

Diversity, Equity, Access, and Inclusion: (Re-)New(ed) Collaboration

The University of Minnesota Twin Cities, and so the Weisman Art Museum, is located within the traditional homelands of the Dakota people. It is important to acknowledge the peoples on whose land we live, learn, and work as we seek to improve and strengthen our relations with our tribal nations. We also acknowledge that words are not enough. We aspire to honor and respect the Indigenous Peoples—past, present and future—by establishing meaningful, reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities and by incorporating Indigenous knowledge in the work of the museum.

Moreover, diverse communities have a right to access fully the creative opportunities and resources at the Weisman. Museum staff strive to make inclusion and access foundational for learning programs and educational development at the museum. A practical commitment to equity and diversity is the shared responsibility of all students, staff, volunteers, board members, collaborative partners, faculty, and University leadership. WAM activities will be grounded on policies and practices that advance diversity and promote equity and inclusion.

In order to achieve these goals, we embrace the following imperatives:

- **Champion Equity.** Work to eliminate barriers to participation by historically underrepresented groups.
- **Advance Diversity and Inclusion.** Make every aspect of our recruitment, hiring, training, advancement, and retention practices equitable; work to ensure that leadership and staff reflect the diversity we value and the inclusivity to which we aspire.
- **Extend a Universal Welcome.** Forge new pathways to engagement, both within and outside the museum, to increase the participation of historically underserved communities and advance inclusive practices in programming, collections, and exhibitions.

We are committed to a museum where:

1. Diversity, equity, access and inclusion are recognized as core institutional values that drive decision-making, resource allocation, and the development of all policies and practices.
2. Diverse students, staff, and faculty are recruited, retained, and supported.
3. Collaborative internal and external partnerships support the emerging needs of students, staff, faculty, and the communities in which we live and work.

We emphasize:

1. Access and Inclusion: continuously inviting and welcoming people to an environment where all have the opportunity to engage with art at the museum and beyond.
2. Community: creating equitable and collaborative partnerships to better work together within and outside the museum towards shared goals.
3. Education and Learning: actively and intentionally using models and practices that incorporate content that reflects diverse ways of knowing, being, and experiencing the world.
4. Sustainable Transformation: engaging in continuous individual and institutional reflection and collaboration to build capacity and integrate what we learn into our culture and infrastructure.
5. Accountability: evaluating and assessing progress toward our equity and diversity goals.

Next Steps

As we continue to progress in this direction, we invite your comments and collaboration. Centering on key principles of equity, justice and inclusion, we aim to build and sustain a healthy and welcoming community that celebrates people from all walks of life. We hope to advance our commitment to diversity, equity, access and inclusion through a variety of pathways, among which we are considering the following:

1. ART

- Develop more inclusive curatorial principles that will
 1. increase representation of underrepresented artists in exhibitions, collection and programs
 2. expand creative practices fostered at the museum to include those that have been excluded or underrepresented in Western museums
 3. explicitly grapple with issues of cultural extraction and appropriation.
- Survey and track WAM's acquisitions, exhibitions, residencies and programs to determine the representation of historically marginalized people.
- Develop inclusive exhibition design and programming principles through consultation and partnerships with other UMN units, including UMN Disability Resource Center, Center for Applied and Translational Sensory Science, and with community members.
- Use digital, social media, and print platforms to present diverse voices and perspectives on art.

2. PLACE

- Integrate inclusive design principles and practices throughout the museum to make each visitor feel welcome.
- Conduct an accessibility audit and establish a timeline for new initiatives that better accommodate all audiences and that reflect current innovations in the field.

3. RELATIONSHIPS

- Support, amplify, and advance BIPOC artists.
- Develop sustainable relationships with communities and artists through institutional capacity building, meaningful long-term connections, and mutually beneficial opportunities.
- Develop marketing and communication strategies to reach first-time and occasional visitors more effectively and to build sustained relationships.
- Solicit and apply feedback from target audiences to identify areas of interest.
- Collect audience feedback to assess whether programs and exhibitions are reaching new and targeted audiences.
- Offer a broad range of programs to engage new audiences and introduce the museum.
- Cultivate partnerships with civic, cultural, and university organizations to build our audience and develop programs that address issues of equity and inclusion in the arts and society.
- Leverage the Colleagues Advisory Board as a mechanism for feedback, accountability, and advice.

4. RESOURCES

- Commit financial and administrative (time, effort) resources to enhance staff competencies in diversity, equity, access and inclusion.
- Seek contracts with vendors from diverse backgrounds across a variety of services.
- Provide in-kind support to community groups, including, specifically, BIPOC organizations, through the museum's co-sponsorship programs.
- Prioritize resource development that advances diversity, equity, access, and inclusion.

5. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

- Develop inclusive job descriptions for all open positions by eliminating gendered language.
- Ensure a diverse pool of candidates for every open position.
- Develop careful interview methods and protocols.
- Require all hiring managers to complete the "Implicit Biases in Search and Selection Processes" training and certificate program.

- Require all staff to complete the online education module “Preventing Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, and Retaliation.”
- Communicate the importance of equity and inclusion in staff training and orientation by connecting participation in the E & I training to annual performance reviews.
- Improve student hiring practices; gain consistency across postings, and clarify how and where to post.
- Create clear channels for all museum staff to voice concerns and ask questions regarding aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Develop and implement fellowship and internship programs to drive improved workforce representation.
- Create a culture of continual self-reflection and self-challenge.

Again, we invite your comments and feedback.

FY21 PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES:

- Hosted and produced exhibitions that engaged audiences with diverse artists and social justice issues:
 - *Pressing Issues: Printmaking as Social Justice in 1930's United States*
 - *We Are the Story* - Under the curatorial direction of Carolyn Mazloomi, Women of Color Quilters Network (WCQN) founder and member of Textile Center's National Artist Advisory Council, *We Are the Story* explores themes of liberation, resistance and empowerment, offering a visually compelling, honest, and critical account of the breadth of experiences and struggles that comprise Black history.
 - *Just Yesterday* - an outdoor poster campaign that draws attention to systemic racial injustice in the United States.
- Supported commissions from socially [engaged artists in the museum's Target Studio](#) for Creative Collaboration. All Target Studio projects have aspects of community engagement and support DEAI work. Approximately 45% of the artists commissioned since 2018 are artists of color.
- Produced a robust public program series that provided audiences opportunities to engage with artists, scholars and community members and with museum exhibitions and initiatives:
 - **Artist Talk:** Brook Turner: The Aesthetics of Fascism
 - **Symposium:** States of Control - 'States of Control' aims at constructing a continuous dialogue between artists and the public of different ages and generations in order to stimulate critical thinking around the topics of information manipulation, the history of propaganda, post-truth, and constructing news during times of political unrest

- **Panel:** How do we know fascism when we see it? Brooks Turner (Target Studio artist-in-residence), Caroline Sindors (critical designer and artist), and Christopher Lehman (professor of ethnic studies, St. Cloud State University)
- **Dialogue:** Election Night Watch Party with artist Wafaa Bilal
- **Artist Talk:** “SEEN @ The Cedar”: WAM collaborates with the nonprofit We Are All Criminals and the Cedar Cultural Center to create an online program dedicated to the art of creatives who are incarcerated in the Minnesota Correctional Facility - Stillwater
- **Artist Talk:** Penny Mateer and curator Carolyn Mazloomi — *We Are the Story*
- **Lecture:** “An Art Commentary on Lynching: How a 1935 Exhibition Resonates Today,” with Dr. Margaret Rose Vendryes
- **Lecture:** “The Legacy of Bearing Witness While Black in Minnesota: African Americans, Smartphones, and the New Protest #Journalism,” with Dr. Allissa Richardson, moderated by Dr. Danielle Kilgo, UMN; presented in partnership with the UMN Office of Equity and Diversity.
- IMLS grant to establish [new accessibility standards](#); ALS interpreters at all spring FY21 programs.
- Medical School Workshops.
- On-going collaboration with UMN Medical school researchers and professional staff to develop trauma-informed approaches to art education.
- Completing the inventory of the [Mimbres cultural materials](#), as the University works toward full NAGPRA compliance.
- Submission of an IMLS grant proposal for a three-year truth and reconciliation program (pending); development of a Native-led truth and reconciliation advisory committee (established)
- Participation in an Aspen Institute Tech Policy Grant, which led to the development and launch of a new student-led [digital content team](#). WAM plans to continue this new program for the full academic year in FY22, with a new cohort of students this fall.
- Supported interdisciplinary student voices through WAM Collective, the museum’s Student Campus Life Program. Student-led programs included the professional networking event, [“Conversations with Creatives,”](#) and a student round-table discussion on [the future of museums](#), with university art museum student groups from across the country.
- Colleagues Advisory Board’s participation in the national [Facing Change](#) initiative.
- Grant award and launch of [Cloudguide](#), an app-based audio guide including new content on WAM’s permanent and public art collections.