

SPENCER  
MUSEUM of ART

HELEN FORESMAN SPENCER MUSEUM OF ART

2018-2024  
STRATEGIC  
PLAN



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## FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Spencer Museum of Art is dedicated to serving all students, researchers, and citizens across the state of Kansas. Those who experience the Museum, both in our galleries and beyond our walls, exercise and strengthen their capacity for imagination and creative thinking, curiosity, and sensitivity to culture—skills that are critical for cosmopolitan citizenship. Each of these skills heighten our ability to respond to difference and self-knowledge.

This strategic planning document is a snapshot of a dynamic organization that continues to build upon a distinguished history and remains acutely attuned to artistic and social opportunities. The Spencer Museum is a place of encounter, where art and people intermingle, where students and scholars and artists converge. In ways large and small, these interactions are catalysts for discovery and transformation, of the self and of our world. Through art, education, and research, the Museum works to improve the lives of people while stewarding cultural and natural systems.

Saralyn Reece Hardy  
*Marilyn Stokstad* Director  
*Spencer Museum of Art*



## INTRODUCTION

The Spencer Museum of Art is entering its second century of infusing art into the University of Kansas curriculum, K-12 classrooms, and regional communities. Our 2018-2024 strategic plan reflects emerging opportunities at this unique moment in our institution's history.

In 2016, we completed a major renovation of 30,000 square feet of our facility and launched a major initiative to integrate arts research throughout the University. The transformation of our facility introduced new technologies and expanded spaces for teaching, learning, and research. Within these spaces we are experimenting with deepening relationships with our communities and partners. Similarly, the establishment of the Integrated Arts Research Initiative in early 2016 builds on our long history of leading interdisciplinary research collaborations and positions us to further reaffirm the role of university art museums in scholarship and creative endeavor.

The Strategic Plan that follows pays heed to the rich history and present character of the Spencer Museum of Art. As a cultural resource for the University of Kansas, the city of Lawrence, and the state of Kansas, the Spencer has a responsibility to develop programs, collections, and initiatives that represent and serve these audiences. For the next five years, the Spencer Museum of Art will dedicate resources toward fostering creative and critical thinking through engagement with art; acting as a catalyst for inquiry and discovery; stewarding an encyclopedic collection; and enhancing organizational adaptability.

## Mission

The Spencer Museum of Art sustains a culturally diverse collection and encourages interdisciplinary exploration at the intersection of art, ideas, and experience. The Spencer strengthens, supports, and contributes to the academic research and teaching of The University of Kansas and is committed to serving communities of learners across Kansas and beyond.

## Vision

Stimulate creative thinking and spark new ideas through transformative arts experiences.



The Spencer Museum of Art is an institution dedicated to interdisciplinary teaching, learning, and research for audiences of all ages and backgrounds. The Museum's diverse collection, educational initiatives, and international research profile have deep roots and reflect a century of thoughtful cultivation by generations of curators, directors, students, and visitors.

## A COMPREHENSIVE ART MUSEUM

The permanent collection of the Spencer Museum of Art dates to a 1917 donation of art to KU by Sallie Casey Thayer, and also to the year 3,000 BCE when the oldest object in the collection was created. The Museum's global collecting focus was established by Thayer's gift of more than 7,000 art objects from the Americas, Asia, and Europe. The Museum continues to acquire art from cultures worldwide. In 2009, the collection grew significantly through the acquisition of approximately 9,000 objects from the former KU Museum of Anthropology. The current collection numbers more than 45,000 objects that represent 5,000 years of human history across six continents. The Museum continues to grow its collection to be more representative of the diverse communities it serves and increase understanding of the human experience.







## A CENTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Since its origins, the Museum and its collection have enriched the university experience for KU students pursuing degrees in the arts. By the 1960s, the Museum was extending its resources to students in other fields under the leadership of Director Marilyn Stokstad. Her groundbreaking exhibitions and courses such as “Humanities in the Art Museum” introduced new ways of thinking about how art can enrich teaching across disciplines. By the early 2000s, dozens of KU faculty, staff, and students in many different schools and departments were incorporating the Museum’s exhibitions and collection into their curriculum every year. This proliferation in campus engagement led to the establishment of an endowed department to sustain and expand this work. Now, more than 50 distinct KU units and departments engage with the Museum annually through customized viewing experiences in the Stephen H. Goddard Study Center, curricular-themed installations in the Jack & Lavon Brosseau Center for Learning, and guided and self-guided class visits to the galleries. The Museum’s collection, facility, and staff continue to play a pivotal role in enhancing the student experience for KU undergraduate and graduate students across disciplines.



## A CULTURAL RESOURCE FOR COMMUNITIES OF LEARNERS

At the core of the Museum's founding, championed by Sallie Casey Thayer, was the belief that world-class works of art should be accessible to audiences in the geographic center of the United States. The Museum continues to adhere to this ambition and works to reach communities in the city of Lawrence, the state of Kansas, and the Midwest region. Thousands of K-12 students and their families visit the Museum every year, educators and artists participate in professional development training led by Museum staff, and lifelong learners experience educational programs that are available for free and cover a range of topics. Over the next few years, the Museum will expand its engagement with communities across Kansas through the development of new programs and strategies to more broadly share our collections.



## A CATALYST FOR RESEARCH AND CREATIVE IDEAS

A growing priority for the Museum is facilitating discovery of new ideas and artistic production. While we continue long-standing collaborative programs, like our 35-year-old Murphy Lecture series in partnership with the Kress Foundation Department of Art History and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, we develop new initiatives to reach scholars and artists. Rocket Grants (offered in partnership with the Charlotte Street Foundation and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts) and our International Artist-in-Residence Program support the creation of new works of art and artistic research. Similarly, the Andrew W. Mellon Integrated Arts Research Initiative (IARI), which began in 2016, emerges from years of interdisciplinary collaborations and projects that integrated the arts and artists into research in the sciences and humanities. IARI works to elevate the national stature of KU as a leader for integrating the arts in research, and also aims to strengthen the research culture at KU and expand collaborations among disciplines and campuses. Our recent membership with the Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities (A2RU) underscores the growing role of the arts in academic research as well as elevating the University of Kansas's research profile.



## AN EVOLVING SPACE FOR ART, IDEAS, AND PEOPLE

Just as the Museum's collections and programmatic initiatives continue to shift in response to changing audience needs and trends in higher education, our facility adapts in turn. Until 1977, the Museum was housed in Spooner Hall. By the mid-1970s, the Museum's collection and vision had surpassed the physical capacity of Spooner Hall, and at that time the current building was constructed on the west side of the Kansas Union, adjacent to historic Marvin Grove. In 2016, the Museum underwent a major facility renovation to reimagine its spaces—expanding areas for teaching, learning, and research, welcoming visitors by bringing natural light into gathering spaces and galleries, and introducing new technologies throughout the Museum. An enduring priority is to create a welcoming environment where all audiences feel valued, included, and represented.

# Strategic Plan 2018–2024

The Spencer Museum of Art is at a pivotal moment in its history, having just completed a major facility renovation and celebrated the centennial of its collection. As we enter our second century of sharing art and ideas, we focus our resources on strategic directions that will ensure continued relevancy to our many communities and lay the foundation for our next hundred years. The way forward is shaped by guiding principles that reflect the values and mission of the Museum.

## Guiding Principles



- Art at our Core
- Catalyst for Inquiry & Discovery
- Site for Inclusion & Dialogue



## Guiding Principle 1

# Art at our Core

- Explore art in ways that support teaching, learning, and programming and stimulate research and creative work
- Grow our collection sustainably, responsibly, and respectfully to better reflect and illuminate the fabric of our global community
- Preserve and share the works of art we steward, which are vital to the Museum and all that we do



## Guiding Principle 2

# Catalyst for Inquiry & Discovery

- Transform ways of seeing, thinking, and acting by generating and facilitating interdisciplinary collaborations and research
- Inspire and support artists at all levels, generate new creative work, and document artistic processes and works of art
- Foster individual and institutional innovation and creativity in order to produce new and expanded benefits for our communities





## Guiding Principle 3

# Site for Inclusion & Dialogue

- Amplify the capacity of art and artists to create a space for engaging audiences with critical issues and human experiences
- Employ a broad range of voices, ideas, and experiences, including both practices proven successful and methods that challenge traditional museological practices
- Create an accessible environment that promotes individual lifelong learning



## Strategic Directions

The Museum has identified several actionable goals for the next five years. These objectives correspond to four strategic directions: activate art, stimulate engagement, inspire inquiry, and enhance organizational adaptability.

- Activate Art
- Inspire Inquiry
- Stimulate Engagement
- Enhance Organizational Adaptability

Develop and steward the Spencer Museum's collection in order to share it with our audiences in broader ways.



## Activate Art

# Goals

- Develop a collection that embodies diversity in accordance with best practices that reflect a changing world.
- Expand information about our collection and how we share it.
- Use the collection to proactively investigate enduring questions through exhibitions, programs, and digital initiatives.

Encourage and support a research environment open to collaboration and innovation.



## Inspire Inquiry

# Goals

- Establish and nurture reciprocal relationships with diverse individual and institutional research collaborators.
- Build openness among museum staff to critique and adopt new ideas and methods.
- Model and advocate for interdisciplinary and artistic research/inquiry.
- Develop and utilize public platforms to broadly disseminate research and discovery.

Offer multifaceted opportunities for diverse community participation.



## Stimulate Engagement

# Goals

- Co-develop rich content and socially relevant programs and exhibitions.
- Expand inclusive opportunities for communities across Kansas and beyond to experience Museum resources.
- Sustain the Spencer as a valued resource through innovation, responsiveness, and strategic communications.



Strengthen internal systems and capacity toward achieving long-term stability in response to the continual changes to art museums and support for the arts.



# Enhance Organizational Adaptability

## Goals

- Cultivate a positive work environment that supports individual staff members and builds cohesion by increasing opportunities for professional growth, creative intellectual work, and teambuilding.
- Develop an efficient and dynamic staffing structure and improve communication to strengthen existing initiatives and respond to emerging opportunities.
- Establish a healthy financial foundation that promotes transparency, accountability, and flexibility that acknowledges shifts in public and private support for the arts and education.

# Process

The 2018–2023 strategic plan extends from January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2023. It was developed through an investigation of our internal practices, University and community partnerships, and current developments in museums and related fields. The plan was driven by a perspective of inquiry and led by a cross-departmental team, with guidance from independent consultant Marc Vogl. They gathered valuable comments from the entire Museum staff, as well as partners and key stakeholders through interviews, surveys, and group discussions.

# Participants

## Consultant

Marc Vogl, *Vogl Consulting*

## Strategic Planning Committee

Margaret Perkins-McGuinness, *Director of External Affairs, Co-Chair*

Jennifer Talbott, *Associate Director, Operations, Co-Chair*

Annette Becker, *Assistant to the Director*

Alexis Fekete-Shukla, *Director of Advancement and Planning*

Richard Klocke, *Exhibition Designer*

Casey Mesick, *Curator of Global Indigenous Art*

Saralyn Reece Hardy, *Marilyn Stokstad Director*

Celka Straughn, *Andrew W. Mellon Director of Public Practice, Education, and Research*

Angela Watts, *Associate Collection Manager*

## Staff

Sue Ashline, *Matter/Framer*

Doug Bergstrom, *Exhibition Technician*

Cathy Brashler, *Development*

*Communications Coordinator*

Rachel Brown, *Berkeley Education Intern*

Dan Coester, *Exhibition Technician*

Emma Cormack, *Rights and Reproduction Student Assistant*

Emma Davison, *Administrative Student Assistant*

Janet Dreiling, *Assistant Director for Collections*

Amy Duke, *Public Programs and Visitor Experience Manager*

Myles Dunigan, *Sloan Print Intern*

Susan Earle, *Associate Curator of European and American Art*

Kris Ercums, *Associate Curator of Global Contemporary and Asian Art*

Sydney Gaylord, *Berkley Multicultural Intern*

Sofia Galarza Liu, *Collections Manager and Database Project Co-Manager*

Michael Ann German, *Internal Operations Administrative Assistant*

Alex Gilmore, *Legal Extern*

Steve Goddard, *Associate Director and Senior Curator of Prints and Drawings*

Robert Hickerson, *Information and Image Manager*

Will Hopkins, *Web Programmer/Designer*

Lauren Johnson, *Mellon/Loo Global Indigenous Art Intern*

Elizabeth Kanost, *Communications Manager*

Sam Lyons, *Mellon/Loo European and American Art Intern*

Amanda Martin-Hamon, *Associate Director of Community Engagement*

Jeffrey McKee, *Graphic Designer*

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Megan Murphy, *Digital Imaging Student Assistant*

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Kayle Reiger, *Tours and Education Intern*

Shannon Sweeney, *Collections Intern*

Ryan Waggoner, *Photographer/Videographer*

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Weitian Yan, *Carpenter Asian Art Intern*

Claire Zimmerman, *Graphic Design Intern*

## Advisory Groups

Linda Bailey, *National Advisory Board*

Diane Horning, *Friends of the Art Museum Board*

Mike Michaelis, *National Advisory Board*

John Pierce, *Friends of the Art Museum Board*

Reggie Robinson, *Friends of the Art Museum Board*

Pam Sullivan, *Friends of the Art Museum Board*

Lawrence Academic Community

Cody Charles, *KU Office of Multicultural Affairs*

Sarah Crawford-Parker, *KU Office of First Year Experience*

Anne Dotter, *KU Honors Program*

Joshua Falleaf, *Haskell Indian Nations University*

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Jennifer Humphrey, *KU Natural History Museum/Biodiversity Institute*

Mary Anne Jordan, *KU Department of Visual Art*

Emily Ryan, *KU Commons*

Anthea Scouffas, *KU Lied Center of Kansas*

Sally Utech, *KU Hall Center for the Humanities*

Doug Ward, *KU Center for Teaching Excellence*

Lawrence Creative Community

Jason Barr

Diane Guthrie

Amber Hansen

Rick Mitchell

Meredith Moore

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