

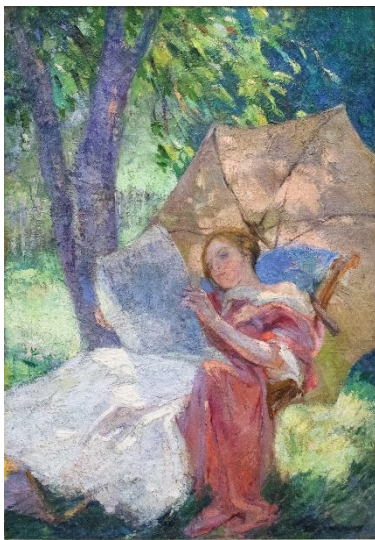


## Strategic Plan FY2022-2024

approved by the KMA Board of Trustees May 24, 2021

### Background/Context

The Knoxville Museum of Art can look back proudly in 2021 over three decades of institutional growth, development, and achievement. Since it opened in 1990, the KMA has strived to



move purposefully in the direction of being more accessible, more welcoming, more appealing, more inclusive, more relevant, more responsive, and more sustainable. That process took on a deeper and fuller dimension in 2008 when the museum recalibrated its mission and identity to focus on the art and artists of East Tennessee and their connections to the wider world, a strategic shift announced by the opening of the permanent exhibition *Higher Ground: A Century of the Visual Arts in East Tennessee*. Since then, the KMA has acquired by gift and purchase nearly 700 artworks by artists with East Tennessee connections, indicating that the focus on local and regional traditions resonates with the museum's stakeholders. *Higher Ground* was soon followed by the permanent exhibition *Currents: Recent Art from East Tennessee and Beyond* to bring the story up to the present and bring in a broader global context aimed at younger visitors. Also in 2008, the KMA also began

offering free admission, underscoring the core institutional value that we welcome and embrace everyone.

The May 2014 unveiling of Richard Jolley's *Cycle of Life* and the completion of the comprehensive restoration, refurbishment, and mechanical upgrading of the landmark Clayton Building and its surrounding gardens further bolstered and strengthened the KMA's sense of identity and purpose. *Cycle of Life* put the KMA on the map for glass as a vital sculptural medium, which has become an area of ongoing collecting strength and focus as expressed in the permanent exhibition *Facets of Modern and Contemporary Glass*. The steady growth in attendance, revenue, participation, and other indicators year over year for the past decade and a half suggests that we are, in fact, moving in the right direction, and should maintain that general course.



The February 2020 opening of the exhibition *Beauford Delaney and James Baldwin: Through the Unusual Door* represented yet another important milestone in the museum's journey. This



landmark exhibition documenting the friendship between Knoxville native Beauford Delaney and civil rights icon James Baldwin affirmed the KMA's commitment to the art and artists of East Tennessee and showcased the diversity and richness of the region's visual culture. It was possible only because of the breadth and depth of the KMA's holdings of Delaney works, the largest and arguably most important such collection of any public institution in the world. The building of this key collection in a short timeframe is itself the realization of a longstanding, ambitious strategic goal. *Through the Unusual Door* embodies the progress the KMA has made on many fronts, and has moved the museum forward in many important ways: it raised the KMA's national profile, made a significant contribution to Delaney scholarship, boosted the museum's institutional capacity (we are now much better positioned to carry out such ambitious projects, and have the credibility required to raise support from outside our local area), highlighted Delaney's international renown in his hometown, and broadcast to our community and to the world the global significance of East Tennessee's visual arts legacy.

Where to now? During the fall of 2019 we asked staff, trustees, and volunteers to imagine the best possible future for the museum, one that builds on, extends, and enhances the strengths of the museum's first three decades, and they responded with enthusiasm and thoughtful feedback, ultimately generating the strategic goals enumerated below. The advent in March 2020 of COVID-19 and its attendant disruptions considerably delayed progress on the plan, but also presented an opportunity to assess and prepare for a considerably altered set of circumstances. The trauma of the pandemic and shutdown had the unexpectedly beneficial effect of starkly revealing institutional strengths and weaknesses and, in some cases, greatly accelerating developments that were already underway (in the use of virtual programming, for example). What at first seemed an unmitigated catastrophe has left us a stronger, more responsive, and more resilient institution, one for which our community stakeholders have demonstrated their support and commitment. Another consequential development in 2020 stemmed from the civil unrest that erupted across the nation in response to the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. These events challenge the KMA, like every other cultural organization in America, to address the long-overdue national reckoning on race and equity that has ensued.



We have distilled many months of extended conversation and reflection down to four broad goals that provide a framework for guiding and evaluating the direction of the KMA for the next several years. The strategic goals are preceded by a streamlined and updated statement of the KMA's mission and values and followed by a list of tasks that will need to be carried out to realize each goal.

## **Mission**

The Knoxville Museum of Art celebrates East Tennessee's rich, diverse visual culture and its connections to the wider currents of world art.

## **Priorities/Values**

The KMA values diversity and inclusion in exhibitions, programs, staff, volunteers, visitors, and stakeholders; warmly welcomes and embraces all; operates ethically, responsibly, and transparently as a public trust; enhances the community's quality of life; and strives to meet people where they are, to encourage life-long learning and engagement.

## **Goals/Tasks**

**Goal #1: Educate and inspire people through the visual arts, with a focus on the art and artists of East Tennessee and their dialogue with the wider world.**

- Prioritize the acquisition, preservation, and display of works that fulfill our core mission and underscore the diversity of our region's visual culture.
- Strategically incorporate technology to engage visitors and enliven the museum experience.
- Leverage storytelling to connect art and audiences, and include diverse stories.
- Provide a rich mix of on-site, off-site, and virtual programming to engage diverse audiences of all ages throughout their lifetimes.
- Invest in the staff and other resources needed to maintain the highest standards for the care, documentation, and display of the collection.

### **Tasks**

1. *Redesign, upgrade, expand, and reinstall the museum's flagship permanent exhibitions and present them in a robust and engaging interactive interpretive apparatus.*
2. *Develop new interpretive strategies and new ways to use technology to enhance the visitor experience.*
3. *Publish the museum's first book-length catalogue of Higher Ground.*
4. *Establish a dedicated art purchase fund or endowment through fundraising and through deaccessioning objects that are not relevant to the KMA's mission.*
5. *Develop a comprehensive curriculum of studio and art history classes for all ages to make optimal use of new dedicated education spaces.*
6. *Increase the curatorial preparator position to permanent, full-time.*

**Goal #2: Engage all segments of our community and expand the museum's base of support by building genuine relationships of mutual need, passion, and interest.**

- Amplify efforts to connect with and engage minority and other underserved audiences, young professionals, and young families.

- Prioritize school programs that impact disadvantaged neighborhoods (Community Schools Program).
- Cultivate and recruit diverse volunteer leadership with the skills and passion to lead through change and growth.
- Ensure adequate staff and other resources to support the vital fundraising and cultivation activities of auxiliary groups (Guild, Art House, Collectors Circle) and the sustainability and growth of L'Amour du Vin, the KMA's largest single revenue source.
- Encourage the participation of board members in the fundraising and donor cultivation processes.
- Broaden the museum's base of support by identifying and engaging new stakeholders.
- Build and steward loyal donor relationships.
- Strategically incorporate technology to acquire a more detailed picture of who visits, who does not, and how to engage both groups.
- Foster a culture of collaboration and stay open to strategic partnerships with other community organizations.

### **Tasks**

1. *Empanel a working group of board and community representatives to develop policies and guidelines that support and increase diversity and inclusion in staff, governance, programming, and audiences.*
2. *Create an inclusive community advisory committee to bring diverse voices to the installation and interpretation of Higher Ground and other permanent exhibitions.*
3. *Prioritize acquisitions of works by artists representing diverse and/or underrepresented audiences.*
4. *Launch an endowment campaign to generate revenue for staff, program, and acquisition support.*
5. *Develop strategies for collecting more detailed demographic and other information from visitors and members to target marketing and development efforts, audience cultivation, and volunteer recruitment.*
6. *Create part-time position to support fundraising and cultivation activities of auxiliary groups (Guild, Art House, Collectors Circle).*
7. *Create auction coordinator position to support L'Amour du Vin.*
8. *Seek national funding for key museum projects (i.e. Higher Ground reinstallation).*
9. *Create and implement a comprehensive marketing and communications strategy designed to communicate the KMA's mission and story.*

### **Goal #3: Recognize and reward the paid and volunteer staff responsible for our continued success.**

- Compensate paid staff at all levels in ways that acknowledge their value and encourage longevity.
- Cultivate, motivate, and celebrate a strong volunteer corps.
- Plan effectively to ensure the smooth and positive transition of upper staff leadership.

### **Tasks**

1. *Review and adjust staff salary ranges biannually to ensure that compensation remains competitive.*

2. *Develop a plan and timetable to prepare for expected increase in Federal minimum wage to \$15/hour.*
3. *Develop a detailed leadership succession plan and establish an endowment to support the executive director position.*
4. *Migrate volunteer database from Excel into Donor Perfect; cross reference volunteers and members; add volunteer module to DP that restricts access to donor information.*
5. *Provide professional customer-service training for frontline paid and volunteer staff.*
6. *Provide additional opportunities for continued professional development and training for paid and volunteer staff.*

#### **Goal #4: Maximize the use and condition of KMA's indoor, outdoor, and virtual spaces, developing new venues to meet our evolving needs.**

- Explore building and operating upgrades that ensure ongoing safety and protection of people and collections.
- Maintain the optimal condition of the KMA facility and campus.
- Consider developing lifestyle destination additions (café, coffee shop, meet-up spaces).
- Continue to explore facility use and consider creative secondary location(s) to exhibit the collection and engage visitors.

#### **Tasks**

1. *Consider lifestyle destination additions to the facility (café, coffee shop, meet-up space).*
2. *Consider building retrofits and upgrades to prepare for possible future public health emergencies.*
3. *Acquire hardware (screens, bins, flat files) to help alleviate art storage shortage, better accommodate the current collection, and allow for future growth.*
4. *Revisit and update campus master plan to guide and direct future growth and expansion.*