



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**NOVEMBER 13, 2019**

**FIFTH CLASS OF THE ANDREW W. MELLON UNDERGRADUATE CURATORIAL FELLOWS  
ANNOUNCED BY SIX MAJOR U.S. MUSEUMS**

(Los Angeles—November 13, 2019) The Art Institute of Chicago, the High Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH), The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art are pleased to announce the 2019–2021 class of fellows designated for The Andrew W. Mellon Undergraduate Curatorial Fellowship Program. The fellowship provides specialized training to students across the United States from historically underrepresented groups in the curatorial field and supports the goal of promoting inclusive, pluralistic museums. The students began their fellowships this fall. More information about the need for a diverse educational pipeline into the curatorial field is available in the [2018 Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey](#).

Fellows participate in The Andrew W. Mellon Undergraduate Curatorial Fellowship Program during their undergraduate career, with the goal of continuing their education through graduate work. The two-year fellowship provides students with hands-on experience in a museum setting, assisting curators and staff on exhibitions, collections, and programs. Fellows are matched with a curatorial mentor at each museum who works to enrich the academic experience and to increase exposure to the museum context while broadening a fellow's understanding of art and art history. Fellowships include regular engagement during the academic school year followed by full-time engagement over the summer.

Since the program began in 2014, 30 fellows have completed the Mellon Undergraduate Curatorial Fellowship program. Two fellows have started the PhD program in art history at Harvard University, while nine others have completed Master's degrees or are enrolled in graduate programs at the American University in Cairo; Arizona State University; Cornell University; Courtauld Institute of Art; the Maryland Institute College of Art; University of Chicago; University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies; University of Southern California; and the University of Texas, Austin. Nearly half of the alumni are working in the arts either in staff positions or in other fellowship opportunities.

Selected fellows for the 2019–2021 program are as follows (full bios start on page 3):

- Art Institute of Chicago: **Iris Haastrup**, Wellesley College; curatorial mentor: Constantine Petridis, Chair of the Department of the Arts of Africa and the Americas and Curator of African Art. **Kyndal Gragg**, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; curatorial mentor: Andrew Hamilton, Associate Curator of Art of the Americas, Department of the Arts of Africa and the Americas.
- High Museum of Art: **Destinee Filmore**, Spelman College; curatorial mentor: Katherine Jentleson, Merrie and Dan Boone Curator of Folk and Self-Taught Art. **Adeja Sterling**, Emory University; curatorial mentor: Stephanie Heydt, Margaret and Terry Stent, Curator of American Art.
- Los Angeles County Museum of Art: **Emily Le**, University of Southern California; curatorial mentor: Hollis Goodall, Curator of Japanese Art. **Jackeline Lopez**, University of California, Los Angeles; curatorial mentor: Stephen Little, Florence & Harry Sloan Curator of Chinese Art and Department Head, Chinese, Korean, and South and Southeast Asian Art.
- The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston: **Veronica Carleton**, Northlake Community College; curatorial mentor: Mari Carmen Ramírez, the Wortham Curator of Latin American Art and Director of the

International Center for the Arts of the Americas. **Jaelynn Walls**, The University of Houston; curatorial mentor: Dena Woodall, Associate Curator of Prints and Drawings.

- The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art: **Husnain Noorbhai**, Kansas City Art Institute; curatorial mentor: Kimberly Masteller, Jeanne McCray Beals Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art. **London Williams**, Kansas City Art Institute; curatorial mentor: April Watson, Curator of Photography.
- Philadelphia Museum of Art: **Laila Islam**, Moore College of Art and Design; curatorial mentor: Peter Barberie, The Brodsky Curator of Photographs, Alfred Stieglitz Center. **Hannah (Han) McCoy**, Temple University; curatorial mentor: Matthew Affron, The Muriel and Philip Berman Curator of Modern Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

“It’s an honor to once again have the support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in the ambitious work of developing our next generation of curatorial leaders. Our Mellon Fellows continue to bring fresh perspectives to the museum and we are excited to see participants from our first cohort embarking on graduate studies and beginning careers at cultural institutions across the country. We look forward to following their future accomplishments,” said James Rondeau, President and Eloise W. Martin Director at the Art Institute of Chicago.

“As we welcome a new class of Mellon Fellows to the High, we reflect on the remarkable impact this program has had on our institution, but also look forward to how it will continue to shape the future of the field,” said Rand Suffolk, Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr., director of the High Museum of Art. “Bringing diverse perspectives to museum leadership will help to ensure that our organizations remain relevant and essential in our communities. We are honored to continue this important work with the support of the Mellon Foundation.”

“We are pleased to welcome the incoming class of Mellon Undergraduate Curatorial Fellows,” said Michael Govan, LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director. “Now in its sixth year, we are beginning to see the potential long-term impact of this important fellowship, expanding the canon and the voices we hear from for generations to come.”

“All of us here at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, are pleased to welcome the newest class of fellows. Each year, these students lend intelligence and a fresh perspective to our work, fostering collaboration and diversity within museums. We are honored to join our partners across the country in this initiative and provide valuable opportunities for the future leaders of the museum field,” said Gary Tinterow, Director, The Margaret Alkek Williams Chair, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

“Fostering diversity and inclusion in our next curatorial generation is vital to shaping a museum future that is both relevant and inspiring,” said Julián Zugazagoitia, Menefee D. and Mary Louise Blackwell CEO & Director of the Nelson-Atkins. “The Nelson-Atkins is honored to continue developing this important program and we look forward to welcoming a new group of students.”

“It is a vital part of a museum’s mission to attract the best and the brightest of scholars to our field and to create mentorship opportunities to ensure their growth,” said Timothy Rub, The George D. Widener Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. “This wonderful fellowship program helps to build our capacity to achieve these goals, nurturing the development of a more diverse workforce. At the same time, it presents our staff with the rewarding experience of serving as mentors to exceptional students. We are delighted to welcome the new fellows and grateful to the Mellon Foundation for its dedication to this important initiative.”

## THE ANDREW W. MELLON UNDERGRADUATE CURATORIAL FELLOWS:

### Art Institute of Chicago



**Iris Haastrup** is a second-year student at Wellesley College double-majoring in art history and architecture. Haastrup is from the South Side of Chicago with familial ties to Mississippi and Nigeria. In her time at Wellesley, she is the lecture chair for the black student association, on the programming committee of the Davis Museum student advisory board, and a member of TZE arts and music society. Academically, Haastrup is interested in research regarding black women artists, the relationship between art and activism, equity in the arts, and the effects of sustainability in architecture. She is inspired by the works of Toni Morrison, Lorraine Hansberry, and Carrie Mae Weems. In her personal life, she enjoys making crafts and zines, skateboarding, and watching movies. For the 2019–20 academic year, Haastrup will be mentored by Constantine Petridis, Chair of the Department of the Arts of Africa and the Americas and Curator of African Art.



**Kyndal Gragg** is a third-year student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) studying art history and urban planning. Gragg developed a passion for museums early in her academic career and believes that museums are like books in their storytelling capacity. Gragg is passionate about advocating for narratives from indigenous communities and the African diaspora so that they may be recognized for the longevity of their artistic contribution and seen as contemporary practitioners. Currently, Gragg is a collections assistant at UIUC's Spurlock Museum and a research assistant for Krannert Art Museum where she researches and digitizes Andean materials for an upcoming reinstallation. Gragg is interested in supporting the collective history of the world and emphasizing a pluralistic appreciation for art. For the 2019–20 academic year, Gragg will be mentored by Andrew Hamilton, Associate Curator of Art of the Americas in the Department of the Arts of Africa and the Americas.

### High Museum of Art



**Destinee Filmore** is a third-year student from Tampa, Florida studying art history and international studies at Spelman College. On campus, she is an active member and leader of several organizations, most notably, the Bonner Scholar Program, Social Justice Program, and Curatorial Studies Program. Filmore is interested in a wide range of research topics but is most intrigued by the impact made by African American artists on communities abroad during their voluntary or involuntary departures from the United States. Filmore intends to pursue a doctorate degree in art history following her time at Spelman and aspires to become a curator. She is also interested in advocating for the accessibility of arts-based education programs for low-income students and students of color as such programs were vital to her success. As a Mellon Undergraduate Curatorial Fellow at the High Museum of Art, Filmore is receiving mentorship from Katherine Jentleson, Merrie and Dan Boone Curator of Folk and Self-Taught Art.



**Adeja Sterling** is a third-year student at Emory University studying art history in hopes of becoming a curator, art writer, and one day a museum director. Originally from New Orleans, Louisiana, but now residing in Atlanta, Georgia, Sterling has had a range of experiences in the Atlanta art scene, previously interning at ART PAPERS magazine, and with the Museum of Contemporary Art Georgia (MOCA GA). As a Mellon Undergraduate Curatorial Fellow at the High Museum, Adeja will be mentored by Stephanie Heydt, Margaret and Terry Stent, Curator of American Art.

### Los Angeles County Museum of Art



**Emily Le** is a third-year student at the University of Southern California (USC), double majoring in art history and creative writing. Throughout her time at USC thus far, she has been working as a collections associate for the school's Archaeology Lab and has also had the opportunity to co-curate an exhibit for the USC Fisher Museum, entitled *Suppression, Subversion, and the Surreal: The Art of Czechoslovakian Resistance*. As a first-generation college student and a child of Vietnamese immigrants, Le was not exposed to art, art history, or museums until later in life. Coming from this background, she wants to bring greater accessibility and diversity to the museum world, breaking down the idea of art as being a "cultural privilege." Her curatorial mentor is Hollis Goodall, Curator of Japanese Art.



**Jackeline Lopez** is a third-year student majoring in anthropology with a focus in archaeology, as well as art history at the University of California, Los Angeles. Born and raised in South Central Los Angeles, she strives to apply anthropology to curatorial work and is particularly interested in the process of making exhibitions accessible to underrepresented communities. Her goal as an aspiring archaeologist and curator is to protect and preserve cultural patrimony, and to encourage cross-cultural connections. Lopez is currently involved in an archaeological project based in Portugal and recently completed her second field season there. Along with writing an honors thesis based on the project's research, she plans to co-curate an exhibition with the site director to make their findings accessible to the local, rural community. Stephen Little, Florence & Harry Sloan Curator of Chinese Art and Department Head, Chinese, Korean, South and Southeast Asian Art, will be her curatorial mentor during her first year in the program.

### Museum of Fine Arts, Houston



**Veronica Carleton** is a third-year student at Northlake Community College, majoring in art history. After attending Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing & Visual Arts, where she had a painting and drawing concentration, she initially went on to study international relations with a focus on Latin America. She has since decided to pursue the curatorial field to marry her passion for art and history. Carleton's goal as a Mellon Undergraduate Curatorial Fellow is to develop a curatorial practice that focuses on the expansion of the artistic canon to include more voices that have historically been underrepresented in the fine art world. Her curatorial mentor is Mari Carmen Ramírez, the Wortham Curator of Latin American Art and Director of the International Center for the Arts of the Americas.



**Jaelynn Walls** is a third-year student and Mellon Mays Research Scholar studying art history and African American studies at The University of Houston. Jaelynn developed a passion for curation during her time as a Teen Council member at The Contemporary Arts Museum of Houston. She has since independently curated shows throughout Texas including *One for Us* at Big Medium Gallery, *Turned On Like A Switch* at Pump Project, and *A Gathering* at The Blanton Museum of Art. In addition to independent curation focusing on African-American art and artists, Walls has held both education and curatorial positions at The Blanton Museum of Art, Sugar Hill Museum, and The Contemporary Arts Museum of Houston. She also spent the summer of 2019 as a research assistant in the Art History department of Stanford University. Walls hosts a YouTube channel titled *Art in Color* in which she interviews contemporary artists of color and discusses their work for K–12 audiences and beyond. She hopes to pursue a PhD in art history focusing specifically on work by contemporary African American artists. Her curatorial mentor is Dena Woodall, Associate Curator of Prints and Drawings.

### The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

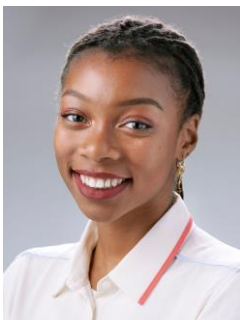


**Husnain Noorbhai** is a second-year student at the Kansas City Art Institute (KCAI) majoring in graphic design, and is a member of the Professional Association of Design (AIGA). He enjoys designing logos and posters, as well as ink drawing and calligraphy. After earning his BFA, Noorbhai hopes to work on large murals and continue his artistic practice, as well as pursue graduate school. He grew up in Plano, Texas, a diverse suburb of Dallas and attended Plano West High School where he participated in many German culture and art competitions earning several awards. During his free time, Noorbhai enjoys cooking, watching movies, and making art. Noorbhai's curatorial mentor is Kimberly Masteller, Jeanne McCray Beals Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art.



**London Williams** is a third-year student at the Kansas City Art Institute majoring in Painting. Originally from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, he began to develop his craft within the painting discipline at Pius XI Catholic High School. While attending Pius, Williams earned many accomplishments, including a National Scholastic Silver Medal in 2017 and curatorial practice experiences with the Chipstone Foundation and the Milwaukee Museum of Art. Williams gained further curatorial experience serving as co-curator of exhibitions for BACC (Black Artist Culture and Community), a KCAI campus organization. Williams is committed to using curation within fine arts institutions to incorporate the voices of underrepresented individuals as a means to start meaningful conversations within the community. April Watson, Curator of Photography will be Williams's curatorial mentor.

### Philadelphia Museum of Art



**Laila Islam** is a second-year student at Moore College of Art and Design, majoring in curatorial studies with a minor in fine arts. Born and raised in Philadelphia, Islam was inspired to pursue a career in the arts at the age of 12. Being immersed in the visual art scene of her city enabled her to study in an accelerated after school program and summer art courses. At age 16, Islam founded her own youth-based collective, *The Future Is Us Collective*, an

experience that inspired her to pursue a curatorial career working with artists and community members. Peter Barberie, The Brodsky Curator of Photographs, Alfred Stieglitz Center, Philadelphia Museum of Art will be Islam's curatorial mentor.



**Hannah (Han) McCoy** is a third-year student at Temple University majoring in art history. Their interests range from the Italian High Renaissance to the early Italian Baroque period. In high school, McCoy served as lead artistic director for their senior class, and today serves on the dean's committee of the Tyler School of Art and Architecture. McCoy would like to pursue a PhD in art history, with a focus on the artistic narratives of people of color during the late 15th and early 16th century in Europe. Their hope is to participate in opening a more inclusive chapter of history in order to encourage younger artists of color. McCoy's curatorial mentor will be Matthew Affron, The Muriel and Philip Berman Curator of Modern Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

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#### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

##### **About the Art Institute of Chicago**

The Art Institute of Chicago is a world-renowned art museum housing one of the largest permanent collections in the United States. An encyclopedic museum, the Art Institute collects, preserves, and displays works in every medium from all cultures and historical periods as well as hosts special exhibitions. With a collection of approximately 300,000 works of art, the museum has particularly strong holdings in Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painting, early 20th century European painting and sculpture, contemporary art, Japanese prints, and photography. The museum's 2009 addition, the Modern Wing, features the latest in green museum technology and 264,000 square feet dedicated to modern and contemporary art, photography, architecture and design, and new learning and public engagement facilities. In addition to displaying its permanent collection, the Art Institute mounts approximately 35 special exhibitions per year and features lectures, gallery tours, and special performances on a daily basis.

**Location and Contact:** 111 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603 | 312 443-3600 | [www.artic.edu](http://www.artic.edu)

##### **About the High Museum of Art**

The High is the leading art museum in the southeastern United States, housed within facilities designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architects Richard Meier and Renzo Piano. With more than 16,000 works of art, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American fine and decorative arts; major holdings of photography and folk and self-taught work, especially that reflective of the American south; burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art including paintings, sculpture, new media, and design; a growing collection of African art with work dating from pre-history to the present day; and significant holdings of European paintings and works on paper. The High is dedicated to a program

reflective of the diversity of its communities, offering a variety of exhibitions and educational programs as well as a host of new experiences that engage visitors with the world of art, the lives of artists and the creative process.  
**Location and Contact:** 1280 Peachtree Street, N.E., Atlanta, GA 30309 | 404 733-4400 | [www.high.org](http://www.high.org)

**About the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)**

Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of nearly 142,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region's rich cultural heritage and diverse population. LACMA's spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

**Location and Contact:** 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90036 | 323 857-6000 | [www.lacma.org](http://www.lacma.org)

**About The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH)**

Founded in 1900, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, is among the 10 largest art museums in the United States. Located in the heart of Houston's Museum District, the MFAH comprises two gallery buildings, a sculpture garden, theater, two art schools and two libraries, with two house museums, for American and European decorative arts, nearby. The encyclopedic collection of the MFAH numbers some 65,000 works and spans the art of antiquity to the present.

**Location and Contact:** 1001 Bissonnet, Houston, TX 77005 | 713 639-7300 | [www.mfah.org](http://www.mfah.org)

**About The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art**

The Nelson-Atkins in Kansas City is recognized nationally and internationally as one of America's finest art museums. The Nelson-Atkins serves the community by providing access and insight into its renowned collection of more than 33,500 art objects and is best known for its Asian art, European and American paintings, photography, modern sculpture, and new American Indian and Egyptian galleries. Housing a major art research library and the Ford Learning Center, the Museum is a key educational resource for the region. The institution-wide transformation of the Nelson-Atkins has included the 165,000-square-foot Bloch Building expansion and renovation of the original 1933 Nelson-Atkins Building. The Nelson-Atkins is committed to connecting people of all ages with meaningful art experiences. Through its partnerships with Kansas City community, civic, and cultural organizations and the national and international arts community, The Nelson-Atkins welcomes and engages the diverse population of Kansas City and the surrounding region with enriching exhibitions, cultural programs, and educational activities.

**Location and Contact:** 4525 Oak Street, Kansas City, MO 64111 | 816 751-1278 | [www.nelson-atkins.org](http://www.nelson-atkins.org)

**About the Philadelphia Museum of Art**

The Philadelphia Museum of Art is Philadelphia's art museum. A place that welcomes everyone. A world-renowned collection. A landmark building. We bring the arts to life, inspiring visitors—through scholarly study and creative play—to discover the spirit of imagination that lies in everyone. We connect people with the arts in rich and varied ways, making the experience of the Museum surprising, lively, and always memorable. We are committed to inviting visitors to see the world—and themselves—anew through the beauty and expressive power of the arts.

**Location and Contact:** The Philadelphia Museum of Art is located on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway at 26th Street | 215 763-8100 | [www.philamuseum.org](http://www.philamuseum.org)