

PRESS RELEASE

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SEATTLE ART MUSEUM RECEIVES \$3.5 MILLION GRANT FROM THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION

Challenge grant to support development of the only museum center devoted to the comprehensive conservation and study of Asian paintings in western US



Left: Conservator Tomokatsu Kawazu and SAM's Chief Conservator Nicholas Dorman examine screens from SAM's collection. Right: Façade of the Seattle Asian Art Museum.

SEATTLE, WA – The Seattle Art Museum (SAM) announced today that it has received a \$3.5 million challenge grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to establish and endow the Asian Paintings Conservation Center at the Seattle Asian Art Museum. The only one of its kind in the western United States, the Center will be devoted to the conservation, mounting, and study of Asian paintings, serving SAM's collection as well as institutional and private collections in the region. As part of the grant, SAM must raise \$2.5 million in matching funds over four years to create an endowment supporting the Center's operation.

"We are honored by this generous grant from the Mellon Foundation, and grateful for their stewardship and guidance as we've developed plans for the Center," says Kimerly Rorschach, SAM's Illsley Ball Nordstrom Director and CEO. "This is a significant step forward for this exciting project."

"Establishing the Asian Paintings Conservation Center will fill a critical need for the field," says Nicholas Dorman, SAM's Chief Conservator. "This grant from the Mellon Foundation will help SAM and numerous institutions preserve these important works and the global cultural heritage they represent."

The Asian Art Museum is one of only four museums dedicated to Asian art in the United States. As one of SAM's strongest and most comprehensive collecting areas since its founding in 1933, the preservation of Asian art is a critical part of its mission. There are currently no institutional resources dedicated to the structural conservation of Asian paintings within museums in the western US, so the establishment of the Center will have a significant impact on SAM, the surrounding region, and the field of conservation.

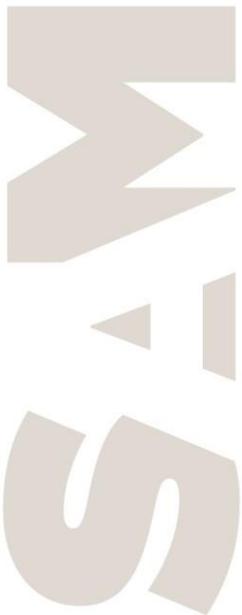
SAM undertook the planning process in conversation with the Mellon Foundation, independent consultants, and museum colleagues—including staff at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, Portland Art Museum, and Los Angeles County Museum of Art. These, and other museums and private collections, will have access to the Center and its specialized services. In

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addition, SAM curators, educators, and conservators will develop educational and scientific initiatives to further the study of these works of art and conservation practices. Finally, in another benefit for the region, SAM is one of five Pacific Northwest art institutions participating in a newly established program of scientific examination of works of art thanks to a concurrent Mellon-supported initiative at Portland State University.

The Center will be a highlight of the Asian Art Museum renovation and expansion, estimated to be completed in 2019. The major project planned for the 1933-era building addresses critical infrastructure issues and adds much-needed education and gallery space, in addition to creating this singular opportunity to establish a conservation center. A notable feature of the Center will be that visitors can observe the conservation facility through a viewing window, as well as displays featuring conservation projects and processes.

SAM and the Mellon Foundation have a long relationship; it was a permanent endowment in March 2000 that founded the museum's conservation department and established the position of Chief Conservator. The Mellon Foundation also offered a grant in 2011 in support of developing institutional strength, resources, and networks to show and care for SAM's Asian collections. With these funds, SAM was able to initiate a conversation with prospective partner institutions about the need for a regional conservation resource for Asian paintings, survey the condition of SAM's Japanese paintings collection, and collaborate with Asian artists and curators to develop two popular exhibitions of contemporary art from Japan and Korea.

Photo credits: Courtesy Seattle Art Museum; Benjamin Benschneider.

ABOUT SEATTLE ART MUSEUM

As the leading visual art institution in the Pacific Northwest, SAM draws on its global collections, powerful exhibitions, and dynamic programs to provide unique educational resources benefiting the Seattle region, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond. SAM was founded in 1933 with a focus on Asian art. By the late 1980s the museum had outgrown its original home, and in 1991 a new 155,000-square-foot downtown building, designed by Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, opened to the public. The 1933 building was renovated and reopened as the Asian Art Museum in 1994. SAM's desire to further serve its community was realized in 2007 with the opening of two stunning new facilities: the nine-acre Olympic Sculpture Park (designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architects)—a “museum without walls,” free and open to all—and the Allied Works Architecture designed 118,000-square-foot expansion of its main, downtown location, including 232,000 square feet of additional space built for future expansion. The Olympic Sculpture Park and SAM's downtown expansion celebrate their tenth anniversary in 2017.

From a strong foundation of Asian art to noteworthy collections of African and Oceanic art, Northwest Coast Native American art, European and American art, and modern and contemporary art, the strength of SAM's collection of approximately 25,000 objects lies in its diversity of media, cultures and time periods.

ABOUT THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION

Founded in 1969, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation endeavors to strengthen, promote, and, where necessary, defend the contributions of the humanities and the arts to human flourishing and to the well-being of diverse and democratic societies by supporting exemplary institutions of higher education and culture as they renew and provide access to an invaluable heritage of ambitious, path-breaking work.