

A. What activity (or activities) would the grant support?

The Richard F. Brush Art Gallery (Gallery) at St. Lawrence University (SLU) seeks a specialist to provide a Preservation Needs Assessment and Space Specifications Report in order to update previous assessment reports, comply with current best practices, and lay the groundwork for future facilities planning. With funding from the grant, Dyani Feige, Director of Preservation Services at the Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts (CCAHA), Philadelphia, PA, will come to campus for a one-day site visit to work with Gallery staff and a curatorial advisor, Caroline Welsh, former director and chief curator of the Adirondack Museum, Blue Mountain Lake, NY.

The Preservation Needs Assessment will encompass a general evaluation of the building, environment (temperature, relative humidity, pollution, and light), housekeeping, pest control, fire protection, security, and disaster preparedness; collection storage, handling, exhibition, and treatment; and preservation planning. The site visit will consist of a review of the site; an examination of the collections; and interviews with relevant staff, including those responsible for collection care, security, and the physical plant and building maintenance. The final Preservation Needs Assessment report will provide observations and recommendations to guide in the development of a comprehensive preservation plan for the Gallery's permanent collection. It will incorporate current findings and observations with previous assessment work undertaken in the 1980s and '90s by the Williamstown Regional Art Conservation Laboratory, MA, (now Williamstown Art Conservation Center or WACC).

A Space Specifications Report will provide specifications and recommendations for a renovated storage space that will comfortably and securely accommodate the institution's collections using long-term preservation standards. The report will outline appropriate room fixtures, furnishings, layout considerations, environmental parameters, and security issues. The report will also contain recommendations for preparing a collection for a move, selecting movers, packing materials, handling during the move, unpacking in a new space, and inventory control.

B. What are the content and size of the humanities collections that are the focus of the project?

Located in the Griffiths Arts Center, the Richard F. Brush Art Gallery oversees the care of and access to the University's permanent collection of over 7,000 art objects and cultural artifacts housed in an art storage room that was constructed in the mid-1980s as a wing in the same building. Art objects and artifacts are stored on/in 40 sliding metal racks, 107 wooden shelves, and 98 oversized print drawers. The storage room is nearing capacity in terms of storing artworks, which is why assessment and space specifications reports are important at this time. The space also functions as a place to document and catalogue artworks during the acquisition/registration process.

The collection supports inquiry in many humanities subjects: identity politics; belief systems; perceptions of the natural world; diversity and multiculturalism; history and politics; and creative expression. Works range in date from the Middle Ages to present day and in genres ranging from representational to Abstract Expressionism and beyond. The majority of the collection dates from the 20th century to present day and includes paintings (1,000+), prints (3,000+), photographs (1,100+), portfolios (100+ with 1,500 discreet works of art), artists' books (265), sculpture and ceramics (400+), and ethnographic objects (400+). Acquisitions are made strategically through selected gifts and purchases using designated endowment funds.

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Twentieth- and 21st-century American and European works on paper (drawings, prints, photographs, and portfolios) represent the strengths of the collection. Ethnographic collections spanning the last 100 years also form a “Global Studio” that includes Tibetan Buddhist scroll paintings and ritual objects, Haitian vodou flags and altarpieces, African and South American textiles, and regional Akwesasne Mohawk wampum belts and baskets. The collection also holds a significant number of Inuit prints and drawings, developed in part due to our proximity to Canada. Today, SLU’s permanent collection is one of the most significant arts and humanities collections in northern New York.

Highlights of the collection include paintings by Milton Avery, Frederic Remington, and Albert Bierstadt, as well as a 15th-century Spanish painting of the martyrdom of St. Lawrence; several significant 20th-century photographers (outlined below); and prints by Robert Rauschenberg, David Hockney, Shepard Fairey, Takashi Murakami, and the Guerrilla Girls. We are also in the process of developing collections documenting the U.S. civil rights era, as well as U.S. political posters spanning the last sixty years.

Three subcollections illustrate the humanities focus of the collection. The first is the University’s collection of photographs, initiated in the 1960s by then student Michael Hoffman, SLU ’64 and later longtime executive director of Aperture Foundation. Hoffman’s vision resulted in early acquisitions of photographs by Ansel Adams, Paul Caponigro, Robert Frank, Paul Strand, and others. As a student, Hoffman also arranged to bring Caponigro and Minor White to campus for studio workshops. In 2000, the Gallery published *Photographs at St. Lawrence University: A Critical Survey*, a 220-page catalogue raisonné featuring selected plates, curators’ and artists’ essays, and a complete checklist to date. Due in part to their inherent accessibility, photographs from the collection are used on a regular basis for rotating exhibitions, class visits, writing assignments, and scholarly research projects.

A series of 62 black-and-white and color photographs by American G.I.s and nurses from the Vietnam War era is used for similar scholarly and cultural purposes. In 1987, as part of SLU’s then annual Steinman Festival of the Arts, Vietnam War veteran Dick Amerault and photographer Boyd Nicholl organized what they called a “balanced view of the war era” in an exhibition of works by amateur and professional photographers working at home and abroad. In 1992, Amerault donated a group of these photographs to the University. In this unique collection, American soldiers and nurses document their experiences in Vietnam through images of war zones, city and village life, and soldiers and prisoners. In addition, the collection includes photographs taken in the U.S. of demonstrations, sit-ins, student protests, and peace rallies that address issues of feminism, religion, racism, and war. The multiple perspectives offered by a variety of photographers offers a window into this period of American history marked by intense social change and the growth of counterculture.

A third important subcollection features over 100 Canadian Inuit prints, drawings, and carvings from Cape Dorset, Pangnirtung, and Baker Lake. Distinguished artists in the collection include Kenojuak Ashevak, Kananginak Pootoogook, Pudlo Pudlat, Kavavaow Mannomee, and Ningeokuluk Teevee. A series of editorial cartoons by the late Alootook Ipellie is also featured. Inuit art holds a particular attraction for a university teaching collection as it offers many disciplines a starting point for discussions on nature and the environment, traditional stories, spirituality, social and political commentary, aesthetics, and design.

The three subcollections described above are featured as digital image collections on the Gallery's website at <https://www.stlawu.edu/gallery/digital-image-collections>, as is the *Roy Collection of West African Textiles*.

C. How are these humanities collections used?

The permanent collection supports teaching and learning for undergraduates in a liberal arts environment, as well as for school groups, scholars, and others. Faculty from the humanities (Art & Art History, Anthropology, English, Environmental Studies, First-Year Program, Global Studies, Government, History, Modern Languages & Literatures, Performance & Communication Art, and Religious Studies) make regular use of the collection. Activities include rotating exhibitions (organized by faculty, staff, students, and external curators), traveling exhibitions, object-based learning, writing assignments, oral presentations, independent research, lectures, digital humanities projects, and collaborations with regional, national, and international academic and cultural institutions. Since 2010, over 25 rotating exhibitions have been developed from the collection by SLU faculty in the departments and programs listed above. At least one major rotating exhibition draws from the permanent collection each academic year, and oftentimes, more than one.

Inuit prints from the collection formed the basis of an exhibition that premiered at the Canadian Embassy Art Gallery in Washington, DC, in 2010, and traveled to the College of Wooster Art Museum (OH) in 2012 and the Huntington Museum of Art (WV) in 2014. In 2017, several drawings by Inuit artist Alootook Ipellie were loaned to Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, for a retrospective exhibition that opened there and later traveled to SLU and to art galleries and museums in Nunavut, Ontario, and Manitoba (<https://www.stlawu.edu/content/alootook-ipellie-walking-both-sides-invisible-border>). SLU's collection of works by Ipellie is the largest institutional collection of its kind in North America, representing an important acquisition ahead of its time. The Gallery also receives ongoing requests from journal and book publishers to reproduce Inuit works from the collection.

The recent conservation of a 15th-century wooden panel painting of *St. Lawrence* from the collection was the prompt for research undertaken in Palos de la Frontera, Spain, to uncover the painting's origins. Based on Gallery files regarding provenance and on the conservator's findings in Spain, she posits that the painting probably came from the Franciscan monastery La Rabida, "where [Christopher] Columbus stayed and consulted with scholarly friars on navigation and astrology" and from where he and others sailed to the New World. She writes that if confirmed "from Palos, then the ... panel is witness to a rather key piece of history." We continue to do research on this painting, as it will be shown in an upcoming exhibition called *Belief Systems: Artworks and Cultural Artifacts from the Collection* in the spring of 2020.

D. What is the nature and mission of your institution?

The Richard F. Brush Art Gallery is an educational resource with a mission to enhance SLU's academic programs and the cultural life of the community at large through acquisition, preservation, interpretation, and exhibition of original works of art and cultural artifacts. In the 2010s, the Gallery and University Libraries were joined by Faculty Council to form a tripartite advisory committee made up of faculty, staff, and students who discuss policies and procedures.

E. Has your institution ever had a preservation or conservation assessment or consultation?

Yes, in 1985 and 1992. SLU was a member of WACC for several years during the 1980s and '90s, which provided collections and facilities assessment reports that remain somewhat relevant to this day, though the electronic security system and HVAC systems have been upgraded since those reports were written. WACC membership was dropped in the 2000s due to lack of annual funding for conservation services at that level. Other painting and paper conservators have been hired for projects on a case-by-case basis. See Appendix for more information about previous assessments and other grant-funded, collection-related activities.

F. What is the importance of this project to your institution?

In 2012, the Gallery initiated an ongoing, multi-year collections assessment by hiring Caroline Welsh, former director and chief curator at the Adirondack Museum, Blue Mountain Lake, NY, as an independent contractor. The collections assessment project is now in its seventh year with 14 campus visits per year. During this time period, we have focused on: a) examining and evaluating art objects and cultural artifacts on a curatorial, item-by-item basis; b) updating collection-related policies and protocols; c) refining collection goals; and d) strategic planning. The assessment has concluded that preservation, improved storage methodologies, and greater access to the collections are the primary needs to be addressed in order to enhance the University's academic goals. Upgrading the art storage facility is the essential next step toward meeting this goal.

According to Welsh, the art storage facility, which was constructed in 1978 out of concrete block and brick masonry, may have structural issues that do not meet current standards regarding environmental barriers. In particular, dust generated from the concrete walls has accumulated over time, causing a thin layer of grit to deposit on some surfaces. It is important to note that the nearly 40-year old Halon fire-suppression system in the art storage facility is currently "grandfathered in." However, during a recent inspection, the University's risk assessment team suggested that the Gallery should explore a more eco-friendly fire suppression system.

Additionally, preservation assessment and space specifications reports will inform the longer-term development of a new Arts Learning Commons that will incorporate "visible storage," in which students and others can examine original works of art for the purposes of academic and cultural inquiry. This initiative is part of SLU's comprehensive, multimillion-dollar "Campaign for Every Laurentian," which was announced in October 2018.

G. What are the names and qualifications of the consultant(s) and staff involved in the project?

Catherine Tedford is the project director. She has served as director of the Richard F. Brush Art Gallery at SLU since 1989, overseeing an ambitious schedule of rotating exhibitions and educational programs, as well as the University's permanent collection, digital image collections, and collections assessments. She has written successful grants on regional, national and international levels for Gallery exhibitions, assessments, and conservation, as well as for various University curriculum development projects. In 2011-12, she helped write a multi-year Mellon Digital Humanities grant in which SLU received \$700,000. She holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in printmaking; her primary research interest is in political stickers from around the world.

Dyani Feige, CCAHA Director of Preservation Services, joined the staff in 2010 as Preservation Specialist and was promoted to Director of Preservation Services in 2014. Before

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coming to CCAHA, she worked as Assistant Librarian at the Brooklyn Museum Library. Feige has a Master's of Science in Library and Information Science with a Certificate in Archives from Pratt Institute and interned at the New York Public Library Barbara Goldsmith Preservation Division. She has been recognized by the Society of American Archivists as a Digital Archives Specialist. As Director of Preservation Services, she is responsible for managing all preservation planning activities and education programs.

Caroline Welsh will serve as a project advisor. For the past seven and a half years, she has worked with Gallery staff on a collections assessment project that has entailed the physical examination and evaluation of over 4,000 art objects and artifacts in the permanent collection. She helped write a proposal for an Arts Learning Commons that is now included in the University's current comprehensive fundraising campaign. Welsh has curated several exhibitions for St. Lawrence drawing from the permanent collection. She is the director emerita of the Adirondack Museum and has over 40 years professional museum experience specializing in exhibition development and collections management. She has degrees in Art History and Museum Studies from Wellesley College and the Getty Leadership Institute.

Carole Mathey, project assistant, has worked as the assistant director of the Richard F. Brush Gallery since 1993. She holds a Master's degree in history from UCLA and a Bachelor's degree in history/French language and literature from San Diego State University. She works closely with St. Lawrence faculty and students in their interactions with the collection, ensuring its accessibility to the SLU community. She has assisted with the mounting of numerous exhibitions at the Gallery, has facilitated external loans of art objects from the collection, and the conservation of objects. She also maintains the Gallery's website and social media presence.

H. What is the work plan for the project?

The proposed work schedule for the preservation needs assessment will take a total of nine days between September 1, 2020, through March 1, 2021: one day for the on-site visit (Feige/Welsh); five days to write two final reports (Feige); and two days of travel (Feige/Welsh). A final day is also included for Welsh to respond to the final reports.

Month 1, Full day on-site visit to interview Gallery staff and to evaluate/discuss:

Existing interior and exterior building structure (perimeter concrete walls, ceiling, flooring, roofing, charged pipes in the storage facility); climate controls and climate conditions; storage furniture for adequacy and function (sliding racks, wooden shelving, metal cabinets); security system; Halon fire control system; disaster preparedness plan; pest control.

Month 2: Four days to write preservation needs assessment report to provide detailed recommendations and specifications to upgrade the art storage facility. One day to write space specifications report.

Month 3: Welsh to visit the Gallery to respond to the final reports and to assist Gallery staff with developing an implementation plan.