

**HELEN FORESMAN SPENCER MUSEUM OF ART
THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS**

**STRATEGIC PLAN
2009-2015**

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INTRODUCTION

The Spencer Museum of Art (SMA), located on the University of Kansas campus in Lawrence, houses an internationally known collection that is deep and diverse, currently numbering approximately 38,000 artworks and artifacts in all media. The collection spans the history of European and American art from ancient to contemporary, and includes broad and significant holdings of East Asian art. Areas of special strength include medieval art; European and American paintings, sculptures, and prints; photography; Japanese Edo-period paintings and prints; 20th-century Chinese painting; and KU's ethnographic collection, which includes about 10,000 Native American, African, Latin American, and Australian works.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COLLECTION

In 1917 Sallie Casey Thayer, a Kansas City art collector, offered her collection of nearly 7,500 art objects to the University of Kansas to form a museum "to encourage the study of fine arts in the Middle West." Her eclectic collection included paintings, sculpture, prints, drawings, furniture, rugs, textiles, metalwork, ceramics, glass, and other examples of decorative arts, primarily from Europe and Asia. Eventually the University of Kansas Museum of Art was established in 1928, based on this collection. Over the years the collection has grown substantially thanks to the generosity of many benefactors and the expertise of many curators.

By the late 1960s the Museum had outgrown its quarters in Spooner Hall. Mrs. Helen Foresman Spencer, another Kansas City collector and patron of the arts, made a gift of \$4.6 million that funded construction of a new museum. The building housing the Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art, the Kress Foundation Department of Art History, and the Murphy Library of Art and Architecture opened in 1978. The neo-classical structure, built from Indiana limestone, was designed by Kansas City architect Robert E. Jenks, a 1926 graduate of KU.

In 2007, the Spencer Museum grew again when approximately 10,000 ethnographic collection objects from the former University of Kansas Museum of Anthropology were transferred to the Spencer's care. The collection includes a wide variety of cultural materials from all around the world, with a particular emphasis on American Indian materials. The collection is still housed in historic Spooner Hall and the storage space has been upgraded to include specially designed cabinets to house and protect the collection.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

This plan is an updated iteration of the Spencer's Strategic Plan (originally submitted in 2008), in response to AAM recommendations based on the 2008 SMA submission and a changing climate in upper-level administration at the University of Kansas. After receiving feedback from AAM in the summer of 2009, the Spencer sent a team of four staff members (including representation from Administration, Development, and Education) to the National Arts Strategies' *Strategy Seminar* in Chicago to assist in structuring the Spencer's planning. Participants returned with experience utilizing business models to identify core values within the institution and develop strategic initiatives from those values.

In fall 2009, the Spencer asked Bret Waller, Director Emeritus of the Indianapolis Art Museum and a former Director of the Spencer, to visit the Spencer and conduct preparatory interviews and offer opinions. Upon the completion of his assessment, Waller recommended the consultation of Rena Zurofsky, a specialist in non-profit art institution management. Zurofsky visited the Museum twice in the spring of 2010 and submitted a formal report to the Director of the Spencer, outlining her observations and suggestions for the Museum's future.

Using Zurofsky's analysis, the Spencer has adopted a new organizational structure and has clearly identified its institutional goals. Throughout the process of developing this completed version of the strategic plan, SMA staff members have considered those initiatives prioritized by the University's Provost.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Spencer Museum of Art sustains a culturally diverse collection of art. It 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.

KEY VALUES

As outlined by the University of Kansas, the Spencer espouses the following key values:

Human Cultures and Institutions – area studies; international and global processes; the design, implementation, and impact of public policy; the social dimensions of science, technology, and engineering

Human Health and Development – life-span studies; drug discovery and delivery; the genetics of organismal development; neuroscience; bioengineering

Information and Technologies – energy; information, technology and social change; new communications media; bioinformatics; remote sensing and imaging

Environment – global ecology; biodiversity

INTEGRATION WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

As a unit within the University of Kansas, the Spencer seeks to work toward goals set by the University. In 2008, Chancellor Robert Hemenway convened task forces around three topics that are central to the University, and the current administration is working to further highlight these ideas in all work at KU. The topics are:

- Teaching and Learning
- Discovering and Innovating
- Working for Kansas

The Spencer's Strategic Plan prioritizes these tenets as it outlines the goals for the future of the Museum.

Currently, the University is undergoing a review of its Strategic Planning policies to reflect a shift in leadership. The Provost has appointed working groups from across campus to assess and plan. SMA's Director and Associate Director/Senior Curator of Works on Paper are both involved integrally in this process, reflecting the University's regard for the Spencer and the Museum's reciprocal desire to best serve the institution.

GOALS

As the Spencer Museum of Art (SMA) grows, it strives to fulfill its mission and reach audiences in reliably meaningful ways. Toward this end, the Spencer aims to serve its many constituencies, while broadening the purview of its audience and deepening the impact of audience engagement. To continually provide high-caliber experiences, SMA aims to:

1. Serve its many constituencies through thought-provoking, multisensory experiences with art that inspire an understanding of the complexity, beauty, and meaning of human expression.
2. Strengthen and reconsider its collections as a living archive, including artist commissions, object-centered research, teaching, and transformative public dialogue.
3. Integrate its collections, exhibitions, facilities, and artistic projects into the cross-disciplinary academic and intellectual life at the University of Kansas (KU) demonstrating connections among creative expression, the environment, global understanding, health, and well-being.
4. Expand and diversify current funding sources.
5. Improve current infrastructure operations and physical facilities.

GOAL 1

Serve its many constituencies through thought-provoking, multisensory experiences with art that inspire an understanding of the complexity, beauty, and meaning of human expression.

Strategies:

SMA strives to engage visitors by offering authentic, accessible, and open-ended inspiration through exhibitions and programs that contribute to an understanding of the roles of art in society, build upon current scholarship, and serve as a catalyst for creative work across disciplines. It seeks to (i) broaden the quality, scope, and impact of its programs by increasing the active involvement of faculty, students, artists, and communities in program planning, implementation, and evaluation, and (ii) seize the opportunities afforded by emerging digital and electronic learning technologies to support the dissemination and modes of interpretation/understanding of the Spencer's educational content to broader audiences, both on and off campus.

- 1.1. Prioritize collection-based exhibitions, and complement with collaborative and traveling exhibitions.
- 1.2. Develop educational programs, performances, tours, and experimental projects to reach audiences in new/meaningful ways.
- 1.3. Further develop virtual off-site environments (e.g. SecondLife, Website, social media, "Inside/Out" installations, Online Database, Public Art).
- 1.4. Plan for expanded accessibility to SMA, including extended hours.
- 1.5. Develop a more flexible structure for public discussions, conversations, and other forms of input that foster spontaneous opportunities (e.g. Walk-ins Welcome Fridays).
- 1.6. Continue to form and sustain strategic artistic partnerships in local, national, and international communities.
- 1.7. Promote and support new scholarly partnerships that enhance the research profile and set the agenda for SMA within the overall expectations of a Research I University, and sustain current collaborations such as the Murphy Lectures and related publication.
- 1.8. Continue to develop several facets of the publications program.

GOAL 2

Strengthen and reconsider SMA collections as a living archive, including commissions object-centered research, teaching, and transformative public dialogue.

Strategies:

Maintaining standards of connoisseurship, conservation, interpretation, the Spencer increasingly reconsiders its creative ways of using its collections.

- 2.1. Implementation of second and third phases of *Project Redefine*; refresh the Teaching Gallery and the 20/21 Gallery.
- 2.2. Increase the Spencer's presence by working with other University Art Museums, circulating exhibitions throughout the state of Kansas, and sustaining a responsive loan program.

- 2.3. Establish the SMA website as a repository for scholarly and logistical information about the collections, archives, and activities to increase resource discovery and learning opportunities, and to broaden SMA's reach to international audiences.
- 2.4. Expand digital access to collections through SMA archives; scholarly journals including *The Register*, the Spencer's annual peer-reviewed publication; and on-line interviews with artists and scholars.
- 2.5. Continue to build and refine collection database, incorporating acquisitions and new research.
- 2.6. Encourage research projects that utilize and engage with SMA collections.

GOAL 3

Integrate SMA collections, exhibitions, facilities, and artistic projects into the cross-disciplinary academic and intellectual life at the University of Kansas (KU) demonstrating connections among creative expression, the environment, global understanding, health, and well-being.

Strategies:

The Spencer champions cross-disciplinary approaches to teaching and research through collaborations across the University.

- 3.1 Expand the presence of art through the Spencer's role as a partner in The Commons, KU's catalyst for unconventional thinking, interdisciplinary inquiry, and unexpected discoveries across the sciences, arts, and humanities.
- 3.2 Further develop state and federal funding through KU Center for Research (KUCR).
- 3.3 Increase participation in KU digital domains, including the digital libraries and digital humanities initiatives.
- 3.4 Promote and sustain the Spencer as a center for cross-disciplinary teaching, learning and research, increasingly integrating SMA collections, resources, and programs into KU curricula and research collaborations with KU and other partners.
- 3.5 Promote and publish International Artists-in-Residence Program

GOAL 4

Expand and diversify current funding sources.

Strategies:

The Spencer will advance its financial stability and long-term growth through strategic emphasis on a more balanced ratio of University allocations, federal and state grant funding, private foundation awards, individual giving, and endowed funds. The Museum strives to build a strong community of supporters through increased interaction with and cultivation of alumni, foundation staff and trustees, collectors, and collaborative partners from across the region, nation, and globe. In addition to targeted communications strategies, traditional media and social networking will help to elevate the Spencer's reputation and prominence.

- 4.1. External Funding - Establish specific external funding goals for SMA staff to increase funds for exhibitions, publications, and scholarly and creative initiatives.
 - 4.1.1. Increase generation of grant proposals to private foundations, federal and state funding entities; increase overall rate of grant funding.
 - 4.1.2. Increase individual giving through annual fund/membership; support for exhibitions, publications, and special projects; documentation of bequests; and augmentation of endowed funds to support exhibitions, education, facilities, and curatorial/administrative positions.
 - 4.1.3. Increase collaboration with University and external partners for cost-sharing, including joint appointments of staff, temporary staff fellowships, facilities, and equipment.
 - 4.1.4. Secure lead gifts to advance for facility (to house SMA, the Kress Foundation Department of Art History, and the Murphy Art & Architecture Library) expansion.
- 4.2. Improve documentation and promotion of exhibitions and public programs through increased advertising, critical reviews, and social media; improve marketing strategies to recruit new audiences.
- 4.3. Building Communities
 - 4.3.1. Increase participation and communication with KU alumni regionally, nationally, and internationally through increased collaboration with KU Endowment and KU Alumni Association staff and chapter volunteers for on- and off-site programming and communications.
 - 4.3.2. Increase participation and communication KU Students and Faculty:
 - 4.3.2.1. Offer awards and stipends for faculty and students for art-related research based on SMA collections and mission. Acknowledge donors, funding agencies, and researchers as partners in KU's research.
 - 4.3.2.2. Define, require, and support research and publication objectives for graduate interns.
 - 4.3.3. Collectors—develop strategic plan for cultivation of regional, national, and international collectors of art. Increase interaction and visits with collectors who are well-aligned with SMA mission.
 - 4.3.4. Local and Kansas Partners—continue outreach and collaboration with local and state partners, including local and regional cultural arts centers, art museums, and complementary multidisciplinary government, private, and nonprofit organizations.
 - 4.3.5. Identify and cultivate 3-5 innovation partners in and beyond the arts.
 - 4.3.6. Identify, pursue, and engage state, national, and international funders.

GOAL 5

Improve current infrastructure operations and physical facilities.

Strategies

Employ technology to enhance workflow and ensure results. Develop plans for facility expansion to meet growing needs for storage, exhibition, and office space. Identify and reward effective practices to ensure effective operational relationships among staff.

- 5.1 Update and enhance technologies that enable the interactive exchange of content, image, and message.
 - 5.1.1 Build upon Information Management Team initiatives to collect institutional data and make it accessible to staff and audiences, while adapting to changing technologies.
 - 5.1.2 Expand existing archives, and establish conventions for emerging topics and new artistic forms.
- 5.2 Renew existing facilities and plan for expanded facilities that will assure the Spencer's long-term viability.
 - 5.2.1 Develop a framework for ongoing revitalization of galleries and public spaces.
 - 5.2.2 Update security systems.
 - 5.2.3 Identify off-site storage for collections, exhibition furniture, and materials.
 - 5.2.4 Further development of projected architectural program for expansion.
- 5.3 Assess and renew strategies to ensure the effectiveness and success of the Spencer in the future.
 - 5.3.1 Implement new organizational structure developed from consultation by Rena Zurofsky.
 - 5.3.2 Reward active research, collaborations, and innovation through promotion and professional development of SMA staff.
 - 5.3.3 Encourage team-building by establishing working groups, building on previous success.