

Spencer Museum of Art Collection Plan 2022–2027

Introduction: Art at Our Core

Art is at the center of all the Spencer Museum of Art does. Art guides our mission and serves as a foundation for research, teaching, and exploration for learners of all ages. Art fosters a more inclusive understanding of the human experience and catalyzes conversations around pressing issues of our time.

The Spencer Museum’s diverse collection, which includes more than 48,000 works of art spanning 5,000 plus years of human history across six continents, is the core of the institution. As stewards, we care for the collection in ways that ensure its preservation for future audiences. We are also responsible for intentionally shaping the collection, through thoughtful growth and winnowing, to address the needs of the many communities we serve, now and into the future. Collecting forms a part of our work with artists and communities, through forms of engagement and potential directions for collecting.

This collection plan is intended to provide an intellectual and practical framework for developing the Spencer Museum of Art’s collection in ways that further our mission, support our strategic priorities, resonate with our audiences, and align with physical spaces.

Strategic Priorities for Collection Development

To ensure that the collection continues to achieve the Museum’s mission and aligns with the collection management policy, this collection plan highlights four broad strategies that will guide how the collection develops over the next five years. These priorities are:

1. To thoughtfully expand the collection by acquiring works that support the Spencer Museum’s commitment to fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging (DEAIB). This includes acquiring works that reflect ideas, histories, and voices that have been underrepresented in museums.
2. To ensure the collection supports the research, exhibition, and programming of the Museum.
3. To ensure the collection can respond to the teaching and research needs of the University through supporting the research, exhibition, and programming agenda of the Museum. Because these needs shift and evolve, it is vital that the collection remain geographically, culturally, and chronologically comprehensive; works that can speak across disciplinary boundaries and to multiple topics are especially vital.
4. To acquire works that can be responsibly used in the Museum’s physical spaces.