

Proposal Information

Summary:

The Ph.D. Program in Art History at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY) proposes a renewal of funding by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for the project “New Initiatives in Curatorial Training.” We are requesting \$650,000 for a five-year renewal that would deepen and formalize the program’s long-standing commitment to training future curators and other museum and arts professionals.

The project will build on a successful three-year pilot, as well as a four-year renewal grant, that enabled the Ph.D. Program in Art History to strengthen curatorial training in art history, with a particular focus on Modern and Contemporary topics. As a result of the grants, the Ph.D. Program has forged closer links with exhibiting institutions in the city and nearby region through teaching and fellowships; these institutions include El Museo del Barrio, the Hispanic Society, the Newark Museum, MoMA, Dia Center for the Arts, the Morgan Library, the Queens Museum, the Whitney Museum, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It has also enriched the relationship between the Ph.D. Program in Art History and the Graduate Center’s own James Gallery, leading to a series of student-curated exhibitions there.

A final Mellon Foundation grant for this initiative is sought to continue addressing the intersection of research and curatorial training, but with two new emphases:

- (1) to enhance the diversity of curatorial training at the Graduate Center by broadening the curriculum and the curatorial opportunities available for the study of global art.
- (2) to ensure the sustainability of this initiative beyond the end of Mellon funding by building relationships with programs and individuals in the Graduate Center itself, partner institutions, and donors.

The Ph.D Program in Art History

Founded in 1971, the Ph.D. Program in Art History is a flagship department of the Graduate Center, the principal doctorate-granting institution of the City University of New York (CUNY). From its inception, the Art History Program has been dedicated to the development of scholars, teachers, museum curators, art critics, and other arts professionals. Due to its position within a public university system and its location in New York City, the Program has an enduring commitment to making art historical and curatorial training accessible to a diverse range of students. It has educated such distinguished museum professionals as Lowery Stokes Sims, former President of the Studio Museum in Harlem and former Chief Curator of the Museum of Arts and Design; Jacquelyn Serwer, Head Curator of the National Museum of African American History and Culture; and Richard Aste, Director of the McNay Art Museum.

Currently, the Ph.D. Program in Art History has a doctoral faculty of twenty-one professors drawn from the Graduate Center and the CUNY senior colleges, whose expertise ranges from Ancient Art to Contemporary. It had over 120 students registered in the 2018-19 academic year. In the past five years, the Program has awarded sixty-one doctorates. Among these recent graduates, about one-quarter have gone on to museum-based careers, as, for example, Curator of Time-Based Media at the Smithsonian Museum of American Art, Interim Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston, and Curator of the Albin O. Kuhn Library and Gallery at the University of Maryland, Baltimore.

Proposed Activities and Rationale

As reports by the Mellon Foundation in 2015 and 2018 have demonstrated, while the U.S. population is becoming increasingly diverse, the museum professionals responsible for presenting, interpreting, and caring for art objects here do not yet reflect that diversity. So, too, most museum professionals in the United States are trained primarily in art from the European and American tradition, although many museum collections, as well as museum visitors, have a growing global focus. Indeed, recent exhibitions such as *Postwar: Art Between the Pacific and the Atlantic, 1945-1965* (Haus der Kunst, Munich, 2016-17) have demonstrated modern art's inherently global and interconnected nature. But art history is still frequently exhibited and taught in terms of nation states, and as the creation of a few white European men. There is a tremendous need for curators, educators, and museum leaders trained in artistic traditions outside the Euro-American axis, and practiced in serving the diverse communities of today's U.S. population.

Given the Graduate Center's long-standing expertise in curatorial training, our rich network of alumni in museum fields, our increasing emphasis on global art, and our enduring commitment to educating a diverse range of students, we are particularly well-positioned to address these needs. We propose a final renewal of the Mellon grant, *New Initiatives in Curatorial Training*, in order to leverage our resources for this purpose, and to build on existing networks of relationships between our department, other programs as well as administrators at the Graduate Center, and museums and donors throughout New York City that will sustain our efforts once the grant is completed.

To enhance diversity in curatorial training and to ensure the sustainability of our efforts, we propose a multi-pronged approach. We intend to maintain what has worked well for us in the past — above all, museum-based seminars in which our faculty teach on site with area curators, as well as fellowships at the James Gallery and NYC-area museums — while adapting to offer a more global focus and an emphasis on curatorial careers that serve diverse communities. At the same time, we will use the opportunity provided by the Mellon grant to create enduring relationships with institutions and individuals throughout the city, particularly through partnerships with smaller museums and through inviting local museum professionals to participate in curatorial seminars held at the Graduate Center. Finally, using the lessons learned in our first two iterations of the Mellon grant, we will eliminate activities that proved less effective in addressing our goals. These include the Artist Interview workshop — at \$20,000 for a one-day event, a costly use of scant resources — and the curatorial fellowship at the Whitney

Museum, where the departure of Performance Curator Jay Sanders shortly after the second grant's inception left us without a strong advocate at the institution.

Our approach to this iteration of the *New Initiatives in Curatorial Training* grant incorporates five key activities, as follows:

1. Curatorial Fellowship

Throughout the course of the Mellon grant, the Mellon Curatorial Fellowships at NYC-area museums have been among the most sought-after aspects of the initiative by a wide range of our students, and we are eager to continue offering them. Our plan is to offer two fellowships per year over five years, a more sustainable goal than the three fellowships we previously offered. Reducing the number will also make possible longer-term collaborations with those institutions that have proved our best partners.

Dia Art Foundation has been particularly effective at offering a wide range of formative experiences for our Ph.D. students, from curating exhibition displays related to their research to publishing and organizing symposia. We propose to continue our collaboration with this institution for the renewal period, and to explore the possibility of a long-term relationship. Kelly Kivland, Associate Curator at Dia Art Foundation, will continue to mentor our Curatorial Fellows from the Ph.D. Program in Art History.

The second fellowship will rotate among a series of smaller museums known for serving diverse communities, which will create more opportunities for our students to connect with community-based programs. These institutions, including the Newark Museum, the Queens Museum, and El Museo del Barrio, have small staffs, allowing curatorial fellows to interact with a range of departments and to make a substantive contribution to exhibitions, catalogues, and programming. At the same time, these museums also offer students the opportunity to experience firsthand the challenges and rewards of working directly with diverse local communities, a key area of expertise for curators going forward.

2. James Gallery Exhibition Fellowship

The James Gallery, facing Fifth Avenue on the first floor of our building, is a focal point of the Graduate Center's campus and a conspicuous presence amid the surrounding commercial storefronts in midtown. All of the exhibitions are free and open to the public.

Aligned with the James Gallery's mission — to catalyze research and knowledge production in contemporary art — a key requirement of an exhibition proposal for the Gallery is that it creates dialogue across disciplines. Our mandate is to challenge students to devise shows that move beyond specialist discussions internal to art history, and instead to address a broad public by curating art exhibitions that also speak to other disciplines in the university and beyond its doors.

The James Gallery Exhibition Fellowship has been a critical aspect of the Mellon grant from its inception. Its culminating activity is an exhibition that is both the result of in-depth scholarly research undertaken by the student and an opportunity to make that research accessible and visually compelling to a broader public. These student-organized exhibitions have been among

the most popular and most widely reviewed at the James Gallery. The shows have also been extremely valuable learning opportunities that have prepared the students to compete effectively for museum fellowships and jobs beyond the Graduate Center.

The James Gallery Fellowship will be offered to one of the student participants in the Curatorial Practice seminar (discussed below) and supports the realization of his or her proposed exhibition during the spring of the following academic year. The James Gallery Fellowship runs for the full academic year following the Curatorial Practice seminar and culminates in an exhibition opening in the late spring.

3. James Gallery Global Programming Fellowship

In addition to presenting exhibitions, the James Gallery is a hub of arts-related programming at the Graduate Center. As curators increasingly focus not only on the display of artworks but also the generation of conversations around them, an understanding of effective programming has become an ever more important part of curatorial training. Likewise, as museums have become more broad-ranging and global in their emphasis, programming has taken on a significant role in helping audiences understand and appreciate art from around the world. To address these ambitious goals, we propose a new Mellon Global Programming Fellowship at the James Gallery, to run for the full academic year in years two, three, and five of the grant.

Like the Exhibition Fellowship, we see this Programming Fellowship as a particularly valuable opportunity for our students because it offers them the chance to assume full responsibility for the kind of 'real-life' projects they might encounter in museums. At the same time, as education and programming departments become increasingly significant sources of jobs in museums today, the fellowship gives students the ability to prepare for a wider range of careers and, thus, to increase their opportunities when they reach the job market. Finally, due to the James Gallery's substantial annual budget and endowment as well as the commitment of its curator, Dr. Katherine Carl, to this type of fellowship, we see this as a more sustainable long-term opportunity for our students than an additional external curatorial fellowship would be.

Applicants for the Mellon Global Programming Fellowship will be generated through an open call for programming proposals, with the successful student selected by James Gallery Curator Katherine Carl in consultation with the Art History Program Fellowship Committee. Criteria for selection will include the intellectual quality of the proposed programs, their broad-ranging appeal to communities within and beyond the university, and their feasibility. The Mellon Global Programming Fellowship, envisioned as a two-day per week commitment similar to the Curatorial and Exhibition Fellowships, will culminate in at least two different types of events (scholarly symposia, artist's talks, performances, etc.) in order to give the fellow a range of experiences useful for museum work later on.

4. Museum-based Seminars

Increasing numbers of students come to the Graduate Center with aspirations for curatorial careers, but without significant experience in the field. For those students, object-based seminars in museums are indispensable to their subsequent careers and deepen their general knowledge of

art history. For students intent on pursuing an academic career, these courses are no less central, since they confront students with the material reality of art history, which frequently complicates canonical examples and straightforward narratives. Classes that are team-taught between faculty and museum curators are useful pedagogically as they bring to light different—sometimes conflicting—approaches to objects. Course accommodation in these seminars varies from semester to semester; the average is ten students.

We seek Mellon funds to continue offering courses team-taught by museum curators and CUNY faculty members. We plan to offer one seminar each term, including at least one per year focused on a topic appropriate to the global emphasis of this grant. We have received strong positive feedback about previous seminars taught in this vein. For example, Anna Indych-Lopéz's 2016 seminar at El Museo del Barrio, and Molly Aitken's collaboration with the Islamic department at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2017, have been praised as particularly valuable. At the same time, we are committed to offering Mellon seminars that offer innovative approaches to traditional subject matter, such as Cynthia Hahn's 2019 seminar on the materiality of Medieval manuscripts at the Morgan Library.

5. Curatorial Seminars

A semester-long seminar in Curatorial Practice, taught by James Gallery Curator Dr. Katherine Carl and with the collaboration of a doctoral faculty member, has now been offered three times at the Graduate Center. The classes have proved hugely successful in elevating the quality of exhibition proposals submitted and in strengthening the relationship between the James Gallery and the Ph.D. Program in Art History. This collaboration has also led to increased student participation in programmed talks, conferences, and discussions in the James Gallery. For the final renewal, we propose to offer three Curatorial Practice Seminars, offered in years one, three, and five of the 60-month period; each class would lead to a student-curated exhibition in the James Gallery the following academic year.

Finally, we propose to offer two Global Curatorial Seminars, in years two and four of the 60-month period, to increase student exposure to this growing field. The seminars seek to incubate and disseminate new approaches to modern art, globally conceived. In doing so, they demonstrate the relevance of art history for a broader, more diverse audience.

The Global Curatorial Seminars will be taught by an outside curator with expertise in Global Modern or Global Contemporary, who will be appointed as a Visiting Lecturer by the Graduate Center. The curators will be chosen by a process of soliciting recommendations from the field and then the evaluation of candidates by a committee of our faculty.

Evaluation

To date, both host institutions and student recipients of Curatorial Fellowships have been asked to write an evaluation of their activities; taken together, the evaluations have provided the primary basis for deciding whether or not to continue our collaborations with specific host institutions.

At the end of each semester, student representatives in the Ph.D. Program in Art History distribute online evaluation reports on all classes taught. These surveys provide important information for taking stock of the Mellon-funded seminars in each museum as they proceed.

From a faculty perspective, *New Initiatives in Curatorial Training* has been the topic of informal evaluation at the annual faculty retreat each summer, and during Doctoral Faculty Meetings. We will continue this informal feedback during the renewal period. We have also solicited more extensive written feedback from both faculty and students as the current phase of the grant comes to its conclusion. We have been particularly focused on the aspects of the program that have been most successful and desiderata for the future.

In addition, we have completed a study of the professional outcomes for all students who have been Mellon Curatorial Fellows and James Gallery Exhibition Fellows. Since the grant's inception, twenty-one students have undertaken Mellon-funded curatorial fellowships at NYC-area institutions or the James Gallery. Of these, seven have now completed their dissertations and are advancing to museum-based jobs: Research Associate in the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum, Assistant Curator at the Met's Lauder Center, Associate Curator at the Museum of Modern Art in Fort Worth, and Mellon Curatorial Fellow at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum. We are also pleased to report that another student, still completing her dissertation, has just been hired as Assistant Curator at the Dia Art Foundation, as noted above. The remainder of the students who participated in the program are still completing coursework or dissertating, but in all cases, they describe the fellowships as being an invaluable and formative experiences of their graduate school careers. It is noteworthy that among the fellows, over a quarter are from underrepresented minority backgrounds, suggesting the significance of this Mellon-funded opportunity for fostering diversity in the curatorial ranks of U.S. museums.

Sustainability

Museum Fellowships: In order to incentivize sustainability, this phase of *New Initiatives in Curatorial Training* will emphasize the nurturing of long-term collaboration with the Dia Art Foundation, which in our experience has provided the most dependably rewarding fellowship opportunity among the institutions with whom we have partnered. We will also work with a range of museums in the New York area, particularly those who serve diverse communities and/or specialize in art outside the European and North American traditions. To incentivize long-term collaboration with institutions who provide excellent mentoring for Curatorial Fellows, we propose to decrease the museum subvention from \$4,000 in the first two years to \$2,000 for the last three.

Although this may seem a substantial reduction from the subvention of \$10,000 per year budgeted for in the initial grant, discussions with our curatorial contacts has convinced us that from their perspective, the decrease would not devalue the work of the curators who supervise the fellows. Instead, as Dia Curator Kelly Kivland expressed it, "Given the longevity of our partnership, we envision that the goal of the fellowship is for Dia to establish a long-term commitment to the CUNY program, and vice-versa. We can make the case that the Mellon grant helps both CUNY and Dia establish a well-defined fellowship that aims to be fully integrated into our curatorial program." Newark Museum Curator Tricia Bloom similarly stressed that her

previous Mellon fellow "greatly enriched the department – rather than being a big demand on my time in supervising." She added that she viewed the subvention as quite generous, stressing that, "a lesser dollar amount would still seem generous to me."

It is anticipated that after the 60-month grant period, some institutions, particularly Dia, will be willing to continue the relationship by subsidizing it themselves. When renewing fellowship arrangements with institutions, we discuss the question of long-term sustainability as an important component of collaboration.

In addition, due to the success of the Mellon Curatorial Fellowships, the Graduate Center has committed to funding the travel portion of the Mellon Curatorial Fellowships during the 60-month grant period, offering each fellow \$1,500 for travel related to their curatorial work. These funds, previously covered by the Mellon Foundation, will come from the Provost's Office. Furthermore, once the grant is complete, the Graduate Center has committed to offering a 'buy out' of a teaching year for one Graduate Center Fellow per year, which will allow the fellow to spend this year working in a New York–area museum. The Graduate Center will provide the fellow with a stipend of approximately \$26,000 per year, tuition, and access to low-cost health insurance.

James Gallery: As part of the Mellon grant, James Gallery Curator Katherine Carl has committed to supporting the exhibitions organized by James Gallery Fellows with \$25,000 per show, in cash or in kind. She has also committed to locating additional funds to support the programs organized by the Global Programming Fellows. And once the Mellon grant has run its course, Dr. Carl and the Grad Center administration have committed to supporting the exhibition and programming fellowships with internal funds subsidized by the James Gallery's substantial endowment and annual budget. Both Dr. Carl and the Grad Center administration see the James Gallery as a critical component of the Center's public outreach, as well as its professional training for students; these fellowships offer a significant opportunity to achieve both goals, key to the Center's strategic plan (<https://www.gc.cuny.edu/About-the-GC/Provost-s-Office/Strategic-Plan-2017-2022>).

Object-Based Museum Seminars: With these seminars, our goal is to build long-term relationships with curators and museums during the period of Mellon funding so that we can continue to offer similar object-oriented courses in the future. We have been successful in organizing several such courses without external funding, for instance a course at the Metropolitan Museum's Textile Center in 2016, as follow-ups to collaborations that were initially Mellon-funded. These courses offer compelling evidence for a sustainable path forward after the five-year funding is complete.

While we are certain that it will be possible to organize at least one museum-based seminar per year on a no-fee basis once the grant is complete, we also recognize that some opportunities, very beneficial for our students, will still require funding. Our Program's Executive Committee has therefore voted to set aside \$5,000 of the interest provided annually by our endowment, the Rewald Fund, to provide funds for one museum-based seminar per year once the grant is complete. To demonstrate the Graduate Center's institutional commitment to these critical

learning experiences, the Provost's Office has also agreed to provide \$5,000 per year for the museum-based courses once the grant is complete.

Project Timeline

Year 1, academic year 2019-20:

- 2 x Curatorial Fellowships at NY-area institutions
- 2 x Object-based Seminars at NY-area museums
- 1 x Curatorial Practice seminar (spring)
- Seminars and fellows selected for academic year 2020-21
- Fund-raising undertaken for continuation of the project.

Year 2, academic year 2020-21:

- 2 x Curatorial Fellowships at NY-area institutions
- 2 x Object-based Seminars at NY-area museums
- 1 x James Gallery Fellowship to realize an exhibition based on the previous year's Curatorial Practice seminar
- 1 x Global Programming Fellowship at James Gallery
- Global Curatorial Practice seminar (fall)
- Student-curated exhibition in the James Gallery (spring)
- Seminars and fellows selected for academic year 2021-22
- Fund-raising undertaken for continuation of the project.

Year 3, academic year 2021-22:

- 2 x Curatorial Fellowships at NY-area institutions
- 2 x Object-based Seminars at NY-area museums
- 1 x Global Programming Fellowship at James Gallery
- Curatorial Practice seminar (spring)
- Seminars and fellows selected for academic year 2022-23
- Fund-raising undertaken for continuation of the project.

Year 4, academic year 2022-23:

- 2 x Curatorial Fellowships at NY-area institutions
- 2 x Object-based Seminars at NY-area museums
- 1 x James Gallery Fellowship to realize an exhibition based on the previous year's Curatorial Practice seminar
- Student-curated exhibition in the James Gallery (spring)
- Global Curatorial Practice seminar (fall)
- Seminars and fellows selected for academic year 2023-24
- Fund-raising undertaken for continuation of the project

Year 5, academic year 2023-24:

- 2 x Curatorial Fellowships at NY-area institutions
- 2 x Object-based Seminars at NY-area museums
- 1 x Global Programming Fellowship at James Gallery
- Curatorial Practice seminar (spring)

- Fund-raising undertaken for continuation of the project.

Budget Narrative

Salaries and Wages – Fellowships and Residencies: Total salaries, excluding benefits, for all fellowships, residencies, and scholarships. The budget narrative should list the base salary or stipend amount for each fellow or resident, the number of individuals in each position, and, if applicable, the FTE percentage allocation.

Total Amount Budgeted: **\$434,429**

Mellon Curatorial Fellowships: For the renewal period, Curatorial Fellowships would be provided to two students each year for the five academic years of the project period, i.e., ten in total, funded jointly by the Graduate Center and the Mellon Foundation. Curatorial Fellowships will begin at \$26,000 in order to match existing Graduate Center Fellowships and have a 2% cost of living increase per year (in line with what is provided by the current CUNY contract). A subvention will be offered to each institution hosting a Curatorial Fellow to ensure that they can provide the mentoring and resources needed. To incentivize long-term collaboration with institutions who provide excellent mentoring, we propose to decrease this sum by \$2,000 after the second year, from \$4,000 (year one) to \$2,000 (year five). The Graduate Center will continue to provide all students with tuition and access to health insurance.

James Gallery Exhibition Fellowship: Because the exhibition and seminar have proven so inspiring for Art History students, increasing their sense of being valued by the Graduate Center and contributing toward its public mission, we wish to repeat this twice more during the renewal period. We are therefore requesting \$54,110 for two James Gallery Fellowships, funded jointly by the Graduate Center and the Mellon Foundation, to take place during years two and four of the grant. The James Gallery Exhibition Fellowship will track the cost-of-living increases built into the Mellon Curatorial Fellowships. It will begin in year two with a fellowship of \$26,520, and a second will be offered in year four at \$27,591. The Graduate Center will continue to provide all students with tuition and access to health insurance.

James Gallery Global Programming Fellowship: The Global Programming Fellow, chosen via a selective application process, will have a dissertation topic outside traditional European and American art. The student will draw on their area of expertise to organize conferences, lectures, performances, and other public-facing events. We are requesting \$81,712 for three Global Programming Fellowships, to run in years two, three, and five of the Mellon grant. These fellowships, funded jointly by the Graduate Center and the Mellon Foundation, will likewise track the cost of living increases seen in the other two fellowships, rising by 2% per year. The Graduate Center will provide all students with tuition and access to health insurance.

Additional Budget Categories: If applicable, the total funds allocated for use in any additional budget categories. Please describe the allocated amount and purpose for each category.

Category: Museum-based seminars

Total Amount Budgeted: \$100,000 (\$10,000/seminar for 10 seminars over 5 years)

Notes: A subvention of \$10,000 per seminar course is requested, in order to make it possible for institutional partners to accommodate seminar meetings and student research projects by providing objects and archives for consultation (e.g. requesting objects from storage), making meeting space available, and otherwise opening the institution to seminar participants. In cases where visits may be planned to multiple museums, the subvention may be split between institutions.

Category: Curatorial Practice and Global Curatorial Seminars
Total Amount Budgeted: \$65,000

Notes: The Curatorial Practice seminars are budgeted at \$5,000 each, in order to offer honorariums that would attract leading curators to the Ph.D. Program. The Graduate Center has offered Dr. Katherine Carl an adjunct position (currently remunerated at \$3,860) in order to continue her involvement teaching this course on top of her other duties.

The Global Curatorial seminars are budgeted at \$25,000 each, in order to offer an appropriate salary that would attract leading NYC-area curators to teach the course on top of their other duties. The Graduate Center has indicated its support for such seminars and its openness to covering health insurance, if necessary, for curators teaching during the course of the grant.

Category: James Gallery Exhibitions
Total Amount Budgeted: \$50,000

Notes: For the final renewal, we propose to support two James Gallery exhibitions in years two and four of the grant. We are therefore requesting \$50,000 for two iterations of a student-curated exhibition. In both iterations, the Mellon's exhibition subvention will be supplemented by \$25,000 from the James Gallery.