



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF PRESERVATION AND ACCESS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the NEH Division of Preservation and Access application guidelines at <http://www.neh.gov/divisions/preservation> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Preservation and Access staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Asheville Art Museum Works on Paper Assessment

Institution: Asheville Art Museum

Project Director: Carolyn Grosch (May 2017 to January 2018); Thomas Schram (January 2018 to June 2019)

Grant Program: Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions

NARRATIVE
NEH Preservation Assistance Grant for Smaller Organizations

A. What activities would the grant support?

The Asheville Art Museum requests \$6,000 to support a conservation assessment of approximately 100 selected works on paper from its Permanent Collection. Funding will specifically support bringing paper conservator Kesha Talbert from ECS Conservation (located near Greensboro, NC) to the Museum to record the condition of these works and help train the Museum's curatorial staff on best practices for the storage of works on paper. The assessment will provide a detailed condition report for each work on paper, approximate costs for treatment, as well as a priority list for treatment that will be incorporated into the Museum's long range preservation plan. To raise public awareness about preventive care, the grant will support a public program at the conclusion of the assessment that focuses on best practices for storage, display, and handling of works on paper. This workshop will be designed for the general public, including families, collectors, and artists who care for works on paper in their own collections.

B. What are the content and size of the humanities collections that are the focus of the project?

The Museum's Collection is comprised of nearly 3,800 objects, including 702 paintings, 1,961 works on paper (including photographs, prints, drawings, pastels, collages, and watercolors), 159 sculptures, and 961 craft objects in glass, ceramic, metal, wood, and fiber. The Collection as a whole spans a 157-year period from the Civil War era to the present day, with a fundamental focus on American art of the 20th and 21st centuries. The goal of the Museum is to celebrate and integrate 20th- and 21st-century art from the Southeastern United States into the larger arena of American aesthetic development. To this end, the Museum collects important work from artists of Western North Carolina (WNC) and the Southern Appalachian region together with nationally recognized artists. The Collection has several unique focal areas, including Appalachian historical and contemporary work, Black Mountain College, studio craft, regional architecture, and Cherokee art. The Collection has been developed through an ongoing program of donations and purchases dating from 1948.

The primary strength of the Collection is works made by artists affiliated with Black Mountain College (BMC). A unique experiment in American higher education and an important part of the WNC regional and national cultural heritage, BMC opened 15 miles east of Asheville in September 1933. Several of the most influential American artists of the 20th century, including Josef and Anni Albers, Kenneth Noland, Robert Rauschenberg, John Cage, William deKooning, Franz Kline, and Jacob Lawrence, taught or studied at BMC. Placing great emphasis on interdisciplinary study and the importance of the arts—including fine art, dance, literature, poetry, and music—in everyday life, BMC became an important center of artistic activity that shaped postmodernist thinking in the decades to follow. While it ceased operation in 1957, the artistic vision that was cultivated there has received global recognition.

A secondary strength of the Museum's Collection is fine, handmade craft. Western North Carolina has a long history as a home for both traditional craft and American contemporary studio craft. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, talented missionaries came to the mountains with the express idea of aiding mountain people through craft revival and marketing. Important works by early 20th-century Southern Appalachian artists include a wool textile by Granny Donaldson, fine silver by William Waldo Dodge, Jr., wooden animal carvings by the Brasstown Carvers, and a set of bookends by the Tryon Toymakers. In the 1960's the contemporary studio glass movement began in WNC and studio craft continues to thrive with a vibrant community of significant artists calling WNC home. The Museum's Collection includes works by Mark Peiser and Harvey Littleton, two of the most important studio glass artists in the country, along with expert basket weaver Billy Ruth Sudduth and widely recognized ceramic artists Michael Sherrill, Peter Voulkos, and Norm Schulman. Today, the Museum has more than 570 works covering all craft media, from the early 20th century to the present. The Museum holds an additional 55 objects of handmade craft by artists from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, including outstanding examples of

baskets by Rowena Bradley and Shan Goshorn, wood carving by Virgil Crowe and Stan Tooni, Jr., and stone and ceramic works by Fred Wilnoty and Joel Queen.

C. How are these humanities collections used?

One of the primary ways that the Museum makes its humanities collections accessible to the public is through exhibitions. Typically, a portion of the collection (about 3%) is on view in the Museum's exhibition spaces, which include Permanent Collection galleries that rotate annually and four galleries for temporary exhibitions that rotate every 4-6 months in 16-21 changing exhibitions each year. While the Museum undergoes renovations in 2017 and 2018, a temporary location four blocks down from the main Museum is open to the public (Asheville Art Museum On the Slope), which continues to offer 5-6 rotating exhibitions per year. The Museum has also partnered with several businesses and organizations around Asheville to display additional objects, ensuring that 2-3% of the Collection is still publicly available for display at any given time. Currently 13 works on paper are on view in the Museum's *Pop 'n' Op* exhibition. Two of these works have condition issues that need to be evaluated by a conservator.

The Museum's changing exhibitions make connections between art and other areas of the humanities including history, literature, and culture. Topics covered in the past two years of exhibitions included quilting as an exploration of male identity and male stereotypes; the empowerment of Appalachian craftswomen by early 20th-century female leaders who promoted the revival of handmade objects in the Appalachian mountains; photography as a vehicle for expressing family and community values; and early 20th-century portrait photography as a way of understanding issues of race and class at a time of disenfranchisement, segregation and inequality in the American South.

The Museum's exhibitions guide the development of public programs, media and publications that make connections and provide richer experiences for visitors. Adult educational programs include *Lunchtime Art Break* talks led by staff, visiting artists and critics; *Up for Discussion* lectures highlighting current exhibitions; docent- and staff-led gallery tours for students and adults; and workshops and classes taught by local and visiting artists. For the Museum's upcoming exhibition *Hear Our Voice*, which features posters from the Women's March and explores how significant events in history lead to creative output, the programming will include a lunchtime Art Break; a panel discussion on the ability of art to empower artists and viewers; and an event held in conjunction with World Wide Knit in Public Day that recognizes the creative output in fiber art that accompanied the Women's March.

The curatorial team accommodates numerous requests each year by researchers, professors, and the general public to view specific objects. Over the past two years, the Museum has been contacted by several individuals requesting a special viewing of objects in the works on paper collection. Some examples include an Art & Politics class from Warren Wilson College discussing a Diane Arbus photograph; a Creative Writing class from Appalachian State and a Black Mountain College Studies class from St. Andrews University viewing the Black Mountain College collection; high school students from Asheville School comparing Ruth Asawa's *Double Sheet Stamp* design study with her looped wire sculptures while practicing the looped wire technique through a hands-on activity; and descendants of the artist Clarence Worrall holding a family reunion that featured the viewing of the artist's pastel landscapes.

The Museum strives to make its collections available online for the general public, students and scholars. The Museum's Black Mountain College (BMC) Research, Collection & Digitization Project ensures the protection of valuable work by BMC students and faculty while it creates a comprehensive collection of BMC artists' work in a single institution. There are more than 1,000 BMC works in the Museum's collection, representing 77 BMC artists. The collection has already drawn considerable recognition and 12 works from the Collection (the largest single loan) were featured in a traveling exhibition – *Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College 1933–1957* which originated at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston.

The Henry Luce Foundation recently awarded the Museum a two-year American Art program grant to support the reinterpretation and reinstallation of the Museum's Permanent Collection, and the first catalogue of Collection. The Museum plans to finalize its checklist for this reinstallation by the end of 2017 and would include the works on paper from this checklist in the conservation assessment project.

D. What is the nature and mission of your institution?

Established by artists and incorporated in 1948, the Asheville Art Museum is committed to being a vital force in community and individual development and to providing life-long opportunities for education and enrichment through the visual arts. The Museum's vision is to transform lives through art; its mission is to engage, enlighten and inspire individuals and enrich community through dynamic experiences in American Art of the 20th and 21st centuries.

The Asheville Art Museum is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization, accredited by the American Association of Museums which receives support for its programs from Museum members, other generous individuals, corporations, businesses and foundations, the North Carolina Arts Council, a state agency, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. Additional support is provided by the City of Asheville and Buncombe County. The Museum's current annual operating budget (FY2017) is \$1,651,387.

With fourteen full-time staff members, ten part-time staff members and over 200 volunteers, the Asheville Art Museum offers a wide and exciting variety of programs for all ages to enjoy, including: 16-21 exhibitions each year, classes and workshops for adults, college students, children and families; guided and group tours; concerts and performances; volunteer and docent programs; year-round and summer internship programs; film screenings; lectures and panel discussions; school and teacher programs; special events; and much more. In 2016, the Museum produced 18 special exhibitions and nearly 500 educational programs and served 129,491 participants (over a 50% increase from 2015 as a result of expanded outreach programming). Over the past year, the Museum provided over 32,000 pre-K through 12th grade children with valuable and otherwise unavailable visual arts education, including arts-integrated lessons in core curriculum subjects that took place at WNC schools.

As the only accredited visual art institution serving all 24 counties that comprise Western North Carolina, the Museum provides otherwise unavailable educational and public programming and serves as a cultural and economic engine for the region. The Museum is located in the urban center of this 10,601 square mile Appalachian region, which is comprised primarily of rural mountain communities. This 24 county area has a population of more than 1.2 million residents, and 17 of the 24 counties are classified as 100% rural by the State of NC with an average poverty rate of 17.8% (US Census). Many of the school districts that the Museum serves are designated underserved, rural and low wealth by the State. The Museum's constituency reflects the diversity of the region. Minorities represent a small percentage of the total population in WNC: 9% Latino, 4% African American, 2% Native American and 1% Asian American.

E. Has your institution ever had a preservation or conservation assessment?

In 1996, the Asheville Art Museum received a Conservation Assessment Program (CAP) grant for a general assessment of the Museum's collection and its historic 1926 building designed by Edward Tilton. Rustin Levenson conducted the collection aspect of this assessment and Charles A. Phillips, AIA of Phillips and Oppermann, P.A. assessed the historic building, producing reports that have formed the basis for the Museum's long-range planning and implementation. In the past eighteen years, the Museum has experienced a period of immense growth. Under the guidance of the current Executive Director, Pamela Myers, the Museum's Collection has more than tripled in both size and significance. The Museum is dedicated to the proper stewardship of its collections. Recently, the Asheville Art Museum contracted with David Goist, Conservator, to update a Conservation Assessment of Collections after a review of the

1996 Conservation Assessment Program (CAP) reports, as well as provide advice for packing and storing paintings during renovation. The Collection, in accordance with the Museum's Collection Growth and Strategic plans, has continued to expand over the past two decades (and the 1996 assessment noted the need for additional space for this growth). The Museum's Long Range Preservation plan is enclosed.

F. What is the importance of this project to the institution? Discuss how this project fits into the institution's overall preservation needs or plans (past and future). Describe the current condition of collection.

The Museum is currently undergoing a major expansion project that will include a significant overhaul of the heating and cooling systems and also result in additional storage space for the Collection. In preparation for this expansion project and the move of the entire Collection to an offsite storage facility, the Museum staff conducted a physical inventory of the Collection, which revealed that a number of works on paper have a significant need for conservation evaluation and treatment. Condition checks throughout the inventory process identified works that had condition issues ranging from cockling and foxing to issues of inherent vice such as works mounted on acidic cardboard.

The works on paper collection consists of 69 pastels, 38 collages, 267 drawings, 538 photographs, 806 prints, 148 watercolor and gouache paintings, 8 books/manuscripts, and 87 mixed media works. The proposed project would assess the condition of approximately 5% of this collection. Many of the works slated for assessment are part of the Black Mountain College collection. Three key works include:

- Ruth Asawa's design study entitled *Double Sheet Stamp*. Asawa created this work using a common rubber stamp from the laundry room at Black Mountain College while Asawa was a student in 1948. An important precursor to Asawa's looped wire sculptures, which have attracted the attention of curators and scholars in recent years, this work is a perfect example of how students at Black Mountain College used ordinary materials to create innovative art forms. Because Asawa printed the rubber stamp design on newsprint mounted on cardboard, the work is at risk due to the inherent acidity and delicate nature of its materials. In order to ensure its longevity, it is critical to consult with a paper conservator about possible deacidification and best practices for display and storage. The Museum's Collection also contains a one-of-a-kind zipatone print by Asawa, which suffers from undulations in the paper due to the tight fit of the original frame.
- Robert Rauschenberg's *Cunningham Relief* is a mixed media print with embossed designs on paper. The work references Merce Cunningham, one of the most influential dancers and choreographers of the mid-20th century. This work was acquired with scattered foxing that prevents it from being exhibited. The dark brown spots of the foxing disrupt the minimalist quality of the work with its stark white background and delicately embossed figures.
- Fielding Dawson's *Charles Olson* is a calligraphic ink drawing depicting poet, writer, and Black Mountain College rector Charles Olson. Olson is known for developing the concept of Projective Verse, which stresses breathing in the creation of poetic meter rather than syllables or lines. Recently featured in the nationally-touring exhibition *Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College, 1933-1957*, Dawson's work was the original image intended for the back cover of Olson's *The Maximus Poems*, one of Olson's most famous works of poetry, published by Corinth/Jargon 24 in 1960. Like, Asawa's *Double Sheet Stamp*, Dawson's drawing is on acidic cardboard and therefore at risk of deterioration.

A number of works are significant examples by nationally recognized artists. Two key works include:

- Jim Dine's *The Heart and the Wall*. This monumental work, measuring 89.4 x 69.5 inches, was created by one of the leaders in the American Pop Art movement of the 1960s. The work is one of Dine's most

ambitious projects and includes his characteristic sentimental imagery and glorification of ordinary subject matter. Made up of four oversized prints on paper, this work has developed undulations from an incident of exposure to high humidity levels and the handicap of its enormous size. Consultation with a conservator who could evaluate the work's hinging and framing, and provide recommendations for treating the undulations, would benefit this work in the long term.

- Antonio Frasconi's *Homage to George Jackson*. Considered one of the foremost artists of the 20th century producing American woodcuts, Frasconi created *Homage to George Jackson* the same year that Jackson was murdered by guards at the San Quentin Prison in 1971. Jackson was a writer, leader of the prison movement, and member of the Black Panther Party. This important political work has water staining that prevented it from being exhibited in the Museum's recent exhibition entitled *Creating Change: Political Art from the Permanent Collection*.

Other works of national significance that will be assessed as part of the proposed project include prints by Grant Wood, Isabel Bishop, Leonard Baskin, George Luks, Willie Cole, Chuck Close, and George Bellows, and photography by Diane Arbus, Edward Weston, Carrie Mae Weems, and William Wegman.

G. What are the names and qualifications of the consultant(s) and staff involved in the project?

Kesha Talbert joined ECS in 2012 as an Assistant Paper Conservator. She earned her M.A. in Art Conservation with a specialization in paper conservation from the State University of New York Buffalo State College. During her graduate studies she completed internships at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Fine Art Conservation and Technical Services in Clarence Center, NY and Great Lakes Art Conservatory. Talbert also has a B.A. in Art Conservation from the University of Delaware. Talbert is a member of the American Institute for Conservation (AIC), the Southeastern Regional Conservation Association (SERCA) and the North Carolina Preservation Consortium (NCPC).

Carolyn Grosch, Associate Curator for the Museum, is responsible for development, implementation and management of the permanent collection and exhibitions. Grosch holds a M.A. in Art History and Museum Studies from Tufts University. Her areas of specialization are contemporary art and collections care. Grosch has been in the museum field for over twelve years. Prior to her position at the Asheville Art Museum, Grosch was the Registrar and Assistant Curator at the Lyman Allyn Art Museum in New London, CT. Grosch will oversee the management of the project and select the objects for the assessment.

Jay Milner, Preparator at the Museum, will assist with object retrieval and staging. Milner worked five years for the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art in Biloxi, MS, where he served as instructor, in-house potter, art preparator, installer and transporter. He has over thirteen years of gallery and framing experience.

H. What are the plan of work and timetable for the project?

The project will be completed in approximately 7 days between January and March 2018. In January 2018, Carolyn Grosch will identify and secure a room at the Western Regional Archives that can be used as a staging area for the assessment of 100 works on paper from the Collection. Paper conservator Kesha Talbert will travel to the Museum during a one-week period in February 2018 to conduct the assessment. After the assessment, Talbert will lead a Collections Care workshop in conjunction with curatorial staff at the Museum's On the Slope location for interested members of the community. This workshop will cover best practices for storage, display, and handling of works on paper for families, collectors, and artists. Over two days off-site in March 2018, Talbert will assemble her findings on the condition of the works on paper and make recommendations for future treatments. She will provide the Museum with detailed condition reports, proposals and costs for treatment, and a list prioritizing works in need of care. Talbert will also make recommendations for improvements to storage, object housing, and environmental conditions. These recommendations will provide the basis for future grant applications.