



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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Weisman Art Museum receives a grant of nearly \$240,000 from the federal Institute for Museum and Library Services to support a Truth and Reconciliation project with Indigenous communities

November 15, 2022, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota's Weisman Art Museum (WAM) is pleased to announce that the museum has received a grant award in the amount of [\\$239,912 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services](#) (IMLS), as part of the agency's competitive [Museums for America](#) program. WAM is one of 120 organizations across the country to receive a Museums for America grant from IMLS this year.

This grant provides vital funding for a Truth and Reconciliation project at WAM, including support for consultation with Indigenous communities to address issues of reconciliation and repair for harm done by the museum in the past, and to work toward decolonization of museum practice now and going forward.

This project is informed by the materials inventory (to be completed by December 2022) and ongoing repatriation process of the [Mimbres cultural belongings](#) currently housed by WAM and the U of M. The Truth and Reconciliation work at WAM involves close collaboration with an Indigenous-led advisory board, composed of local Indigenous artists and community members as well as members from Mimbres-descendent tribes from the American Southwest. WAM staff will also work with an Indigenous evaluators cohort, led by the arts-based evaluation firm [Inspire to Change](#), who will help develop institution-wide evaluation practices built around Indigenous frameworks and culturally responsive methodologies.

This IMLS grant also helps support a new Indigenous artist fellowship at the Weisman, as well as a series of public conversations and topical programs exploring decolonization and Indigenousization in museum practice. In addition, WAM will host a convening to present the findings and frameworks, developed in conversation with Indigenous advisors, to the Weisman's constituent communities and other museum professionals.

This project is part of WAM's ongoing commitment to embed the principles of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion at the heart of its operations. The Truth and Reconciliation project, in particular, centers around ongoing conversation with community members and artists to foster deeper relationships and rebuild trust with Indigenous communities. WAM aims to shift the foundations of museum practice through power-sharing and reciprocal relationships, to provide a home for ongoing critical conversations and dialogue within the field, and develop a foundation for culturally responsive evaluation of WAM's programs, exhibitions, operations, and educational offerings.

Weisman Art Museum director Alejandra Peña Gutiérrez says, "University art museums like WAM occupy a unique space in the cultural landscape, situated simultaneously in the worlds of the arts and the academy. If we are to remain relevant as cultural institutions, we have a duty to develop practices that position museums as intentional actors in society, whose agency extends well beyond the museum walls, and even beyond the arts. We have a responsibility to leverage our position, as a bridge between the University and wider community, to work across social divisions and build connections that are essential for addressing social and historical injustices—including harms done in our own field, by our own institutions."

"This year's awardees demonstrate the continuous learning efforts of museums," said Laura Huerta Migus, Deputy Director, Office of Museum Services at IMLS. "These projects reflect the implementation of lessons learned to revitalize museum practice and workforces while continuing to serve their communities."

Director Peña echoes that sentiment: "This is a moment for us to reflect, consult with Indigenous community members, artists, and leaders, and to fully engage the work of repair for injuries done by WAM, and by museums and cultural institutions more broadly, to develop new, more inclusive practices in conversation with the communities we serve. This project is an important step on the path toward changing museum practice at the Weisman for the better."

About Weisman Art Museum

Since its origin in 1934, Weisman Art Museum has been a teaching museum for the University of Minnesota. Today, education remains central to the museum's mission to create art experiences that spark discovery, critical thinking, and transformation, linking the University and the community. The Weisman is located at 333 East River Road, Minneapolis, on the University of Minnesota campus. Gallery admission and membership are free. For more information, visit www.wam.umn.edu.

About the Institute of Museum and Library Services

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums. We advance, support, and empower America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development. IMLS envisions a nation where individuals and communities have access to museums and libraries to learn from and be inspired by the trusted information, ideas, and stories they contain

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