

16 ART MUSEUMS RECEIVE MORE THAN \$3 MILLION IN GRANTS TO SUPPORT AN EXPANDING ARRAY OF PROGRAMS IN CREATIVE AGING

*Bronx Museum of the Arts, Honolulu Museum of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston,
MCA San Diego, and Toledo Museum of Art Among Second Group of Vitality Arts Grantees*

Minneapolis, MN—January 11, 2023—E.A. Michelson Philanthropy announced today that it has awarded more than \$3 million in new grants to 16 different art museums across the United States, a continuation of its investment in creative aging programs that are an essential part of addressing the coming demographic wave of older Americans. Targeted to support the creation of new programs aimed at museum audiences who are 55 years of age and older, these creative aging classes recognize the many benefits—social, emotional, and physical—of engaging older adults in the process of artistic creation.

The museums receiving funds as part of the second phase of the Vitality Arts Project for Art Museums are: Akron Art Museum; ASU Art Museum; Boise Art Museum; Bronx Museum of the Arts; Frist Art Museum; Heard Museum; Honolulu Museum of Art; John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art; Memphis Brooks Museum of Art; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Neuberger Museum of Art; Philbrook Museum of Art; Queens Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Tampa Museum of Art; and the Toledo Museum of Art. Their hands-on art making programs for older adults are expected to be available to the public between May 2023 and August 2024. Each museum is developing these art-making programs to address a growing awareness of ageism in our society and in recognition of the role that art museums can play in providing creative aging opportunities to their community.

This new group of 16 museums builds on the foundation's [July 2022 launch of the Vitality Arts Project for Art Museums initiative](#)—and more than a decade of investment in developing and funding these programs at other community organizations. Originally started by the foundation with targeted grants in 2013, E.A. Michelson Philanthropy has since invested more than \$21 million for advocacy, training and funding of creative aging programs at art and history museums, performing arts organizations, botanical gardens, and community centers. Museum consultants Brian Kennedy and András Szántó are advising the foundation on its work to address ageism in American art museums.

Museums that participate in the Vitality Arts grant program receive an array of support beyond funding. In particular, museum staff will receive training and technical assistance in program design and implementation from E.A. Michelson's long-term partner, [Lifetime Arts](#). Founded in 2008, Lifetime Arts is the national leader in the development and dissemination of creative aging capacity building services and best practices. They work to advance the field with public libraries, museums, senior service organizations, community arts organizations and teaching artists, as well as the systems and institutions that support them.

“Our collective belief system has evolved to prioritize the interests of youth and younger adults and to under-value and overlook older adults,” said Ellen Michelson, founder and president of E.A. Michelson

Philanthropy. “The creative aging programs we help to develop and implement are rooted in a recognition that older adults across all races, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic groups deserve to be acknowledged as vibrant and contributing members of the American population, who both need and deserve creative, educational outlets and the opportunity to build and maintain their social networks.”

This round of grants brings to 25 the number of leading American art museums serving their communities with such programs, enabling programs for older adults while taking advantage of the diverse collections and creative potential of art museums. Among the anti-ageism ideas and programs being developed by this new group of 16 art museums are:

- The 2021 opening of Mirabella, a senior living and retirement community located on the ASU campus, provides an opportunity for Tempe’s ASU Art Museum. The museum plans to launch its **Creative Aging for Lifelong Learners (CALL) Workshop Series** this spring, with different—free—programs focused on activities such as contemporary craft, printmaking, and storytelling.
- The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, in Sarasota, has long served a population of older adults and the demand for programs has only grown with an influx of residents and visitors to Florida. Its Vitality Arts grants will make it possible to develop new programs that specifically provide active creative opportunities to these audiences. The museum’s **Circus Arts** workshop will introduce participants to various aspects of the circus, from costume design to advertising posters to performance, while in the **Moving With The Ringling** program, participants will explore artistic movement with a local dance and movement troupe.
- The Queens Museum is located in the most demographically diverse community in the U.S. Building on its strong local relationships—and its eclectic collections, which include an important World’s Fair archive—the Museum will develop creative aging workshops such as **Cooking and Community**, in partnership with La Jornada and the Cultural Food Pantry, and **Portrait Painting**, an opportunity for participants to think about how they view themselves, their connections to their heritage, and their role and perceptions within their local communities.
- The Philbrook Museum of Art has an array of programs emphasizing intergenerational engagement. For the Vitality Arts initiative, the Museum’s **Stay Gold Sessions** will emphasize the intersection of art making and nature as a source of inspiration. The program will use the Museum’s studio classrooms, art galleries, and acres of formal and informal gardens as spaces for drawing and painting, creative writing, collage, textiles, and printmaking, often in combination, while also seeking to expand its relationships with local organizations and residences focused on older adults.
- The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, is one of the largest art museums in the United States, serving a population that is demographically diverse in nearly every way. The museum’s program **What I Know and When I Knew It**, will focus on a diverse group of older adults from Houston’s Third Ward—a predominantly African American community located a short distance from the MFAH campus—with workshops in storytelling combined with classes in drawing, painting, or printmaking, building towards a larger goal of capturing their personal narratives and community experiences.

Each Vitality Arts grantee is eligible for up to \$250,000 in support of programming and program development costs. Last summer’s launch provided more than \$2 million in funding to nine American

art museums—Brooklyn Museum, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, New Orleans Museum of Art, Pérez Art Museum Miami, and Utah Museum of Fine Arts—with programs that began in fall 2022. This combined group of 25 art museums joins more than 50 of the foundation’s current and past Vitality Arts grantees, whose programs have engaged thousands of older adults across the country.

About E.A. Michelson Philanthropy

Over the last nine years, E.A. Michelson Philanthropy has pioneered programs in creative aging through its Vitality Arts program area, working with a diverse array of visual and performing arts institutions, including: Anchorage Museum Association (Anchorage, AK); Craft Contemporary (Los Angeles, CA); Heard Museum (Phoenix, AZ); Louisiana State Museum (New Orleans, LA); Minnesota Opera (Minneapolis, MN); Museo de Historia, Antropología y Arte (San Juan, Puerto Rico); Naples Botanical Garden (Naples, FL); and The Olana Partnership (Hudson, NY), among others. These programs and others supported by the foundation have served thousands of older adults, helping them to discover and build their artistic skills and their connections to others. Participants often begin these classes with little to no background or history in art making, but finish the course with a completed project or performance. For more information, please visit: <https://eamichelsonphilanthropy.org/vitality-arts/for-art-museums/>

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For more information, please contact:

Sascha Freudenheim
PAVE Communications & Consulting
sascha@paveconsult.com
917-544-6057

Teresa Bonner
E.A. Michelson Philanthropy
teresa@eamphil.org
415-547-9025