

PRESS RELEASE

Minneapolis Institute of Art Receives Two Major Grants in Support of Empathy and Diversity Initiatives

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Ford Foundation, and Walton Family Foundation Grants Total More than \$1.25M

Minneapolis, December 13, 2017— The Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) announced today that it has received two major grants: a \$750,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in support of the museum's Center for Empathy and the Visual Arts; and a \$520,000 grant from the Ford Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation supporting Mia's ongoing Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) initiative.

Center for Empathy and Visual Arts /Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation funding will enable Mia to establish the first-ever Center for Empathy and the Visual Arts (CEVA) within an art museum. Mia is spearheading the project, collaborating with researchers, scholars, philosophers, content experts, artists, thought leaders, and colleagues at other museums to explore and research best practices to foster compassion and enhance related emotional skills. This ambitious initiative will span nearly five years, providing Mia and other art museums ample opportunities to purposefully build empathy into their learning practices as a strategy for impacting positive social change.

Kaywin Feldman, Nivin and Duncan MacMillan Director and President of Mia, said, "A visitor to our museum has the opportunity to experience works of art made over the course of some 5,000 years, from every corner of the globe. One of the most meaningful aspects of this encounter is the awareness it can awaken of a common humanity—an immediate sense of connection between the viewer and someone who may have lived in a very different time and place. Thanks to the Mellon Foundation, we're proud to take the lead with partners across the country, in studying how to spark and nurture empathy through the visual arts, so that Mia and all art museums can contribute even more toward building a just and harmonious society."

The first phase of this initiative kicked off in October, when Mia invited experts from fields as diverse as the social sciences, empathy research, virtual reality, and neuroscience fields, as well as museum curators and directors, artists, and educators, to discuss empathy and the art museum at the University of California, Berkeley—a partner in this research project. The ideas generated by the think tank will be developed and tested with the aim of fostering greater awareness and understanding, wonder, and/or global awareness among visitors.

"To be human is to express our emotions in art," said Dacher Keltner, Ph. D., Professor of Psychology at University of California, Berkeley, Director of the Berkeley Social Interaction Lab and Co-Director of the Greater Good Science Center. "Aesthetic experiences—in viewing a painting, sculpture, photograph, or dance, or in music—are sources of awe and wonder. They enable us to solve a complex mystery—to understand what our fellow humans think and feel. For these reasons, the museum may be one of the great catalysts of human empathy and compassion. That possibility is the focus of Mia's new scientific initiative with UC Berkeley and the Greater Good Science Center."

During the initiative's second phase, the Center will disseminate easy-to-use tools that guide museum educators and curators in using their collections to foster empathy among their own visitors. The initiative's leaders at Mia hope that museums across the country and abroad will be inspired to build upon this work by incorporating the key learnings into their own practices, resulting in far-reaching impact inside the field and beyond.

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Mia

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility/Ford Foundation and Walton Family Foundation

The Ford Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation will provide resources for Mia's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) efforts, which strengthen the pipeline of art museum leadership positions for those who have been historically underrepresented: people of color and indigenous people. With the funding, the museum will hire a Diversity & Inclusion Manager, who will research, develop, and launch a robust fellowship program for college students of diverse cultural backgrounds. The IDEA program expands upon Mia's current Native American Fellowship Program, which has been active for more than 10 years through financial support from the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community.

"At Mia, we believe that embracing diversity as a core value, not just as a program, will bring more voices, perspectives, and experiences to the field and its practice," Feldman said. "Within the next decade, we hope to see a significant impact on young leadership in the museum field."

Mia will collaborate with Twin Cities' colleges and other organizations to develop networks to recruit candidates for fellowships, full-time openings, unpaid internships, and volunteer opportunities. To do so, it will work with other institutions' H.R. and diversity inclusion departments, college career advisors, and campus student groups.

"We are delighted to partner with Mia on this important initiative," said Patricia Pratt-Cook, Senior Vice President for Human Resources, Equity and Inclusion at St. Catherine University. "St. Kate's, home to one of the nation's largest colleges for women and a student population that is 37.7% diverse, serves diverse students with an innovative approach to learning and a faculty that has been recognized nationally for their commitment to teaching. We look forward to supporting Mia's success through this grant by sharing our experiences with the museum and connecting our students to opportunities available through Mia's IDEA project."

About The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Founded in 1969, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation endeavors to strengthen, promote, and, where necessary, defend the contributions of the humanities and the arts to human flourishing and to the well-being of diverse and democratic societies by supporting exemplary institutions of higher education and culture as they renew and provide access to an invaluable heritage of ambitious, path-breaking work. Additional information is available at mellon.org.

The Ford Foundation

The Ford Foundation is an independent, nonprofit grant-making organization. For more than 80 years it has worked with courageous people on the frontlines of social change worldwide, guided by its mission to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement. With headquarters in New York, the foundation has offices in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

The Walton Family Foundation

For three decades, the Walton Family Foundation has continued the philanthropic vision begun by Sam and Helen Walton. Their legacy is more important than ever as the foundation accelerates efforts to improve K-12 education for all students in America, to protect rivers and oceans and the communities they support, and to give back to the region that first gave Sam and Helen Walton opportunity. In 2016, the Walton Family Foundation awarded grants totaling more than \$454 million. Learn more at waltonfamilyfoundation.org.



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About The Minneapolis Institute Of Art

Home to more than 89,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest wide-ranging art collections in the country—Rembrandt to van Gogh, Monet to Matisse, Asian to African—Mia links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration.

General admission to Mia is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee.

Museum Hours

Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday	10am–5pm
Thursday, Friday	10am–9pm
Sunday	11am–5pm
Monday	Closed

For more information, call + 1 612 870 3000 or visit artsmia.org

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