

Phoenix Art Museum

For Immediate Release

Phoenix Art Museum launches new funds for exhibitions, education, engagement and contemporary art thanks to \$2 million in gifts

Opatrny Family Foundation and Cohn Fund for Arts & Culture provide seed funding for institution's first exhibition and education excellence funds; Lenhardt family renews support for contemporary art acquisitions and programming

PHOENIX (October 12, 2023) – Today, Phoenix Art Museum (PhxArt) announces three major gifts totaling \$2 million in support of exhibitions, education and engagement programs, and contemporary art acquisitions, corresponding with the launch of dedicated funds to support the Museum's ongoing work in these areas. With a founding gift of \$1 million, The Opatrny Family Foundation creates the Phoenix Art Museum Exhibition Excellence Fund, providing PhxArt with its first-ever dedicated fund for exhibition development and curatorial scholarship. The Cohn Fund for Arts & Culture, a component fund of the Arizona Community Foundation, has provided a founding grant of \$750,000 to establish the Phoenix Art Museum Education and Engagement Excellence Fund, which enables the Museum to double its annual Arizona Artist Award prizes, among other initiatives. David and Dawn Lenhardt gave \$250,000 to renew the David and Dawn Lenhardt Contemporary Art Initiative, bringing their overall support of the initiative since its founding in 2017 to \$1 million. The initiative seeks to elevate PhxArt's contemporary art program through the ongoing acquisition of contemporary artworks, an annual artist lecture series, and the designation of a contemporary art gallery.

"On behalf of our Board of Trustees, our staff and volunteers, and our community, we extend our deepest gratitude to The Opatrny Family Foundation, the Cohn Fund for Arts & Culture, and the Lenhardt family for this incredible display of generosity and commitment to the mission of Phoenix Art Museum," said Jeremy Mikolajczak, the Museum's Sybil Harrington Director and CEO. "These gifts have allowed us to make great strides in our efforts to diversify our holdings, invite regionally based as well as globally recognized contemporary artists to the Museum, and bring outstanding exhibitions like *Amalia Mesa-Bains: Archaeology of Memory* and *Barbie®: A Cultural Icon* to Arizona. The gifts from The Opatrny Family Foundation and the Cohn Fund for Arts & Culture have enabled the Museum to create critical financial infrastructure to ensure long-term, sustainable support for our exhibitions, Museum-wide education and engagement programming, and our support of Arizona-based artists. Thank you to the Opatrny, Cohn, and Lenhardt families for truly making a difference in our ability to present impactful art experiences and serve as a vital platform for community engagement and exchange, now and for decades to come."

Phoenix Art Museum Exhibition Excellence Fund

Founded this year with a \$1 million gift to PhxArt's endowment from The Opatrny Family Foundation, the Phoenix Art Museum Exhibition Excellence Fund provides integral support to the Museum's development of impactful special-engagement exhibitions, large-format presentations, and enhanced collection reinstallations. Donors can contribute through either the *Exhibition Current Use Fund*, which provides support for exhibitions presented within a specific timeframe, or the *Exhibition Endowment Fund*, which incorporates restricted endowment gifts that support PhxArt's commitment to excellence in its ongoing exhibitions programming. Contributions to the latter fund are added to an original corpus established by gifts from The Opatrny Family Foundation and The Joan Cremin Exhibition Endowment, which was created in 2016.

"The formation of the Phoenix Art Museum Exhibition Excellence Fund marks a critical step in ensuring PhxArt can advance its efforts in mounting top-tier presentations of emerging and established artists and engaging audiences with their important work," remarked Donald Opatrny, Chair of the Museum's governing Board of Trustees. "We hope that, through the Fund's establishment, we can inspire new and past donors alike to contribute additional funding that will be invaluable to ensuring the continuity and quality of the Museum's outstanding exhibitions programming."

Phoenix Art Museum Education and Engagement Excellence Fund

With a grant of \$750,000 from the Cohn Fund for Arts & Culture at the Arizona Community Foundation, this year Phoenix Art Museum established the Phoenix Art Museum Education and Engagement Excellence Fund. This initial seed investment, distributed over multiple years, supports the naming of the Cohn Curator of Contemporary and Community Art Initiatives position, currently held by Christian Ramírez. It additionally provides five-year support for the Museum's ASU-LACMA Fellow, who takes part in a three-year master's degree program created by Arizona State University and LACMA that is designed to foster a more diverse generation of Museum curators, administrators, and thought leaders. Claudia López, bilingual communications specialist, is the Museum's inaugural PhxArt ASU-LACMA Fellow.

The grant also enables the Museum to deepen its support of Arizona-based artists. Effective with the 2024 cohort of Arizona Artist Award recipients, PhxArt will increase monetary support for the annual Scult Artist Award from \$10,000 to \$20,000 and the Lehmann Emerging Artists Awards from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per artist (two awarded). Additionally, the Museum will establish in 2024 the Sette/Cohn Artist Award, a new artist recognition opportunity that awards a \$5,000 prize to an emerging Arizona-based artist.

With support from the Cohn Fund for Arts & Culture, PhxArt will also initiate an annual educational partnership with a Valley-based organization that is designed to broaden engagement with the visual arts among underserved audiences.

Donors can contribute to the Phoenix Art Museum Education and Engagement Excellence Fund through either the *Education and Engagement Current Use Fund*, which provides support for programming and engagement initiatives presented within a specific timeframe, or the *Education and Engagement Endowment Fund*, which incorporates restricted endowment gifts that support PhxArt's commitment to excellence in education and engagement programming.

"We are pleased to support these initiatives to expand the Museum's 'reach' beyond its walls," said Mike Cohn, Valley philanthropist. "These programs will have a major impact on the Museum's ability to support others in our shared community, and we are excited to help position PhxArt as a museum of the future through this grant."

Lenhardt Contemporary Art Initiative

[Dawn and David Lenhardt have also renewed their Contemporary Art Initiative](#), made possible through a recent gift of \$250,000 from the Arizona-based family. The Lenhardt Contemporary Art Initiative seeks to deepen the Museum's commitment to contemporary art and elevate the institution's profile on a national scale through an annual artist lecture series, the designation of a contemporary art gallery, and the ongoing acquisition of contemporary artworks. Established in 2017, the initiative was expanded in 2021 to support the diversification of PhxArt's contemporary art collection through the acquisition of works by artists contributing to discourses on race, gender, and other socially relevant issues, including those by Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and women artists, among others. This recent gift ensures the continuation of two semiannual Lenhardt Lectures, featuring presentations by or conversations with emerging and internationally renowned contemporary artists. Since 2017, the Lenhardt family's generosity, now totaling more than \$1 million, has enabled the Museum to acquire artworks by Shara Hughes, Arcmanoro Niles, Derek Fordjour, Rashid Johnson, Otis Kwame Kye Quaicoe, and Lily Stockman, as well as present lectures by Jim Hodges, Shara Hughes, Daniel Joseph Martinez, Arcmanoro Niles, Teresita Fernández, Amalia Mesa-Bains, Derek Fordjour, Rashid Johnson, and Otis Kwame Kye Quaicoe in conversation with curator and cultural critic Larry Ossei-Mensah. The Fall 2023 Lenhardt Lecture will present Leonardo Drew.

"Dawn and I are thrilled to continue our support of the Lenhardt Contemporary Art Initiative at Phoenix Art Museum," said David Lenhardt, vice-chair of the Museum's Board of Trustees. "We remain dedicated to supporting the Museum in its mission to become an inclusive space of belonging, where everyone can see themselves reflected in the art on the walls or the programs in the galleries. It has been a pleasure to witness the initiative expand over the past five years in the pursuit of this goal, and we are excited to see what more the Museum can achieve."

About Phoenix Art Museum

Since 1959, Phoenix Art Museum has provided millions of guests with access to world-class art and experiences in an effort to ignite imaginations, create meaningful connections, and serve as a brave space for all people who wish to experience the transformative power of art. Located in Phoenix's Central Corridor, the Museum is a vibrant destination for the visual arts and the largest art museum in the southwestern United States. Each year, more than 300,000 guests engage with critically acclaimed national and international exhibitions and the Museum's collection of more than 19,000 works of American and Western American, Asian, European, Latin American, modern and contemporary art, and fashion design. The Museum also presents a comprehensive film program, live performances, and educational programs designed for visitors of all ages, along with vibrant photography exhibitions made possible through the Museum's landmark partnership with the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona. To learn more about Phoenix Art Museum, visit phxart.org, or call 602.257.1880.

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