



National Medal for Museum & Library Service

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2022 State of the Museum

On behalf of the board of trustees and staff of the Asheville Art Museum, we share this letter with you as an expression of our gratitude for your continued support and commitment. While we still experience the continued challenges brought by the pandemic, we are moving forward to embrace opportunities of the new normal.

The Museum continues to strengthen our role as a place of education, exploration, and inspiration; an advocate for the arts and artists; an economic engine; and the preeminent arts resource for the city, county, and region. The Museum is a national leader in developing programs and exhibitions designed to engage diverse audiences of all ages in the active exploration of themselves and their communities through the interpretation of American art in all media since the beginning of the 20th century.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services took notice and recognized this excellence, bestowing its highest honor, the 2022 National Medal for Museum and Library Services to the Museum. In addition to this honor, the Asheville Art Museum was the only museum to win three exhibition awards in the 2022 Southeastern Museums Conference's competition. Additional awards were garnered from the North Carolina Museums Council, the Asheville Chamber of Commerce, the Mountain Xpress, and the Asheville Radio Group.

As a Medal Museum, we were busy throughout 2021–2022. In total, the Museum presented 363 educational programs. The Museum's 127,548 participants included 27,145 children and guests from 50 states, the District of Columbia, and many foreign countries. The Museum's website had 445,054 page views, our Facebook page had 1.4 million impressions, and our Instagram account had 24,057 engagements and 685,447 impressions. The Museum's Member Profile e-blast had an open rate of 63 percent, triple the national average.

The Learning & Engagement team experienced a challenging year. Responding to programming restrictions and learning loss as a result of the pandemic, the team created innovative programming that would engage people at home, at school, and onsite at the Museum under the new guidelines. The department has balanced the

demands for continued virtual programming while re-introducing onsite programs for groups of all ages. The Museum partners with Western North Carolina school districts to offer programs for students in kindergarten through 12th grade that provide valuable, and otherwise unavailable, visual arts education. The Museum also offers an active schedule of adult programming—building stronger partnerships with local colleges and universities, retirement communities, the library system, job training centers, and the vibrant community of artists and art enthusiasts in our region.

Students participating in the Museum’s special program, Connections. Connections is an arts-based program serving community-dwelling adults with mild to moderate memory loss and their care partners.

The curatorial team developed exciting concepts and negotiated dates to create an extraordinary year of Collection-based installations and special exhibitions. As of June 30, 2022, the Museum’s permanent Collection—the only such resource in the region—numbered more than 7,500 objects. These include paintings; works on paper, including photographs, prints, drawings, pastels, collages, and watercolors; sculptures; craft objects in glass, ceramic, metal, wood, and fiber; and 4,905 architectural drawings. The Collection has more than tripled in size since 2005. This growth has broadened and deepened the Collection’s scope, including new acquisitions of works by women, African Americans, Eastern Band Cherokee Indians, members of the Cherokee Nation, and LGBTQ+ artists. The Museum’s unique holdings of Black Mountain College works and works of the Southern Appalachian region also continue to expand.

As a collecting institution, the Museum provides an overview of significant movements and trends in American art in the 20th and 21st century and art of importance to the Southeast. In fiscal year 2021–2022, the Museum added 637 works to its Collection, including works by Black Mountain College artists and artists of the Southern Appalachian region.

From July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022, the Museum presented 25 onsite exhibitions and three “pop-up” exhibitions in the community. Select highlights include Huffman Gifts of Contemporary Southern Folk Art; Public Domain: Photography and the Preservation of Public Lands; and Rural Avant Garde: The Mountain Lake Experience. One of our award-winning exhibitions, A Living Language: Cherokee Syllabary and Contemporary Art, was a juried exhibition featuring more than 50 works of art in a variety of media. Created by more than 30 Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and Cherokee Nation artists, it highlighted the use of the written Cherokee language in artworks. This exhibition was a collaboration with the Museum of the Cherokee Indian and was on view consecutively in both museums.

Another exhibition, Ruminations on Memory, drew from the Museum’s Collection and featured newly acquired works by Judy Chicago, Robert Rauschenberg, and others. Modernist Design at Black Mountain College, drawn primarily from the Collection, included architecture, furniture, ceramics, textiles, and more. The Wyeths: Three Generations, Works from the Bank of America Collection, presented artworks

by Wyeth family members N.C., Henriette, Andrew, and Jamie. Southern Rites: Gillian Laub documented the story of young people in the American South. Draped and Veiled: 20 x 24 Polaroid Photographs by Joyce Tenneson, highlighted acquisitions of these ethereal works.

It was also a time of innovation for the Museum as we launched our online digital collection in October 2022. People world-wide can now explore the Museum's diverse Collection from the comfort of their homes, university libraries, museum offices, or any other space with internet access. To date, the Museum's curatorial team has meticulously digitized approximately 20 percent of the Museum's Collection and uploaded it to this online database. Fifteen-hundred objects are already available, and the Museum will be adding hundreds more each quarter until the entire Collection is available online. With our Collection accessible from anywhere, the Museum can reach a much broader, more diverse audience, increasing scholarship, education, access, and engagement. It also enables us to better meet our mission of transforming lives through art.

Long-awaited and published in 2022, the Asheville Art Museum: An Introduction to the Collection is the first major catalogue published by the Museum. The book highlights the Museum's Collection of American art from 1860 to the present. As an introduction, it acknowledges both the depth of the Collection as it currently stands and its continued growth. The 296-page book features more than 220 images, each paired with scholarly interpretation and generously illustrated essays. It was the genesis of the Museum's online Collection.

Community involvement is a vital aspect of any project's success and sustainability; we continue to be grateful for the outpouring of support our arts-based initiatives have received. We look forward to making a significant impact throughout the coming year by improving and expanding educational programming, organizing thought-provoking exhibitions, and increasing outreach to underserved communities.

Thank you again for being an integral partner in the Asheville Art Museum's present and future vision. Because of your essential support, we can share the transformative power of art within our regional community and beyond.

Sincerely,

Pamela L. Myers
Executive Director