the new \$150 million museum.

Gerlach and Castor said the project should be reviewed and funding should be halted until the review is complete.

They said it was a "wrongheaded decision to borrow money and compel current and future generations of Pennsylvania taxpayers to pay off the debt incurred by the unnecessary Barnes relocation."

The total cost of the project is \$200 million, including \$50 million for an endowment.

Gov. Ed Rendell approved \$47 million in state capital funds for the project.

The museum is scheduled to open in 2012 near the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

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