

Newcomb Art Museum awarded \$500,000 grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

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Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane University, located in the Woldenberg Art Center on the uptown campus, received a \$500,000, three-year grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The grant will establish initiatives to help the museum become more inclusive and accessible. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

During these times of political turmoil, social unrest and social change, Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane University is committed to spearheading substantive ways for art to move the needle towards a more equitable society for all.

The museum received a \$500,000, three-year grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to establish three interrelated initiatives to make the museum more inclusive and accessible. The funding comes from the philanthropic foundation's Art Museum Futures Fund, launched in 2020 as part of its emergency grantmaking in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on arts and cultural institutions around the nation.

The funds will be used to strengthen the museum's current community-based work with local, regional and national stakeholders; empower the use of the museum's permanent collection as a tool for education and social change; and launch an art writing initiative to train emerging and mid-career museum professionals.

Most of this work will be accomplished through the creation of three new fellowships: a **Community Engagement Fellow**, a **Collections Research & Interpretation Fellow** and an **Arts Writing Fellow**. Funding will also support the work of the museum's **Collections Inventory and Acquisitions Technician**. Unlike traditional postdoctoral fellowships, these two-year positions will be open to anyone with a bachelor's degree interested in a museum career. PhDs have historically been a barrier to entry into the profession. Interested candidates are encouraged to apply.

"I greatly appreciate Mellon's investment in Newcomb Art Museum so early in my tenure," said Maurita Poole, who was [named the museum's director in 2021](#). "These additional resources will support the museum, and university, as we create arts initiatives that actively strive to address inequities in New Orleans, the state of Louisiana and the country as a whole. Words cannot express how important it is for Tulane to create opportunities that provide emerging professionals with training that will allow them to play a critical role in making museums and arts institutions more inclusive."

The fellows will further The Mellon Foundation's mission of supporting the arts and humanities by reinterpreting the collection's catalog of art objects; by decolonizing the catalog's instances of outdated language; by developing new models of compensation and curation for underrepresented artists; and by providing resources to make museum and arts-related careers more accessible for everyone.

The [Newcomb Art Museum](#) of Tulane has presented inspiring exhibitions and programs that engage communities both on and off campus, fostered the creative exchange of ideas around art and design, and advanced scholarship in the field for

over twenty-five years. Today, the museum cares for a permanent collection of over 7,000 artworks and presents contemporary art exhibitions and interdisciplinary programs. The exhibitions highlight the contributions of women to art and design, and feature work by artists from underrepresented communities as well as artists of color, while drawing upon the faculty expertise of a Research-1 University to explore issues of social justice and other art-relevant themes.

Since 2015, the museum has made a concerted effort to use its collection to address issues of equity, diversity and inclusion. Ongoing dialogue with community stakeholders about long-standing art industry practices allowed museum leadership to reflect on systemic inequities and the potential for addressing them. The grant will allow the museum to create a safe space to experiment with new models, techniques and strategies of inclusion and accessibility. It will also strengthen existing efforts to utilize the permanent collection as a teaching tool and increase exposure to various styles of arts writing. While Newcomb Art Museum advances opportunities for museum and arts-related careers, the fellows will be afforded the chance to experiment and apply new ideas that have the potential to impact their career options and transform the field.

“Art is a powerful way to engage communities in challenging conversations about who we are and who we want to be, and the Newcomb Museum is a national leader in showing how one can do that while simultaneously embracing the museum’s role as a home for beautiful, captivating and provocative art,” Tulane Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Robin Forman said. “With this gift, the Mellon Foundation is expressing their confidence in Maurita’s leadership of the Newcomb Museum legacy, which we all share. I look forward to seeing how these Mellon fellows will enhance and energize the work of the museum as we seek to reengage with our long-time friends and supporters and expand our work to new audiences.”

Funding for these interrelated efforts will help Newcomb Art Museum to be more accountable to its community partners and to create new models for community-engaged arts programming in light of the social, economic, and political divides brought to the fore by the COVID-19 pandemic, Black Lives Matter social protests, and our currently politically polarized world.

Based in New York City, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation seeks to build just communities where ideas and imagination can thrive and is the largest supporter of the arts and humanities in the United States.