

SAINT LOUIS ART MUSEUM

**DIVERSITY STUDY GROUP REPORT TO THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

AUGUST 31, 2020

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OVERVIEW

The Commissioners of the St. Louis Art Museum Subdistrict of the Zoo Museum District find that we are in a historic time as society focuses on issues of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion. As we, and our community, engage with the past and present to shape our steps into the future, we must ask ourselves how we as the governing body ensure that the Saint Louis Art Museum represents principles of diversity and inclusion, applying these principles in all that the institution does.

Our role is to show our audience the complex narratives of the human condition that art can tell across the diverse cultures of the world and the diverse perspectives of all eras. As one of our Board members said: “When a museum has a great exhibit, the person traveling through its entrance is not the same person that leaves its exit because that person has been exposed to different cultures with various perspectives on distinct experiences in a given time.”

In other words, the Art Museum should help its audience understand the human condition with all its successes and failures by including stories of survival, prejudice, and enlightenment. And in performing that role as an institution it must strive to represent an understanding of how society can succeed in inclusivity.

The Saint Louis Art Museum should be a catalyst in St. Louis for conversations about our collective history—every race, every era, and every culture. That can be done through art and discussions about what art is saying about the human condition. That conversation will include both humankind’s successes and failures, so we can all learn from them. It requires a cross-cultural dialogue including diverse voices and perspectives. We must embrace that the Museum has a unique role to address past injustices, to raise awareness, and to encourage understanding.

The Diversity Study Group has undertaken to bring to the Commission broad recommendations of how to build the institution that can lead in that role.

We found that the Museum has made meaningful progress in diversity and inclusion. Works have been accessioned by African American and Black artists, including important objects by African diaspora artists. These accessions reflect a diversity of era, medium, and artistic identity. Exhibitions of Black artists have been presented with engaging interpretive and educational

opportunities for visitors. We are gratified to have achieved a 2019 average Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 84 for African American visitors and an average of 86 for all visitors.¹

The visitor profile for the Museum continues to draw well from racially and ethnically diverse audiences. Exceptional among art museums, ethnically diverse visitors make up 37% of the visitors, compared to 26% of the metro-St. Louis population.

Finally, we are honored to have designed and stewarded one of the nation’s first and most successful pipeline programs, [the Romare Bearden Fellowship](#), which for nearly 30 years has hosted a one-year fellowship at the Art Museum for outstanding emerging art professionals who bring diversity to the art world. The Fellows work under the direction of the Director of Audience Development, rotating through departments, collaborating on projects, and completing their year with a capstone project. Bearden Fellow alumni now hold a range of prestigious positions in the art world. They are museum directors, educators, curators, and other professionals: gallerists and academic art historians. They hold or have held roles at the Art Institute of Chicago, National Gallery of Art, National Portrait Gallery, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Saint Louis Art Museum, Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, University of Pennsylvania, and University of Texas, Austin, among other institutions. The Bearden Fellowship has been a highly effective program for diversifying the ranks of art professionals nationally and should be lauded for its success. In the process, it has generated a deep pool of both emerging arts professionals and senior thought leaders.

The substantial diversity progress achieved under the guidance and leadership of the Museum Director and in accordance with the current long-range plan, gives the Museum a strong foundation on which to build. In undertaking and now adopting this Report, the Commission is evaluating progress and, with the Director and staff, helping the institution move forward. Indeed, even as we acknowledge our accomplishments to date and their positive impact on St. Louis and beyond, we know we have much work to do. The Art Museum aspires to become a local leader among cultural institutions and a national leader among museums to embrace and integrate diversity and inclusion across our mission, in our values, and through all aspects of Museum operations. In order to become a local and national leader, we as a governing body are prepared to take responsibility for that work.

¹ The average NPS for museums is 54. Net Promoter Score is a measure of consumer loyalty and advocacy used across many industries, and increasingly, by museums. NPS is determined based on the question “On a scale of 0 to 10, how likely are you to recommend the Saint Louis Art Museum to a friend or family member?” Their numeric answer determines the NPS that can range from -100 to +100. Scores above 0 are considered good, over 50 excellent, and over 70 world-class.

The role of this Diversity Study Group was not to create specific plans and proposals. The Commission has governing responsibility for the institution. In accordance with that responsibility, the Commission will set the standards for the Art Museum and devise processes that allow for the design and execution of Museum operating strategies through its governing committees, management, and staff.

This Report makes several recommendations for immediate Commission action in stating the Art Museum mission and values, and modifying governing infrastructure. These actions will ensure that further progress is made as the Museum pursues its mission and adheres to its values. Furthermore, this review suggests a number of ambitions and potential opportunities for the institution but none could be implemented other than through our governance process. Fundamentally, we believe sound process creates the most effective results.

On that basis, highlighted below are a number of key Museum areas and diversity considerations for each. The list of items “To Consider” is intentionally exhaustive of all the suggestions we have heard and found desirable through the assessment process. We believe further examination is warranted and required in every case. We view these areas and groups of suggestions not as isolated silos but instead as component parts of a comprehensive effort by the Museum to reflect diversity, justice, inclusion, and welcoming to all in everything it does.

Accountability for the implementation of the ideas and items in this Report rests with the Commission itself. Once the Commission has established the Diversity Committee with its charge and charter (both recommended in this Report), that committee will monitor, assess, and report progress with respect to all matters raised in this report.

Each of the items set out in this Report as “To Consider,” if exclusively the province of the Board and Commission, will be assigned by the Diversity Committee to the appropriate Board committee. The “To Consider” items that are not exclusively the province of the Board will be considered by Museum management and staff, who will report progress on a regular basis to the Diversity Committee, who will in turn report to the Commission. Neither the item nor how it is to be executed is mandated by this Report. Instead the Boards and Museum staff will determine which items to implement, in what priority, and how. We expect that new ideas will be generated as the Boards and staff move through this process.

The Commission has the ultimate responsibility to ensure that every item in this Report is considered, and where desirable and feasible will be implemented.

The Art Museum values diversity in all its forms including: age, disability, economic status, gender, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexuality. Given the current national calls for

racial equity and events in our home city St. Louis, the Study Group decided to focus an initial diversity, equity, access, and inclusion case study on the Black community, which includes Africans, African Americans, and others members of the African diaspora. The strategy is for the Museum to design, implement, and assess with the Black community, and then revise and implement the process and plan more broadly to be inclusive of other groups. We will use lessons learned from this initial study to create a template to guide our aspiration to become a national model for artistic ambition and excellence through inclusion of diversity in all forms.

Importantly, this approach starting with racial equity necessarily must have flexibility across the domains studied. Most notably, the Museum mission itself cannot be meaningfully diversified without fundamentally rethinking the strategy to tell the full story of art across global cultures and time. We are confident that this broad lens regarding the collection will bring the same racial equity as the more focused attention in other parts of the Report.

The adoption of this Report and the actions contemplated represent the beginning of a substantial process to infuse diversity, equity, access, and inclusion throughout the Museum. With the input of the Diversity Committee, as it monitors and assesses the input provided by the Boards and management, the Commission will set priorities and require specific goals, while ensuring accountability with respect to the process. Clearly stated, the Commission is expected to insist on setting goals and will measure progress on an ongoing basis—to ensure accountability and be transparent to the community.

To create this Report, the Diversity Study Group received substantial support and input. The Museum itself, under the guidance of the Director, provided substantial data and explanation over many weeks of meetings. Input was solicited from all Museum staff members through an anonymous survey. Staff responses provided strong insights and information. The Director hosted a number of meetings with employees and then reported their individual thoughts. In addition to valuable data and analytic input from managers at the Museum, the Study Group had several meetings with individual employees including curators, educators, and others. We had the input of a number of Bearden Fellows, whose assistance was generous and valuable.

Commission members regularly provided guidance, observations, and thoughts as we kept them up to date with respect to our review. We gathered observations and thoughts from a number of Trustees. Conversations were had with donors and local community leaders. And, we consulted with artists, arts professionals, and employees of other museums.

This is a time when the entire art ecosystem is in flux and transition. There are numerous (almost daily) studies, discussions, and articles relating to the role of a museum and art in a world that is reevaluating its history and relationship to social justice. There are wise voices speaking, there

are loud voices speaking, and there are debates raging— many of which helped us immensely in this study.

For the support, insights, and wisdom of all of those who helped inform us we are extremely grateful.

As we look to the road ahead for the Saint Louis Art Museum, we are reminded of the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s analysis of justice in a 1794 letter:

All necessary knowledge in the Branch of Ethics is comprised in the Word Justice—that the Good of the whole is the Good of the Individ[id]ual. Of course it is each Individ[id]ual’s *duty* to be Just, *because* it is his *Interest*. To perceive this and to assent to it as an abstract proposition—is easy—but it requires the most wakeful attentions of the most reflective minds in all moments to bring it into practice—It is not enough, that we have once swallowed it—The *Heart* should have *fed* upon the *truth*, as Insects on a Leaf—till it be tinged with the colour, and shew it’s food in every minu-test fibre.²

We offer this Report to the Commission and encourage that governing body promptly to consider and start to implement these suggestions until this entire, great institution is “tinged with the colour” of inclusion and racial and cultural equity “in every minu-test fibre.”

² Christie, William. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Literary Life*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007. Citing Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Volume 1*. 114-15.

RECOMMENDATIONS & SUGGESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Mission and Values

Inclusion and equity are inherent concepts in the existing Mission and Values; however, we believe the concepts of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion, should be more explicitly stated.

Recommended: The Commission modify the Mission statement to read as follows (with modification highlighted in bold):

The Saint Louis Art Museum collects, presents, interprets, and conserves works of art of the highest quality across time and cultures; educates, inspires discovery, and elevates the human spirit; preserves a legacy of artistic achievement for the people of St. Louis and the world; **and engages, includes, and represents the full diversity of the St. Louis community supporting it.**

Recommended: The Commission modify the Values to add the following bullet point after “Art” and before “Stewardship”:

Inclusion—we value the support we receive from the taxpayers of the St. Louis City and County and our donors, and our status as a public museum and part of the greater St. Louis Community. Throughout all we collect and show, and all we do, we reflect our respect for the rich diversity of that Community, the necessary equity born of that respect, and the inclusion of and engagement with all members of that Community.

Recommended: The Commission adopt the following policy:

The global character of the Museum collection shall hereafter more fully inform and inspire its collecting, installation, exhibition, and interpretative and staffing strategies so that the stories and lessons embodied in the Museum collection are fully, richly, and equitably told across all aspects of the Museum collection. These same strategies shall be applied to further diversify the narrative of art the Museum will tell in its galleries.

Governance

The Museum has made progress in areas of diversity and inclusion over the past years, yet we believe that there is much more to be done. We are confident that we have the right Director to guide us and capable management and staff to help. To infuse values of inclusion throughout the

Museum, we recommend a Commission level deliberate process to ensure that the entire institution is dedicating itself to these principles as inherent in its mission and that every item in this Report is undertaken, monitored, and assessed. We also recommend that in considering membership on the Commission and Boards, there be increased focus on ensuring diversity.

Recommended: The Commission create a new standing Board committee named the “Diversity Committee” charged to give at least quarterly reports to the Commission with respect to diversity and inclusion progress in each of the areas set out below. Membership on the Diversity Committee will include the President of the Commission, the President of the Board of Trustees, the President of the Friends Board, and the Chairs of the Collections, Compensation, Nominating, Governance, and Development Committees as ex officio voting members and such other members of the Commission and Trustees as shall be approved by the Commission.

Recommended: The Nominating Committee should consider further criteria for cultivation and determination of membership and leadership of the various boards and committees to increase racial, ethnic, and other inclusiveness throughout the governance of the institution to reflect better the elements of diversity. In that consideration the Committee might seek input from community leaders from different sectors.

To Consider Relating to Governance:

- For every initiative, project, expenditure, or other action submitted as a recommendation to the Commission, require a “Diversity Impact Statement” intended to explain the impact on diversity, inclusion, and community engagement.
- Create a “President’s Diversity Advisory Group” with members from the community to advise the President on matters of community engagement.
- Require of the Director a regular report on diversity and inclusion and provide that the Director is responsible to support and encourage that culture throughout every element of Museum operations.
- Create a Board generated “Welcoming Committee” to host and encourage social programs for new Board members to meet each other and existing Board members, and to learn about the Museum and its governance.

- Create and define how the Boards may best use “Community Advisory Boards” in specific areas to elicit more community input on topics such as, inclusion, art and exhibition, and technology.

Management Team

The present senior management team is an exceptional group of professionals and leaders. This group would be even stronger if it included someone specifically charged to ensure that all elements of the Museum are sensitive to equity, access, and inclusion. In fact, those functions of ensuring sensitivity are assumed and delegated now, but there is no formal office responsible nor with direct reporting to the Director.

To Consider Relating to Management Team:

- Create an office overseen by a director charged with ensuring that diversity remains a Museum priority.
 - That director should serve in an executive position as a liaison between the Museum Director and the key departments, with respect to diversity goals strategies and decisions.
 - That director should have the resources and staff necessary to support the Diversity Committee and the exploration, implementation, and assessment of all matters in this report and otherwise relating to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion.
 - Professional development and travel funds should be made available to use at the new director’s discretion, to engage in conferences, training, and engagement with other thought leaders in the field.
 - That director would have the responsibility to develop and coordinate processes that encompass goal setting and data collecting, and to examine change and inform stakeholders over time in all areas touching on diversity and inclusion.
- Management should design and implement processes that allow and encourage bilateral and regular communication, to allow the Museum Director to hear regularly from staff, in accordance with established organizational structure, to ensure the efficient and effective communication informing the institution on matters of racial equity.

Employment

The Study Group is pleased to see progress over the past years in employment diversity, equity, access, and inclusion at the Museum. We believe there are opportunities for much further progress at all levels of employment within the Museum. Our recommendations follow.

Recommended: The Commission should require deliberate and improved hiring processes to increase the pool of diverse applicants for employment at all levels of Museum staffing.

To Consider Relating to Employment:

- Employ a staff recruiter responsible to recruit new hires and develop opportunities to raise awareness of opportunities in the Museum.
- [The Bearden Fellows](#), both current and former, should be cultivated as ambassadors to encourage colleagues to consider employment at the Saint Louis Art Museum.
- In advertising open positions at the Museum:
 - ensure job descriptions and advertising are inclusive and explicitly reference diversity,
 - advertise in places that reach diverse populations including but not limited to, in non-English language media,
 - aggressively reach out and network to reach a diverse community.
- Augment paid internships for interns of color and from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Actively recruit at colleges and universities, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and scholarship foundations.
- Continue to maintain minimum salaries competitive with those of the universities, hospitals, and similar employers in the St. Louis area.
- Continue to encourage staff input through established organizational structure with respect to all relevant matters.

- Establish a goal for a diverse workforce proportionate to the racial and ethnic makeup of the St. Louis community, particularly with respect to entry-level employees.
- Create an alternate complaint system for employees with discrimination or harassment complaints.
- Employ technologies for the evaluation and hiring of employees or employment applicants that are fair to all socio-economic groups and racial differences.
- Look for opportunities to provide more visibility within and outside the workplace for underrepresented members of the workforce.

Acquisitions

The Museum has made notable progress over the past years in acquiring and displaying art by artists of color, particularly Black artists. The Ollie Collection gift along with individual purchases have greatly enhanced how we can reflect and interpret the Black experience in our society. There are, however, further opportunities to make the art collection more reflective of our country's complex and multi-cultural society and to allow analysis in ways that give the Museum and its audience further tools to understand the art and their own experiences. We want to reinforce that the Museum's outstanding cohort of curators should drive consideration of any of the below items relating to acquisitions.

To Consider Relating to Acquisitions:

- Develop an acquisition strategy for a five-to-ten-year period prioritizing acquisitions through a curatorially designed lens of social equity.
- Continue to diversify and enhance the collection aggressively by setting goals and objectives in terms of number or expenditure for art by Black artists.
- Expand cataloging so the collection can be searched across a range of meaningful characteristics, including the race and geographic location of the artist, and the content of the object.
- Develop strategies to encourage the donation of collections of non-Western art, using the Ollie Collection gift as a foundation.

- Steward ongoing conversations among curators to share their respective collection development goals through a diversity and inclusion lens.

Collection

The collection is the Museum’s core identity. Its scope and installation defines and shapes the Museum mission and its commitment to diversity initiatives. More than any exhibition or program, the presentation of the collection consistently tells the public every day who we are. In the past, curators have reflected diversity in gallery installations, but what more can be done needs to be considered.

To Consider Relating to Collection:

- Review all aspects of the collection to determine and address collecting gaps within the Museum’s narrative goals. This review will inform new gallery installations and accession and deaccession strategies.
- Implement a funding strategy to fill identified gaps in the collection. For example, allocate funds to purchase works by artists of color and to cultivate both donors and significant collectors of this material for loans and donations.
- Empower curators to recommend deaccessioning strategies throughout the collection to establish dedicated funds.
- Develop innovative interpretation strategies around the collection, both in the gallery and digitally, to further diversity initiatives.

Exhibitions

In recent years, the Museum has presented exhibitions covering a wide range of historic and cultural traditions, including African and African American topics; these exhibitions speak to cross-cultural elements of our community. These exhibitions and related programs have been effective in engaging visitors, and increasing feelings of being welcome, and a sense of belonging at the Museum; however, there should be many more.

To Consider Relating to Exhibitions:

- Steward ongoing conversations among curators regarding diversity in exhibition proposals.

- Establish programs in collaboration with local and national institutions focused on work by artists of color and themes reflecting the condition of non-white members of the community. This should include institutions of all sizes and scope and should not be limited to peer museums.
- Provide all exhibitions, including those not presented in main galleries, with a level of public attention including marketing and publication consistent with that provided to exhibitions in the main galleries.
- Use smaller exhibitions specifically to promote the diversity of the Museum collection.
- Increase themed exhibitions (gallery installations) displaying a variety of materials, styles, eras, and cultures.

Curatorial Addition

The Museum has a strong curatorial staff with a wide breadth of knowledge and experience. All seem to desire that the collection be broadened along the guidelines set out above.

To Consider Relating to Curatorial Addition:

- Appoint a specific curator-at-large position to function as a diversity and inclusion “rover.” That person would report as appropriate and have substantial authority with respect to:
 - Acquisitions,
 - Exhibitions,
 - Sensitivity to placement and labels of artwork, as well as deeper digital context related to diversity and inclusion,
 - Ensure an inclusive and welcoming culture relative to the placement of artwork,
 - The “rover” might not need to be full time or even on premises.
- Hire “Visiting Curators” for one-year terms to add expertise not currently present on the curatorial staff.

- Establish joint program(s) with a university or other institution (local or national) to fund an intern for a year annually.
- Seek endowment funding—or special gift or set aside—so that position is permanently funded.

Education

The Museum has a broad education program that reaches many students in the City, County, and beyond. The Diversity Study Group found opportunities for improvement and formulated questions the Museum might ask.

To Consider Relating to Education

- Each program should be subject to a diversity assessment including:
 - Target audience: are we reaching racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse students, families, and communities?
 - Welcoming: does the program leave students, families, and communities feeling welcome at the Art Museum, and thereby building a foundation for a diverse audience in the future?
 - Content: does the program expand all students' appreciation for global cultures (and perhaps especially for non-white cultures) that are heavily represented in our region?
- Ticketing and membership experiences for each student in a program that encourages the student and parent (or person of significance) to return to the Museum for a ticketed exhibition or other benefit.
- Develop a process to target various community programs for partnership.
- Continue and possibly enhance the Teen Assistants program and continue the integration into docent work.
- Continue to enhance the Teen Advisory Council to be more accessible with increased stipends and transportation assistance.
- Revive and enhance the Teacher Advisory Group with more structured programs and compensation plans.

- Enhance a teaching artist program or an artist-in-residence program to include more local artists and possibly more venues.
- Incorporate increased elements of the education outreach program going out to the students, rather than bringing the students to the Museum, as a way to make the Museum more visible in their community.
- For visiting lecturer programs, offer a supplemental program for students to attend, when appropriate.

Audience

With the support of the Museum, the Audience Engagement Taskforce evaluated and improved understanding in this area. Visitor research informed the intentional focus on priority audiences, and Alexander Babbage data collection established benchmarks to measure the change-over-time impact. The Study Group found opportunities for improvement here, particularly in accessibility.

To Consider Relating to Audience:

- As the collection data is digitized, determine how and by whom it will be used to inform and determine subject-word cataloging.
- School access programs for digital library—training and utilization.
- Satellite installations similar to those in governmental offices, but in community centers.
- Broaden and enhance digital programming particularly focused on audiences of color.
- Develop electronic educational programs for underserved communities.
- Form youth affinity groups.

Visitor Experience

The Alexander Babbage 2019 visitor intercept surveys found that a variety of artwork, having fun, and engagement with the art consistently rated among the most satisfying aspects of visitor experiences. Nevertheless, we need to consider how visitors identify, locate, and interpret art when they visit the Museum. If the standard is to be welcoming and inclusive— and if we want to avoid the public perception that we are a “colonial” or “white man” museum (a charge now

being leveled against many museums)—how visitors of various cultures perceive us becomes paramount. Every visitor entering the Museum must see objects that help that visitor understand the human condition through art. We note the strong favorable responses to the “Object of the Day” as a program that highlights the diversity of the collection, and as a program that has resulted in numerous comments about the diversity of objects, cultures, and eras shown.

To Consider Relating to Visitor Experience:

- A deliberate process with accountability to analyze art placement, labels, and digital content through a lens of diversity and racial equity.
 - This is likely to be most effective if a single office or person has that responsibility and accountability.
 - That may be the “rover” set out above, a member of the curatorial staff or otherwise.
 - Every employee should be encouraged to make suggestions on this subject to the responsible person, with special opportunities for visitor-facing staff.
 - Any survey seeking input from the visiting public should try to solicit reaction to context, including art placement, labels, and digital content.
- An immediate assessment, by an objective person, of all existing labels through a lens of racial equity and follow-up assessments.
- Special labels (possibly supplementing or supplemented by digital content) directed to a certain audience, to place an object in its historical context relative to issues of social justice.
- Digital gallery tours focused on specialized areas or universal themes of relevance to visitors.
 - These tours might focus on the lessons of history, the particular social or political situation of the artist (such as enslaved persons or holocaust survivors) and the society’s reaction to the artist’s message.

Targeted Advertising and Marketing

There has been an increased focus, in recent years, on how to target and market to diverse audiences. Any of the improvements suggested in this Report, whether relating to exhibitions, employment, education, or otherwise will likely be enhanced by advertising to that audience and targeting it in related programs. Public relations efforts can also make more people feel comfortable and welcome.

To Consider Related to Targeted Advertising and Marketing:

- Evaluate the sufficiency and effect of such advertising and marketing to date.
- All elements of this Report as implemented should be supported by deliberate marketing efforts.
- Reevaluate the Museum website to ensure that content consistently reflects dedication to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion.
- Address the target audience when putting together any program.

Philanthropy and Development

Although there has been progress to engage Black community members in Museum leadership through BAC and Board membership, we perceive that there are a large number of area residents who are not engaged with the Museum. We believe that philanthropy and governance engagement are intertwined. As the philanthropic base is broadened racially, the pool of prospective governance members will likewise be broadened. Similarly, as the governance structure is further diversified, it is likely that the philanthropic base will diversify. So, there are many advantages to broaden our donor base.

To Consider Relating to Philanthropy and Development:

- The Commission directs implementation of a broad philanthropic effort directed to the St. Louis Black community to include:
 - Black wealth holders,
 - Black corporate stakeholders whether owners or executive,
 - Foundations established by Black wealth holders,

- Black community members already engaged in philanthropic support, including churches, fraternal orders, and civic institutions,
- Black community members interested in developing art collections,
- Foundations directing grants to institutions and programs focusing on racial inclusion and justice,
- Reevaluation of diversity prerequisites, if any, for Board members.
- A leadership council that encourages and recognizes substantial donors of color. This would be comparable to similar recognition societies in other institutions in the community as a way to draw more wealth holders into philanthropic engagement.
- Soliciting grants from national and local foundations for racial equity initiatives (for example, the Bearden program) as a source of funding and to increase the Museum’s visibility in this area.
- Cultivate donors to support diversity efforts.
- Reconsider Friends of African American Art to engage more members from the Black community and to increase the “Supporters” category.
- Develop programs to cultivate Black community members’ interest in museum leadership.
- An additional group focusing on racial equity and art’s role in enhancing or impeding it.

Bearden Fellows

Founded in 1991, the Romare Bearden Graduate Museum Fellowship invites a member of a group underrepresented in museums to spend a year working at the Art Museum. The Bearden Fellowship is nationally renowned as one of the oldest, most robust, and most effective museum pipeline diversity programs in the country, with Bearden Fellow alumni now holding roles as leaders and thought influencers across the art world. We believe that the Museum can build on this unique success in several ways. First, it can enhance the Bearden Fellow program.

In a 2019 survey, Bearden Fellow alumni identified several ways to enhance the Fellowship experience. They also noted some of the strengths of the Fellowship. These strengths include that the Fellowship offers broad exposure to a wide range of museum departments and strong mentorship by Museum staff who help Bearden Fellows clarify and develop career pathways. They report that the two most substantial aspects of the Fellowship experience are: 1) the opportunity for Bearden Fellows to identify and cultivate professional interests through work with many different museum departments, and 2) the genuine interest of staff across the Museum to develop the Fellows' interests and skills.

To Consider Relating to Romare Bearden Fellow:

- Lengthen the term of the Bearden Fellowship from one year to a two-year term, to better prepare Fellows for their professional careers (Fellows and staff cited several benefits to extend the Fellowship, including potentially giving Fellows more time to acclimate to the Museum's procedures, to hone and more deeply explore interests and skills, to see their projects to completion, and to broaden their professional networks).
- Ensure support to make Fellows feel comfortable navigating museums as professionals from historically underrepresented backgrounds (the survey of Fellows suggests respondents felt moderately comfortable contributing to meetings with Museum staff, but there is an important nuance to consider regarding Fellows' comfort as professionals from historically underrepresented backgrounds).
- Make clear the intentional prioritization of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion across the Museum (staff interviewees said that the Museum can improve diversity in staff, collections, and programming; and yet cautioned against seeing the Bearden Fellowship as an isolated, but successful, initiative that precludes other ways to diversify the Museum).
- Extend the Bearden Fellowship to a two-year term structured to overlap and thereby provide a small cohort experience between two Fellows.
- The Museum should cultivate and engage the Bearden Fellows not only as "former fellows" but as active Bearden alumni. As an active "Alumni Association," the Bearden Fellows can serve as ambassadors for the Art Museum to many parts of the art world; share their knowledge and expertise as thought leaders in their respective areas; recruit outstanding employees to

the Museum; and continue to enhance the diversity pipeline to museums and the art world. As part of this effort the following are to be considered:

- Appoint a “Bearden Study Committee” to explore and recommend additional ways to enhance the Bearden Fellowship and also to create a “Bearden Alumni Association,”
- Hold an annual virtual summit featuring a panel of Bearden Fellows to catalyze national conversations on the myriad dimensions of race and the art world,
- Hold a regularly scheduled in-person conference (perhaps coinciding with five-year Bearden program anniversaries) on race and the art world, perhaps codesigned by a group of Bearden alumni,
- Empower Bearden alumni as mentors to the next generation of diverse arts professionals to discuss the Bearden Fellowship and other pipeline fellowships,
- Similarly engage the Bearden alumni to share their stories and experiences with diverse St. Louis children, potentially using our existing programs to connect with St. Louis schools,
- Each year invite a former Bearden Fellow alumnus or alumna to do a short residency or visiting curator interaction with the current Bearden Fellow (perhaps in partnership with local universities),
- Invite Bearden alumni to relevant events at the Art Museum and offer them free tickets and perhaps to be hosted either with a Board member or together with each other at the same hotel.

Richardson Memorial Library and Museum Archives

The library holdings are substantial with considerable research materials. The library is used by curators and staff onsite, but otherwise most use is virtual. Library holdings are accessible and do circulate. Recent gifts from Ronald Ollie and Thomas Alexander have greatly increased library and archives collections that document African and African American artists, movements, and exhibitions. In particular, these recent gifts give the library materials not available in other institutions. Library and archives staff participate in external professional organizations and academic endeavors that promote diversity and inclusion.

To Consider Relating to Richardson Memorial Library and Museum Archives:

- Position the Ollie, Alexander, and other pieces in the collection as a focus on African American and African art resources:
 - To increase usage of the library,
 - To increase visibility of the Museum.
- Increase awareness and availability:
 - To increase accessibility complete further digitalization and cataloging in various databases to enable searches across a range of characteristics, including the race and geographic location of the artist and the content of the object,
 - Awareness should increase with focus and focus should increase awareness.
- Increase diversity in staffing and that should bring focus and awareness.
- Increased hours of operation (for example weekends) to increase accessibility.
- Reevaluate archives and how they might be used as relates to our collection of African American and African material and art.

Docents

The Museum docent volunteer program is an effective program engaging numerous individuals who invest considerable time in training and education and who then help create to a constructive and welcoming visitor experience. Docent volunteers are mostly white and older adults. Teen interns perform some docent functions and are more racially representative of the St. Louis community.

To Consider Relating to Docents:

- Specialized programs drawing on expertise of individual volunteers (like docents) who do not require the full training program.
- Make docent training program more accessible to those who are not available during normal business hours.

- Reach out to retirees through civic groups, fraternal orders, clubs, and similar groups.
- Engage retired teachers from St. Louis City and County public schools and beyond.
- Consider developing a specialized program for docents in “Engaging Diverse Groups” for instance, and use this program to recruit a team of docent trainees from an underrepresented group.
- Compensation for specialized docents.

Contractors and Suppliers

In constructing the East Building and working otherwise on the leased property during that construction, the Museum had a disciplined approach to Minority Business Enterprises requiring that 25% of the work be by Minority Business Enterprises. The Museum has defined policies in place for contractors. In fact, on major projects the Museum aims to include “Disadvantaged Business Enterprises,” but has not always been able to realize this goal. There are no policies with respect to suppliers and service providers.

To Consider Relating to Contractors and Suppliers:

- Review existing policies on minority contractors to determine if they are the right policies.
- Balance minority business preferences and availability, and costs of providers.
- Institute preference policies for Minority Business Enterprise suppliers and services, generally.
- Institute preference for local ownership.
- Increase the pool of bidders in these areas to include more minority businesses.

Collaboration with Other Institutions

There have been a number of collaborations with respect to exhibitions, partnerships with community organizations, and otherwise. Many of these have focused on diversity.

To Consider relating to Collaboration with other Institutions:

- Prioritize collaborations that enhance diversity.
- Look to national models and learning opportunities drawing on experiences of other museums promoting inclusion and equity.
- Increase collaboration with local institutions and experts to address local history of race relations and the reaction of the art world to it, possibly addressing specific objects in the Museum collection.
- Lead St. Louis initiatives of cultural institutions to address race in St. Louis possibly with the History Museum or local universities and colleges.
- Coordinate relevant shows with the Pulitzer Arts Foundation, Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, and the Griot Museum of Black History.
- Encourage volunteer activities (by staff and others) to help smaller local institutions, such as the Griot or Vashon Museums, to acquire and preserve aesthetically significant objects that reflect the life and culture of local minorities.

Endowment Investment

The Museum's endowment is invested by professional investment consultants following a passive investment approach using mutual funds manufactured by large financial companies.

To Consider Relating to Endowment Investment:

- Investment consultants and the funds utilized should be evaluated (as with other service providers and suppliers) to include their ownership and employees by minority status and their commitment to equity.
- Investment Policy Statements include standards relating to the ownership, functions, and standards of racial equity of investment and fund managers.

- Ensure that investments themselves align with the Museum Mission and Values as they relate to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion and avoid investments in companies that do not align with these values.

Saint Louis Art Museum as the Center of its Community

American educator and historian, and the founding director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Lonnie Bunch says:

I believe very strongly that museums have a social justice role to play, that museums have an opportunity to not become community centers, but to be at the center of their community, to help the community grapple with the challenges they face, to use history, to use science, to use education, to give the public tools to grapple with this.

...

What I'm expecting museums to be is driven by scholarship and the community. I want museums to be a place that gives the public not just what it wants, but what it needs.³

The Saint Louis Art Museum is physically at the “center of its community” on a hill overlooking St. Louis, in the middle of the community’s largest public park, and one of the two original subdistricts of the Zoo Museum District. The Museum Director frequently hosts visiting dignitaries and corporate guests.

To Consider Relating to Saint Louis Art Museum as the Center of its Community:

- Examine and articulate how the Museum can play the role that Lonnie Bunch suggests.
- Serve as a venue for local groups and a welcoming space for gatherings with thought leaders and convocations and encourage such gatherings by ensuring the presence of the Director, curators, and other leaders from the Museum.

³ Bunch, Lonnie. “Smithsonian’s Leader Says ‘Museums Have a Social Justice Role to Play.’” *The New York Times*, July 2, 2020.

- Encourage diversity of ideas and views expressed within the walls of the Museum and attended by the community at large.
- Identify and welcome scholars and thought leaders visiting St. Louis.
- Share with the community the Museum’s process, efforts, and actions to represent the highest ideals of diversity and inclusion.