

Romare Bearden Graduate Museum Fellowship Program—Outreach to Inreach—A Generation of Cultivating Tomorrow’s Leaders

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ABSTRACT: This article chronicles the twenty-six-year history of the Saint Louis Art Museum Romare Bearden Graduate Museum Fellowship, which was created to increase the number of professional staff from underrepresented backgrounds working in museums. It provides an overview of early supporters/founders of the program and details the trajectory of a generation of Bearden Fellows, most of whom are now professionally engaged in museums and arts-related careers. This case study also examines the benefits of staff diversity to the inclusive culture sought by museums as they cultivate new audiences and search for innovative strategies to maintain their relevance and community relationships. It calls upon museums to view diversity as an evolutionary conversation by examining the motivations and objectives that constitute the contemporary “diversity and inclusion” discourse.

KEY WORDS: African Americans, Bearden Fellowship, diversity, inclusion, museum staffing

Much of today’s discourse around diversity, inclusion, and equity within museums and cultural institutions focuses on expanding one-off projects and programs instead of examining organizational structures. As the demographics of America change, museums seek ways to cultivate new audiences and innovate new strategies to remain relevant. If museums indeed want to be welcoming institutions reflective of all Americans, systemic changes must occur through intentional commitments to increase staff diversity.

Museums that are serious about a commitment to diversity must be willing to change the status quo of how things have traditionally been done, even when those changes result in unexpected cultural shifts within the institution. It is time for museums to view diversity as an evolutionary conversation and examine the motivations, goals, and objectives that are part of the contemporary “diversity and inclusion” discourse. The goal of diversity programs should be to understand, accept, and value individuality and unique perspectives. Research shows that racial and gender diversity within an organization will lead to higher performance,

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innovation, and creativity.¹ Inclusion is a diversity of people actively participating and sharing in decision making, while equity creates a culture of access by identifying and removing barriers. From diversity comes inclusion and from inclusion comes equity. Given a supportive work environment, the forces of diversity, inclusion, and equity will transform an organization from within.²

In order to meet the goal of truly transformative inclusion, the Saint Louis Art Museum established the Romare Bearden Graduate Museum Fellowship (hereafter referred to as the Bearden Fellowship) more than a quarter of a century ago. The principal objective of the program is to cultivate future museum professionals from historically underrepresented groups or backgrounds by advancing the knowledge, skills, and networking capabilities that make careers in museums possible. Following an annual nationwide search, one successful candidate is awarded the year-long Bearden Fellowship.³ Fellows receive hands-on work experience in various museum functions, including curatorial work, public programming, interpretive materials, audience development, marketing, and fundraising. Although specific assignments are tailored to the needs of the Saint Louis Art Museum as well as the Bearden Fellow's skills and interests, all fellows receive individualized mentoring and training from senior museum staff that fosters confidence building critical to entry-level museum professionals.

History: From Conversation to Implementation

The Civil Rights Movement challenged the social, educational, and economic infrastructure of every city in America, and St. Louis was no exception. Yet in St. Louis, the full impact of the movement took time to become evident. Despite the historic 1954 decision of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, St. Louis schools remained segregated until ordered to desegregate in 1980.⁴ The years that followed

1 Katherine W. Phillips, "How Diversity Makes Us Smarter," *Scientific American*. October 01, 2014. Accessed November 17, 2017, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter/>. A study of more than 500 organizations has found that every 1% increase in gender and racial diversity is correlated with a 3% to 9% increase in sales revenue, respectively; "Diversity Linked to Increased Sales Revenue and Profits, More Customers." *ScienceDaily*, April 3, 2009. Accessed November 18, 2017, <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/03/090331091252.htm>.

2 Jennings and Jones-Rizzi wrote that "the ultimate goal of diverse hiring is not to bring in people of color in order for the organization to continue as usual but to bring in diverse colleagues so that the organization achieves systemic change organically and internally. Jennings, Gretchen, and Joanne Jones-Rizzi. "Museums, White Privilege, and Diversity: A Systemic Perspective." *Dimensions*: 71. Accessed November 17, 2017, https://www.nemanet.org/files/9615/0228/7672/Dimensions-Diversity-Special-Edition_JenningsJonesRizzi.pdf.

3 After that first year of the Bearden Fellowship, the application requirements shifted from undergraduate to graduate students and beginning professionals.

4 The U. S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that separate educational facilities for white and African American students were inherently unequal and that racial segregation in public schools violated the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution. *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), accessed November 17, 2017, <http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-supreme-court/347/483.html>.

marked a time of reflection about the realities of inclusion for social and cultural institutions, the Saint Louis Art Museum among them.

Founded in 1879, the St. Louis Museum and School of Fine Arts was the first museum west of the Mississippi and the first publicly funded art museum in the United States.⁵ Having outgrown its space at Washington University, the institution divided, with the School of Fine Arts remaining at the university and the museum relocating to Forest Park following the 1904 World's Fair. The phrase *Dedicated to Art and Free to All* has been inscribed on the exterior façade of the Saint Louis Art Museum since its inception. The Museum, however, was typical of most public museums in America at that time in that its permanent collection and programming primarily represented the interests of a white middle and upper class audience. The permanent collections, special exhibitions, core visitors, and professional staff did not much reflect African Americans, who by 1980 comprised nearly half of the city's population.⁶ To expand its audience and the relevance of its collection and public programs, specific initiatives were necessary to ensure that it was, in fact, welcoming to all.

The museum benefited from the support of prominent St. Louis philanthropists Daniel and Adelaide Schlafly. The Schlaflys spent their lives advocating for change by fighting social injustice, racial discrimination, and educational inequities.⁷

5 In 1907, under the provisions of the Missouri Legislature, the voters in the City of St. Louis established a publicly owned museum funded by property tax assessment. As part of the 1904 legacy, no general admission to the museum can be charged (although there can be a charge for temporary special exhibitions). In 1972 the Zoo Museum District was formed to represent the taxpayers not only in the oversight of financial affairs, but to also ensure that the subdistrict cultural institutions (Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri Botanical Garden, Missouri History Museum, Saint Louis Science Center, and Saint Louis Zoo) educate, enhance, and benefit all the residents of the St. Louis metropolitan area. For more, see: Saint Louis Art Museum, *Handbook of the Collection* (St. Louis: Saint Louis Art Museum, 2004), 8–10 and “Zoo Museum District,” Metropolitan Zoological Park and Museum District, accessed November 15, 2017, <http://www.mzdstl.org/index.html>.

6 In the early 1980s, the Saint Louis Art Museum staff totaled approximately 125 employees, of which there were no African American professional staff and less than five technical positions held by African Americans. By 1988 the Museum staff had grown to slightly over 200, and the Museum hired its first professional African American employee, Jacquelyn Lewis-Harris, as a school services educator. More information can be found in the Annual Reports of the Saint Louis Museum of Art, Saint Louis Art Museum Archives in St. Louis, MO.

7 Daniel and Adelaide Mahaffey Schlafly were both born into prominent St. Louis families and together used their influence to champion human and civil rights causes, especially opportunities for African Americans. They lent their support to a wide variety of St. Louis cultural and educational institutions including the Saint Louis Art Museum, the Missouri History Museum, St. Louis Internship Program, Harris Stowe College, the Urban League, the NAACP, and the St. Louis Catholic and Public Schools. Daniel worked for the family business, Mountain Valley Mineral Water Company, until it was sold in 1967. He continued to serve on numerous boards including the St. Louis Board of Education and the Saint Louis Art Museum. Adelaide helped to found the Missouri Commission on Human Rights, was a leader of the Missouri Association for Social Welfare and an active member of the Catholic Interracial Council and the Archdiocesan Human Rights Commission. Just as Adelaide and Daniel worked tirelessly for equal rights for everyone in St. Louis and beyond, Phyllis Schlafly (married to Daniel's brother John Fred) gained national attention for her conservative activism, including her opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment. For more, see: Michael D. Sorkin, “Adelaide Schlafly, Champion for Social Justice, dies at 97,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 2, 2012,



Saint Louis Art Museum (exterior). (Photo courtesy of the Saint Louis Museum of Art)

Working as a volunteer in local preschools, Adelaide Schlafly witnessed firsthand the effects of poverty and discrimination on African American children, and she became passionate about improving their lives. Her husband, Daniel, a member of the St. Louis Board of Education from 1953 to 1981, was equally passionate about advancing racial integration. Together the couple championed educational, social, and economic parity for African Americans in St. Louis and across the country. They had a particular interest in the arts. Frequent visitors and devoted financial supporters of the Saint Louis Art Museum, the Schlaflys sought to promote access to its art by generous donations to numerous museum educational programs and by contributing funds for the acquisition of works by African American artists. The couple also lamented the dearth of African American museum professionals at the Saint Louis Art Museum and other mainstream museums.

In early 1990, Daniel Schlafly met with Elizabeth Vallance, then director of education, to ask what a donation to the art museum could do to further the goals of racial desegregation. In April of the same year, several ideas were discussed, but the Schlaflys came to favor the creation of a new ongoing position at the museum. The idea evolved into a proposal for a twelve-month paid fellowship. The initial

http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/obituaries/adelaide-schlafly-champion-for-social-justice-dies-at/article_ac01536a-b335-54cf-9f2e-3a491e71d2ed.html; "Daniel L. Schlafly, Influential Civic Leader, dies at 84," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 17, 1997, <http://o-search.proquest.com.iii.slcl.org/docview/403693541?accountid=176>

vision for the fellow's participation entailed engagement with museum staff on diversity initiatives, receipt of practical on-the-ground experience resulting from daily work with museum staff, and participation in a developing network of emerging museum professionals of color. This early incarnation of the Bearden Fellowship program openly embraced the mission of creating a pool of professionals of color to compete for art museum positions nationally.

By June 1990, the Schlaflys had approved the initial proposal and provided funding for the fellowship for the first four years. James D. Burke, then museum director, suggested that the fellowship be named for the renowned African American artist Romare Bearden, who had died two years earlier. By September, Nanette Bearden, the artist's widow, and trustee of the Romare Bearden Foundation, had given permission to use the artist's name, and the Romare Bearden Museum Fellowship was established.⁸

Fortuitously, in 1991, the same year the Bearden Fellowship was officially inaugurated, the Lila Wallace–Reader's Digest Fund (now known as the Wallace Foundation) launched a significant museum initiative. The Wallace Museum Accessibility Initiative granted more than 32 million dollars to twenty-nine museums around the country, including the Saint Louis Art Museum. According to the Wallace Foundation, the goal of the initiative was to “assist museums to find ways to attract and serve a diverse mix of visitors through a range of innovative programs tied to their permanent collections.”⁹

With the goal of creating stronger links to broader communities, the Wallace grants sought to result not only in a more diverse visitor base, but also to increase diversity throughout museums from boards to staffs. Museums eagerly implemented outreach programs and created staff positions, but many museums fell short of sustaining their Wallace–funded programs. When the grant funding ended in 1999, some museums also ended their initiatives. The ultimate end result was “outreach” without “inreach”—those internal organizational changes necessary to support diversity, inclusion, and equity.

Making and keeping cultural institutions relevant and more accessible to all Americans is an ongoing conversation throughout the museum field. The mission of encyclopedic museums is to collect, exhibit, and preserve cultural histories from around the world and across time periods. If museums indeed want to be inclusive and if these institutions are valued by society, then the very mission of encyclopedic

8 For more, see the following letters and memos from the Education Department Administrative Files, Saint Louis Art Museum Archives, St. Louis, MO: “Ideas to expand desegregation programs,” Elizabeth Vallance to Daniel L. Schlafly, April 13, 1990; “Proposal framework fellowship,” Elizabeth Vallance to Dan and Adelaide Schlafly, May 22, 1990; “Approval to fund fellowship,” Daniel L. Schlafly to James D. Burke, May 24, 1990; “Request to name fellowship in honor of Romare Bearden,” James D. Burke to Daniel L. Schlafly, June 22, 1990; “Approval to use Bearden name,” Nanette Bearden (Gregory Perrin) to Elizabeth Vallance, September 6, 1990; “Announcement of Romare Bearden Museum Fellowship,” Elizabeth Vallance to Staff, September 27, 1990.

9 “Past Initiatives,” The Wallace Foundation, accessed November 15, 2017, <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/how-we-work/our-work/Pages/Past-Initiatives.aspx>.

museums must support diversity—diverse arts, programming, and staffing. Increasing the number of people of color working in professional positions in museums influences important operational decisions, from art on the walls to on-site programming to community collaborations.

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's *Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey* released in 2015 concluded that people of color are dramatically underrepresented in professional positions in American art museums.¹⁰ The Mellon report concludes:

Utilizing the categories employed by the 2000 U.S. Census, 72% of AAMD [Association of Art Museum Directors] staff is Non-Hispanic White, and 28% belongs to historically underrepresented minorities. As the American population is today 62% Non-Hispanic White, the overrepresentation of this group on museum staff may at first not seem as dramatic as one might have expected. [Further] analysis shows, however, that there is significant variation in demographic diversity across different types of museum employment. Non-Hispanic White staff continues to dominate the job categories most closely associated with the intellectual and educational mission of museums, including those of curators, conservators, educators, and leadership (from director and chief curator to head of education or conservation). In that subset of positions, 84% is Non-Hispanic White, 6% Asian, 4% Black, 3% Hispanic White, and 3% Two or More Races. With the exception of the Asian demographic category, which makes up 5% of the United States population today, these proportions do not come close to representing the diversity of the American population.

The low number of people of color in leadership or professional roles in museums is not news to those working in the field. In 2000, Lonnie Bunch, then president of the *Chicago Historical Society*, discussed the need for museums to be more inclusive in an article entitled, "Flies in the Buttermilk: Museums, Diversity, and the Will to Change."¹¹ In 2008, Simone Monique Barnes revisited the topic in a presentation at New England Museum Association (NEMA) Annual Conference, "Still Flies in the Buttermilk? The Struggle for Diversity in Museums."¹² The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) published a report in 2009 finding that nearly 80 percent of the

¹⁰ Katherine W Phillips, "How Diversity Makes Us Smarter," *Scientific American*, October 01, 2014, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter/>.

A study of more than 500 organizations has found that every 1% increase in gender and racial diversity is correlated with a 3% to 9% increase in sales revenue: "Diversity Linked to Increased Sales Revenue and Profits, More Customers," *ScienceDaily*, April 3, 2009, <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/03/090331091252.htm>.

¹¹ Lonnie G Bunch, "Flies in the Buttermilk: Museums, Diversity, & the Will to Change," *Museum News* 79, no. 4 (July/August 2000): 32–35.

¹² Simone Monique Barnes, "Still Flies in the Buttermilk? The Struggle for Diversity in Museums," presentation, New England Museum Association Annual Conference, Warwick, Rhode Island, November 12, 2008, <https://simonemoniquebarnes.wordpress.com/about/portfolio/talks/>.

museum workforce was non-Hispanic white.¹³ The quantitative data from the Mellon report, AAM, and additional observations from Bunch and Barnes all point to the same thing; it is time for museums to have the will to change and become more diverse, inclusive, and equitable. Discussions, initiatives, and intentions related to museum diversity and inclusion are long in the making—some fifty years—and we are still seeking the realization of this elusive goal for most encyclopedic museums in our contemporary moment. Where commitments toward museum diversity are apparent, as with the Bearden Fellowship program, sustained financial and staff institutional backing of these efforts deepen over time. Significant institutional support for cultivating museum professionals of color throughout the field is an essential ingredient for successful diversity and inclusion outcomes.

Fellowship: Objectives, Priorities, and Progress

The Romare Bearden Graduate Museum Fellowship was one of the first museum fellowships focused on increasing the number of professionals of color working in museums. The goals of today's Bearden Fellowship are remarkably similar to those of the program in 1990. Bearden Fellows spend their year actively supporting and leading high-priority museum initiatives. Each fellow starts the year learning about the Saint Louis Art Museum's comprehensive permanent collection, which is an invaluable resource in teaching in the galleries and conducting programs for all ages. Other projects are shaped by the museum's needs and the interests of the fellow, but typical responsibilities may include curating smaller exhibitions, assisting with the reinstallation of various collections, researching for scholarly publications, developing programs for visitors, and writing interpretive materials.

By the fourth year of the Bearden Fellowship's existence, it became apparent that hands-on practical experiences of conceiving, developing, and implementing projects were invaluable skill-building assignments for young people seeking museum careers. Coupled with the opportunity to work closely with colleagues on cross-departmental projects, presenting and networking at professional conferences, curating installations, and developing programs, the fellowship was instrumental in adding people of color to the museum pipeline of professionals.¹⁴

When the original funding for the fellowship ended, no Bearden Fellow was selected for the 1995 term and the future of the program was uncertain, but discussions continued between museum director James D. Burke and the Schlaflys. Fortunately, in the midst of this uncertainty, the Africana Committee, which was established in 1993 to increase the museum's engagement with the St. Louis African

¹³ "The Museum Workforce in the United States (2009)," American Association of Museums, accessed May 29, 2018, <https://genderandarchives.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/museum-workforce.pdf>.

¹⁴ Bearden Fellows submitted an evaluation of summary of their year-long experience: "Romare Bearden Fellowship Evaluation," Fellows to Elizabeth Vallance, 1992–1995, Education Department Administrative Files, Saint Louis Art Museum Archives, St. Louis, MO.

American community, prioritized the continuation and sustainment of the Bearden Fellowship.¹⁵ Within a few months, Daniel and Adelaide Schlafly decided to convert a previously established fund at the museum to a permanent endowment that would support the Bearden Fellowship program. The Saint Louis Art Museum supplemented that fund with resources from its general operating budget to fully fund the Bearden Fellowship. With funding in place, the museum selected the 1996 fellow with the goal of continuing to build a pool of talented minority museum professionals. As further testament to the museum's commitment to engage with underrepresented communities, a full-time position was created to develop long-term relationships and encourage museum visitation and program participation.

In June 1998, Renee Brummell Franklin joined the Saint Louis Art Museum staff as community outreach coordinator, one of two new positions created and funded by the Lila Wallace–Reader's Digest Fund. Franklin's responsibilities were both external and internal at all levels of the institution, specifically building bridges with African American communities. Over the next four years, the art museum education director continued to supervise the Bearden Fellows, and Franklin's relationship with the Bearden Fellows evolved from colleague to mentor, sponsor, and friend. It is not uncommon for museum professionals of color to gravitate to one another because of knowledge, comfort level, or sensibilities—a point discussed in Bunch's article, "Flies in the Buttermilk."¹⁶

In 2002 Franklin was promoted to director of community and school programs, reporting to newly hired education director Bill Appleton. At this point, the Bearden Fellows began reporting directly to Franklin. Now in its tenth year, the Bearden Fellowship appeared in some ways to be running on autopilot. However, after overseeing the program for a year, Franklin sought to make the experiences of Bearden Fellows increasingly more substantive for both participants and museum staff. The statement below reflects Franklin's thought process and recollection at that time:

I thought I could make the experiences of the Bearden Fellows even more fulfilling for the individuals, the museum, and the community. I recommended that the Museum take a year off and reexamine the goals and objectives of the Fellowship, the recruitment practices, and the project assignments. Because of the exceptional qualifications of the Bearden Fellows, over the years they had become reliable staffers entrenched in facilitating annual programs, gallery talks, and other educational programs which resulted in them having less time to work on in-depth projects tailored to their

¹⁵ In May 1993, three African Americans on the Saint Louis Art Museum Board formed an ad hoc group to formulate a mission statement and plan to develop an advisory committee to support the Museum in building a stronger relationship with the African American community. The mission statement, approved on July 13, 1993, was called *To enhance the understanding and appreciation of Africana cultural traditions* and can be found in the Director Files, Saint Louis Art Museum Archives, St. Louis, MO.

¹⁶ Bunch, "Flies in the Buttermilk," 32–35.

interests. I felt it was time to revisit the original intent of the Bearden Fellowship, which was to build a pool of minority museum professionals to work in all areas of the Museum.

During the dormant year 2003 and in the years that followed, Franklin implemented changes to the Bearden Fellowship program that resulted in national recognition for this now established diversity initiative among museum professionals, academic scholars, and public historians. These alternations to the program included the following:

- Arriving in July instead of September gives Bearden Fellows more time to settle into the city and the museum ahead of the hectic fall programming schedule.
- Advocating for additional funding to allow the Bearden Fellows to overlap by two-weeks, resulting in a smoother transition from outgoing to incoming Fellow.
- Relocating the workspace for the Bearden Fellow to be in closer proximity to support staff. This move allows for both enhanced academic learning and social support to aid the Bearden Fellow in navigating the internal culture of museums.
- Eliminating the practice of preassigned gallery talks for Bearden Fellows, allowing them to select topics that contribute to their specific interest and career development.
- Instituting a new procedure for Bearden Fellows to begin their fellowship by contacting alumni to introduce themselves and glean advice to make their year a successful one. By reaching out to alumni, the Bearden Fellows began to build a professional network across the country.
- Expanding Bearden Fellows' engagement in programs outside the museum to encourage regular collaboration with community organizations and encourage community awareness of the museum.

With Franklin's realignment of the program realized, serendipity struck and the Bearden Fellow selected for the 2004 year was a college art administration major: Ellene Stampley. Stampley was interested in a project in the museum director's office, which would prove pivotal for the future of the Bearden Fellowship. Though always supportive of the Bearden Fellowship, museum director Brent Benjamin experienced firsthand the exceptional talent of Stampley and as a result became further committed to the Bearden Fellowship program. The visibility of the Bearden Fellowship catapulted, while varied assignments and experiences became institutional priorities for the Fellows.

Maintaining the alumni network has always been a priority for Franklin and was the impetus for the Saint Louis Art Museum hosting the National Alliance of



Bearden Fellows visit with founder of Romare Bearden Graduate Museum Fellowship during 2005 National Alliance of African Art Support Group Conference at Saint Louis Art Museum Center seated: Adelaide Schlafly. First Row: Alona Wilson, Rehema Barber, Anne Collins Smith, Ellene Stampley. Second Row: Timothy Paul Brown, Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, Cherise Smith, Channon Dillard. (Photograph courtesy of Larry Clark)

African Art Support Group Conference (renamed National Alliance of African Art) in 2005. With coverage of travel expenses and a modest honorarium, many former Bearden Fellows attended the conference and led discussions during the three-day gathering. A highlight of the conference was the opportunity for Bearden Fellows to visit with Adelaide Schlafly, a founder of the program. To commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the fellowship and in collaboration with the National Alliance of African Art Support Group, an even more significant conference attracting more than 150 artists, collectors, and museum professionals from across the country was held at the museum in 2012. During the commemoration, the Bearden Fellows each led a discussion or presented on a panel showcasing their broad-based knowledge. In addition to conference reunions, Bearden Fellows frequently return to the Saint Louis Art Museum to present public lectures.

Most recently, the Romare Bearden Foundation and the Saint Louis Art Museum reestablished their relationship to design a residency program whereby the Bearden Fellow spends two weeks working at the foundation in New York City. The residency is intended to broaden the work experience of Bearden Fellows by exposing them to varied working environments and organizational structures of a public nonprofit museum versus a private arts foundation and the role they can play in fostering community relationships.

Sustainability: Lessons Learned

Providing a nurturing and supportive university environment is vital in developing a pipeline from which museums can recruit talented applicants. It is advantageous to broaden the list of majors and disciplines from which applicants are recruited. Though art history continues to be the primary area of study of Bearden Fellowship applicants, in recent years the museum has identified successful candidates with degrees in education, studio art, business management, museum studies, and ethnic studies. Students' areas of interest have also expanded beyond the traditional curatorial and educational tracks to positions in development, arts management, and conservation. Every museum has a rich array of professionals engaged in duties that align with the fuller complement of college majors inclusive of the humanities, sciences, administration, and other fields. The cultivation of university contacts aware of these possibilities within the museum for Bearden Fellows has broadened the pool of potential applicants to the program.

The program began with the wish of private donors, the Schlaflys, to specifically create opportunities for “minorities,” particularly African Americans—the largest minority group in St. Louis. As the program evolved and American demographics changed, the word minority was dropped from the title of the Bearden Fellowship and qualified candidates now are drawn from “historically underrepresented backgrounds” to ensure that the original goals and objectives of the fellowship continued to be achieved.¹⁷ The museum is fortunate to have institutional and community support to provide resources for the twelve month paid fellowship. With the understanding that museums are of varying size and resources, other museums could offer what they can, whether that is multiple years, one year, a semester, or a summer paid fellowship.

In 2017, the Saint Louis Art Museum was awarded a three-year grant from the Ford Foundation and Walton Family Foundation in recognition of the Bearden Fellowship's success in advancing diversity across all museum sectors. The Diversifying Art Museum Leadership Initiative grant will allow the Saint Louis Art Museum to measure the impact of the museum's longstanding Romare Bearden Graduate Museum Fellowship program. Through an extensive multifaceted review of the fellowship, this evaluation will assess the program's strengths and identify opportunities to increase its effectiveness. The evaluation process will include

¹⁷ The Saint Louis Art Museum never defined the term “racial minority” but has tried to stay true to the Schafly family's original intent to increase the number of people of color prepared to work in museums. In 1993, the Getty Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the J. Paul Getty Trust, established The Multicultural Undergraduate Internship program, also intended to create opportunities for underrepresented cultures to get experience working in the arts. In 2016, Samantha Niemann, a student at Southern Utah University of German, Irish and Italian descent, filed a racial discrimination lawsuit in Los Angeles Superior Court claiming she had been deterred from applying for The Multicultural Undergraduate Internship program. For more on that case, see: Carolina A. Miranda, “Why a white woman's discrimination lawsuit against the Getty is no joke and could set a precedent,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 10, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/miranda/la-et-cam-getty-foundation-lawsuit-samantha-niemann-20160506-snap-story.html>.

a review of the recruitment, selection, and training processes, as well as interviews with Bearden alumni and institutions for which the fellows have worked. A primary outcome of this evaluation will be the production of a program guide for other museums to use in developing and implementing a fellowship program based on the Bearden Fellowship model.

Impact: St. Louis Community and Beyond

The Schlaflys and the Saint Louis Art Museum were innovative, forward thinking, and intentional in trying to level the playing field through the fellowship. Since 1991, twenty-four Bearden Fellows have completed the program. At latest count, ninety-six percent of Bearden Fellows have gone on to work in the arts immediately following their fellowship experience.¹⁸ Twenty-six years later, eighty-three percent of the Bearden Fellows continue to work in the arts and are engaging with communities nationally and internationally.¹⁹

Carefully targeted staffing initiatives are critical to creating relevant and welcoming institutions. Through a multitude of experiences, Bearden Fellows learn how to include community voices from all backgrounds. The current professional engagement experiences by Bearden Fellows speak to the realization of a vision of diversity and inclusion initiated a generation ago. The Bearden Fellowship continues to prepare professionals for positions in museums around the country, but fellows also benefit the museum with their creative energy and intellectual vitality as talented professionals of color. The Saint Louis Art Museum has hired three Bearden alumni over the years—two of whom were employed at the museum at the start of 2018. Sherri Williams (Bearden Fellow in 2009) returned to the museum to oversee family programs. After seven years of innovative youth programming, she is now meeting the challenges of programming gallery talks, lectures, films, and performances for adult audiences. Jennifer Doyle (Bearden Fellow in 2005) returned as a curatorial special project researcher and now leads the school services department. She reaches out to school districts to assure that all communities, regardless of resources, have equal access to the arts. Kara Anderson (Bearden Fellow in 1996) joined the Youth and Family Department as a museum educator until her departure in 1998.

Beyond the Saint Louis Art Museum, Bearden Fellows have also joined staffs at cultural institutions in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Vanity Gee (Bearden Fellow in 2012) became director of community programs and Grand Center operations at Craft Alliance, a nonprofit art center that offers contemporary craft exhibitions, classes, and a variety of arts programs. Rochelle Caruthers (Bearden

¹⁸ Following the Fellowship, Tracey Whye (1991) continued her arts affiliations through volunteering.

¹⁹ Kara Lyn Anderson (1996) worked five years as collections and program manager at the Spelman Museum of Fine Art in Atlanta, GA before moving abroad. Channon Dillard (1997) was museum educator for children and families at the Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk, VA until 2012. Katrina Hallowell (2006) worked as project manager coordinating import and export art shipments at Dietl International until 2013.



Bearden Fellows convene for twentieth-anniversary celebration of Romare Bearden Graduate Museum Fellowship, July 2012. Left to right: Rehema Barber, Alona Wilson, Kara Anderson, Nenette Luarca-Shoaf, Jennifer Doyle, Alisa Swindell, Michelle Mosley, Sherri Williams, Vanity Gee, Rochelle Caruthers, Jennifer McGill Thompson, Ellene Stampley-Whiley, Katrina Hallowell, Anne Collins Smith. (Photograph courtesy of Ingrum Studios)

Fellow in 2011) joined the Missouri History Museum as associate historian leading a digitization project focused on Missouri's role in World War I before moving to the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum at Washington University, St. Louis in 2015. Caruthers is currently the academic programs coordinator responsible for planning events to engage faculty, staff, and students in collaboration with university departments. Her primary goal is to ensure that the museum offers diverse, inclusive, cross-curricula programs that speak to the entire university community. Since her arrival she has exceeded expectations and received recognition from the university for the overwhelming success she has had in increasing the number of students who tour the museum. Katrina Hallowell (Bearden Fellow in 2006) assumed the role of public programs coordinator at the Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis, developing programs that explored tangential relationships between the institution's exhibitions and the St. Louis community.

Other St. Louis metropolitan area arts and cultural institutions have also taken inspiration from the Bearden Fellowship to offer paid arts training programs. Several internship programs have been established, all with the goal of transitioning people of color into the pipeline for professional careers in the arts. Named after



Bearden Fellow Rochelle Caruthers leads art history training for museum docents, 2012. (Photograph courtesy of the Saint Louis Museum of Art. Photograph by S. Carmody Photography)

the iconic dancer, choreographer, and social justice advocate, the Katherine Dunham Internship is a sixteen-week, privately funded fellowship created in 2009 by Sara and Jack Burke to support African American men and women seeking careers in arts administration. Initially a collaboration with the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis, the annual fellowship relocated to the Arts & Education Council of St. Louis in 2017. With similar goals of inclusion and in close consultation with the Saint Louis Art Museum, the Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis launched a fellowship in June 2017 funded by a grant from the PNC Foundation. The PNC Arts Alive Diversity Fellowship is a post-undergraduate, nine-month, full-time, paid position, designed to provide practical, work-related skills in arts organizations as gateways to contemporary art and museum careers for individuals historically underrepresented.

Perhaps one of the boldest St. Louis arts career awareness initiatives is underway at the Regional Arts Commission. Committed to addressing diversity in the workforce of local arts and cultural organizations, the Arts Commission is currently developing a new program to engage a minimum of ten undergraduate students in a ten-week paid summer internship program for individuals who are underrepresented in the arts field, particularly young people of color. The program will provide a stipend, opportunities to attend cultural events, mentorship and networking with colleagues, and well-rounded experiences in all aspects of nonprofit arts administration. The interns will be placed at carefully selected cultural institutions throughout the St. Louis region, giving participants an opportunity to experience a high-quality training program that will bolster their skills and knowledge.



Bearden Fellow Timothy Paul Brown speaks in the galleries. (Photograph courtesy of David Ulmer; © 2007 David Ulmer)

The Romare Bearden Graduate Museum Fellowship has been successful in adding to the diversity of arts professionals working across the United States as well as internationally. Kimberly Jacobs (Bearden Fellow in 2013), assistant curator in the Centre for Performative Practice at the newly opened Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa in Capetown, South Africa, is witnessing firsthand the nuances of curating in a culturally specific institution. Jacobs is working closely with artists of African descent building professional relationships and interpretative practices that will forever influence her curatorial perspective in America and abroad. Michelle Shelly-Moseley (Bearden Fellow in 2010) pursued the path of arts administration and is the senior development officer at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida where she is responsible for the museum's annual fund and sponsorship program, as well as annual and major gifts. Moseley serves on the museum's community engagement task force facilitating the implementation of new programs and strategies to grow the Ringling Museum's collection of art by African American artists, as well as cultivating meaningful long-term relationships with the African American community organizations. Ellene Stampley-Whiley (Bearden Fellow in 2004) combined her talent and passion for

the arts to form *E. Joi Studio*. As an entrepreneur, Stampley-Whiley is using her deep knowledge of culture and art history combined with her community development skills to forge successes as an artist, art educator, and program developer. She understands that developing new audiences is a journey with people, not for people, and the process begins where the people are. One of the guiding principles behind her leadership in the arts is facilitating African Americans in “telling our story” through creativity, enrichment, and inspiration.

When museum staffing better reflects the changing demographics of America, so too will the art collections, programming, membership, volunteers, and stakeholders. A diverse staff contributes to the welcoming and inclusive culture that museums desire as they cultivate new audiences, search for ways to remain relevant to future generations, and increase revenue. The Bearden Fellowship was initiated to advance the hiring and training of individuals from historically underrepresented backgrounds for museum work. Twenty-six years later, alumni of the Bearden Fellowship work in museums, galleries, nonprofit arts organizations, and universities throughout the world. Bearden Fellows, without exception, credit the fellowship as being seminal in refining their career goals, perfecting their skills, and most importantly enabling them to envision themselves as museum professionals. Each Bearden Fellow working at an institution is another opportunity for a community’s story to be shared, validated, and reinforced.

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Renee Franklin, Director of Audience Development at the Saint Louis Art Museum, leads the Museum’s efforts to initiate and cultivate sustainable relationships with diverse audiences to encourage participation in the Museum and beyond its walls. For nearly twenty years, in various Museum positions, she has developed many signature initiatives aimed at expanding Museum audiences and challenging institutional inequities, including managing the Romare Bearden Graduate Museum Fellowship. Renee holds an MBA and a Master’s in Education from Webster University and BS in marketing and business administration from Towson University.

Romare Bearden Graduate Museum Fellowship

Fellowship Year	Fellow Name	Current Museum Profession	Current Institution	Education following the Fellowship
1992	Cherise Smith	Professor Art History and African and African American Diaspora Studies	University of Texas, Austin, TX	Completed a Ph.D., Stanford University

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Fellowship Year	Fellow Name	Current Museum Profession	Current Institution	Education following the Fellowship
1993	Gwendolyn Dubois Shaw	Associate Professor and Undergraduate Chair of the Department of the History of Art	University of Pennsylvania, PA	Completed a Ph.D., Stanford University
1994	Alona Wilson	Director of Collections and Exhibitions	Museum of African American History, Boston & Nantucket, MA	Completed her Ph.D., Boston University
1995	No Fellow Selected			
1996	Kara Lyn Anderson*			
1997	Channon Dillard*			
1998	Jennifer McGill Thompson	Artist and Art Educator	Prince George's County, MD	
1999	Anne Collins Smith	Curator of Collections	Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Atlanta, GA	
2000	Nenette Luarca-Shoaf	Associate Curator of Adult Learning and Interpretation	Art Institute of Chicago, IL	Completed a Ph.D., University of Delaware
2001	Rehema Barber	Director and Chief Curator	Table Arts Center, Eastern Illinois University, IL	
2002	Timothy Paul Brown	Director of Education	Taft Museum of Art, Cincinnati, OH	
2003	No Fellow Selected			
2004	Ellene Stampley-Whiley	Founded of E. Joi Studio and Resident Artist and Cultural Planner	New Orleans, LA	
2005	Jennifer Doyle	Educator and Manager of Teacher and Student Learning	Saint Louis Art Museum	

(continued)

Fellowship Year	Fellow Name	Current Museum Profession	Current Institution	Education following the Fellowship
2006	Katrina Hallowell*			
2007	Alisa Swindell			Ph.D. candidate in Art History at University of Illinois, Chicago, IL
2008	Danielle Burns Wilson	Curator and Manager	African American Library at the Gregory School, Houston, TX	
2009	Sherri Williams	Educator and Manger of Adult Learning	Saint Louis Art Museum	
2010	Michelle Moseley	Senior Development Officer	John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, FL	
2011	Rochelle Caruthers	University Academic Programs Coordinator	Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, Washington University, St. Louis, MO	
2012	Vanity Gee	Director of Production	Youth Speaks, New York City, NY	
2013	Kimberly Jacobs	Assistant Curator	Center for Performative Practice, Zeitz Museum of Contemporary of Art Africa, Cape Town, South African	Candidate for Ph. D. at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
2014	Jordia Benjamin	Mirken Coordinator of Academic and Public Programs	Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, ME	
2015	Courtney Baxter	Education Manager	Peoria Play House Children's Museum, Peoria, IL	
2016	Yvonne Osei	Independent Curator and Artist	Center of Creative Arts, St. Louis, MO	
2017	Jade Powers	Romare Bearden Graduate Fellow	Saint Louis Art Museum, St Louis, MO	