

Newcomb Art Museum receives grant to increase impact of collection

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A \$150,000 grant from the Henry Luce Foundation will support the work of a new Curator of Campus Collections and Public Engagement at Newcomb Art Museum who will contribute to collections sharing and public arts initiatives that can enhance the quality of life on the university's campuses and for the city's residents. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The Newcomb Art Museum (NAM) received a \$150,000 grant from the Henry Luce Foundation to support the work of a new Curator of Campus Collections and Public Engagement in furthering the mission of the museum. A critical part of the

museum's mission is using its collections to strengthen people's capacity to interpret visual art and material culture. The Curator of Campus Collections and Public Engagement will contribute to collections sharing and public arts initiatives that can enhance the quality of life on the university's campuses and for the city's residents. The new hire will specifically focus on expanding access and understanding of art by exploring ways to make it available outside of both the gallery and campus' walls.

The Newcomb art collections consist of art from ancient times to the present that supports teaching about the significance of art, crafts, and design in the United States. Some important works of art from the museum's collection are located throughout the university's uptown and downtown campuses. Some notable examples are paintings by Clementine Hunter and Ida Kohlmeyer and Tiffany Windows in the university chapel and Woodward Way.

In 2022, NAM's newly appointed director, Maurita N. Poole, worked with museum curator Laura Blereau to develop a display of the permanent collection in the exhibition *Metamorphoses*. The show contrasted iconic Newcomb Pottery with kinetic sculpture, photography, and prints to explore ideas of change, transition, and movement in both a literal and symbolic sense. The works by Newcomb and Tulane-affiliated artists connected the permanent collection to the museum's institutional history and revealed how the collection has evolved to include art inspired by diverse cultures, architecture, and fraught sociopolitical landscapes. The nearly thirty, rarely shown, objects that were presented resonate with the museum's efforts to explore dynamism in its collection and innovations in art, craft, and design. More significantly, the exhibition signaled a shift in the museum's recent practice of emphasizing global contemporary art to one that connects contemporary art to local aesthetic praxis and permanent collections.

The new position is part of the director's evolving vision for the museum, which entails prioritizing in depth examinations of its collections, strengthening Tulane faculty engagement with the collection, and enabling Tulane's leadership to incorporate more works of art in its buildings and public spaces.

"Through sharing Tulane's collection, we seek to contribute to the university's desire to deploy the arts to bridge divides, share knowledge, and create cultural sensitivity," Director Maurita Poole said. "The generosity of the Henry Luce Foundation will allow us to share Tulane's collections and provide access to fine art,

craft, and material culture of the Gulf South.”

Newcomb Art Museum’s collections-sharing and public art initiatives reflect the field’s renewed focus on how to use art in public spaces to break down historical barriers to visual art, museums, and galleries.

In 2020, NAM began an arduous collections inventory process – cataloging and digitalizing over 7,000 objects from the museum’s permanent collection. The project culminated with a searchable online database, allowing faculty, students and the public to gather information about the museum’s collection.

The new Curator of Campus Collections and Public Engagement will complement the previous initiative and current efforts by further developing and researching the collection, as well as conducting an inventory of works of art that are in public spaces and offices on campus. They will play a vital role in creating policies for gifts and campus access to Tulane’s permanent collections, as well as support installations and/or commissions for spaces around campus.

“The Henry Luce's Foundation’s American Art Program eagerly supports the expanded role of the visual arts on American campuses, where they can inspire and support important public conversations,” Program Director Dr. Teresa A. Carbone said. “We are especially excited about this project’s outreach beyond the university to local and regional communities.”

The Henry Luce Foundation pursues a mission to advance the role of the visual arts in a more open and equitable society. For forty years, the American Art Program has supported museum projects that foreground diverse experiences and perspectives, empowering institutions to challenge accepted histories, elevate underrepresented voices, and promote critical conversations.

For more information about the museum, please visit

<http://NewcombArtMuseum.Tulane.edu>