


# Gallery Guide Guide



YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY

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The Hiring Process

Community

The First Year

Returning Gallery Guides



# Gallery Guide Guide



Sydney Skelton Simon  
and  
Molleen Theodore

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# Director's Foreword

**THE YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY** is committed to activating the power of art to inspire and create a more inclusive world. As a museum located on the campus of one of the world's great universities, we play an important role in fostering Yale's mission of excellence in teaching and learning, all with an emphasis on interdisciplinary work and cultural preservation. We share our knowledge and mentor students in all areas of the visual arts to support their intellectual journeys. We also engage with people and museums across the globe to bring together campus and myriad other communities in creative and enriching ways. The undergraduate Gallery Guide program, begun a quarter century ago and today truly a center of the life of the Gallery, exemplifies this potential by equipping a new generation of Yale students to become thoughtful guides and leaders themselves in a world of growing complexity.

The program has been shaped by many staff members and further informed by our Yale colleagues and students over the years. Each has built on the successes of the last to create a highly collaborative endeavor, requiring the time, expertise, and support of individuals from across the museum. The Gallery Guide program is directed by the Education Department. For the past several years, the Guides were expertly led by Sydney Skelton Simon, B.A. 2007, and Molleen Theodore, who both came to this work with extensive experience and professional training in art history and museum education. Sydney, who was a Gallery Guide as a Yale undergraduate, oversees university-level curricular engagement as the Bradley Associate Curator of Academic Affairs. She thinks deeply about how the Gallery can prepare students from a wide range of disciplines and

backgrounds to feel welcome and excited to learn in the museum. Molleen, who began her tenure at Yale as the Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman Fellow in the Education Department and is now the Jane and Gerald Katcher Curator of Programs, works closely with students to develop public programming in which they might serve variously as advisers, speakers, performers, or audience members.

The Gallery Guide program has become a standout achievement of the Gallery, both on campus and far beyond. It offers a superb model for how to engage students at academic and civic cultural institutions alike. Furthermore, the program helps undergraduates develop their own interests and find—as well as communicate to others—the power of the visual arts. Initiatives like this one ensure the future and continued relevance of museums by nurturing students, at a formative period in their lives, to appreciate the potential of collections to inform, inspire, and challenge. This publication, the *Gallery Guide Guide*, generously supported by the John Walsh Lecture and Education Fund, documents in actionable detail the elements of training and mentorship that come together in this program and describes the framework that supports its continued growth and development over time. Our hope is that our museum colleagues and others who teach with original works of art will find inspiration in this book and will use it as a starting point for their own programs.

**Stephanie Wiles**

The Henry J. Heinz II Director  
Yale University Art Gallery



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# Welcome to the *Gallery Guide Guide!*

Launched in 1998, the Gallery Guide program at the Yale University Art Gallery has long been a model for student engagement, collaborative learning, and museum education. Hundreds of students have been a part of it over the past quarter century, and it has grown and morphed substantially over the years. Our focus in this guide is on documenting the program after three years of jointly leading it. We aim to give a full sense of the program's core values, as well as the nuts and bolts of how we reach, hire, train, mentor, and support the undergraduate Gallery Guides. At the end of this guide, you will find a sample training syllabus that shows how we structure the academic year (see p. 66). We hope this will serve as a resource for colleagues in other museums who are looking to start or refine student-guide programs or who are seeking inspiration for engagement strategies more generally.



## A Note on Callouts

Throughout the *Gallery Guide Guide*, you will come across text underlined with dots, signaling a connection to a nearby callout box. These callouts are brief texts in which various authors elaborate on specific elements of training and other important aspects of the program from their own perspectives. Together, they highlight the multiplicity of voices and points of view that are a hallmark of the Gallery Guide program.

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## What Is the Gallery Guide Program?

The Gallery Guide program is a paid opportunity for Yale undergraduates to develop and lead interactive, close-looking tours of the museum for the visiting public. Students participate in a training program in which they learn about the collection and how to lead inclusive, interdisciplinary conversations around works of art.

Each year, a group of twelve new Gallery Guides meets with museum staff twice per week during the fall and spring semesters and explores the collection from multiple perspectives. Over the course of the year, each of the trainees develops a unique, thematic tour focused on four objects of their choosing, drawn from different collection areas and representing a diversity of media, time periods, and geographies. They research and write about each of their selected objects, and they learn and practice the skills necessary to facilitate conversations with them. In April each trainee presents a Highlights Tour to an audience of Gallery staff for the purposes of being evaluated and receiving feedback before debuting their tours to the public. The in-depth training requires a time commitment similar to that of an academic course each semester.

Following the completion of the first year of training, returning Guides begin to offer their Highlights Tours to the public. Highlights Tours are part of the Gallery's slate of public programs, all of which are free of charge. Guides also participate in continued weekly training sessions to develop new approaches to presenting the collection, and they serve as mentors to successive cohorts of Gallery Guide trainees.

We compensate Guides for their work at the museum. This includes time spent not only on leading tours but also on training, preparing for training, and conducting research for their tours. Gallery Guides submit weekly time cards through the Yale Student Employment website.

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## Who Are the Gallery Guides?

We hire Yale first-years, sophomores, and juniors into the program, and they typically remain Gallery Guides until they graduate. Students of all backgrounds and majors are welcome. Yale undergraduates are well suited to do this work; they are curious and motivated as well as immersed in a liberal-arts education, and they are active participants in a variety of communities.

We also hire one or two experienced Guides each year as the Betsy and Frank H. Goodyear, Jr., B.A. 1966, Interns in the Education Department; these students serve as Head Guides. The Head Guides are vital partners with Gallery staff in all aspects of the training program, as detailed throughout this guide.



## Benefits of the Program

In addition to becoming critical and observant museumgoers, Gallery Guides develop transferable skills in public speaking, visual literacy, research, creative thinking, and community building. These skills filter back into their academic work and into their personal and future professional lives. Engaging with one another as peers, the Guides become members of a cohort that collapses divisions between different areas of study, residential colleges (dorms), and individual backgrounds. The Gallery Guide program and the Gallery become integral parts of the students' college and New Haven experience, and they take these skills out into the world after graduation.

The museum is a beneficiary as well. In delivering Highlights Tours, the Guides help us meet crucial goals for our public programming, namely to be inclusive of our multiple audiences and to make art broadly accessible. Museum staff also learn a lot from the Guides' insights and perspectives. Moreover, the Guides are trained to adopt a growth mindset at the Gallery and as college students: asking questions, offering and receiving feedback, and engaging in reflection are essential to their practice and thus provide a model for museum colleagues to consider in their own work.



## Our Core Values

We recognize that expertise is a process and comes in many forms. We use the term “Highlights Tour” advisedly, expanding the idea of what constitutes a museum highlight and who is assigned the authority to make such a designation. As part of our commitment to inclusivity, and in order to set expectations for visitors, all Guides introduce their tours by sharing a set of Community Agreements first developed in 2021. They are:

1. Your participation is welcome.
2. Create space for different perspectives.
3. Looking together, we can learn a lot.

In addition to framing individual tours, these agreements direct our approach to the program as a whole.

The Gallery Guide program exemplifies the power of art to bring people together. We see this in the context of training, where the Guides take risks, build trust, support one another, and workshop ideas. And we see this in their engagement with the public, where the Guides merge their roles as students and New Haven residents to break down barriers between the University and our local community. In all aspects of their work, Guides practice talking about art, sharing their perspectives, listening, and facilitating conversation. The engagement philosophy of the program demonstrates the potential of collaborative learning, in which groups of people listen to one another, exchange ideas, and ultimately build a body of knowledge together.

While the basic parameters of the program have remained relatively stable—centering on training students to deliver inquiry-based tours of the collection—our path toward meeting these expectations has shifted over time. The training syllabus, for example, is a living document, reflective of students’ needs and feedback, the collection on view, and the state of the world. The staff leaders of the program devote focused time in the summer to reimagining the approach and hold space throughout the year for reflection and feedback. This is important and rewarding work; it is also time-consuming work, a reminder of the need for adequate staffing to advance such an ambitious project.

The Gallery Guide program offers a model for student engagement that could be replicated in other areas of the museum, across Yale University, and elsewhere. Indeed, the program is a model for engagement, period.



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# A Timeline of the Program

The Gallery Guide program at the Yale University Art Gallery dates to 1998. Though it has stayed true to several core values over its more than twenty-five-year history, it has been indelibly stamped by the staff charged with its stewardship and by the growth and development of the museum itself.



2000

**1998**

The Gallery Guide program is proposed and launched by Ellen M. Alvord, then Assistant Curator of Education, and an undergraduate History of Art major, Megan Luke, B.A. 1999. It is loosely modeled on a similar program at the Smith College Museum of Art, in Northampton, Massachusetts, where Alvord previously worked. The Guides deliver tours called "Angles on Art."

"The founding and initial development of the Gallery Guide program in the late nineties dovetailed with a number of new initiatives focusing on the Yale University Art Gallery's educational mission. From the beginning, what was new and exciting about the student-guide program was the vibrant energy that Yale undergraduates brought into the gallery spaces. Representing an incredibly diverse array of disciplines and interests, the students created thematic tours of their own choosing, in contrast to the scripted highlights tours common in most other museums at the time."

*Ellen M. Alvord, Associate Director for Engagement and Weatherbie Curator of Academic Programs, Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, South Hadley, Mass.*

**1998–2003**

The program is overseen by Ellen M. Alvord. Training sessions are led by Gallery curators and staff as well as History of Art faculty. Notably, Jules David Prown, the Paul Mellon Professor Emeritus, would introduce all trainees to the "Prownian method," his systematic approach to close looking.<sup>1</sup>

2005

**Dec. 2006**

The Gallery's modernist 1953 Louis Kahn building reopens after a major restoration, featuring the first of many student-curated exhibitions, which represent a commitment to integrating students into the workings of the museum.

**2007**

Gallery Guide trainees begin holding regular workshops with John Walsh, B.A. 1961, Director Emeritus of the J. Paul Getty Museum, in Los Angeles, focused on careful and sustained looking.

"Looking back at my tenure overseeing the program, I am particularly proud to have introduced the evaluation tour as the final step of training. I gathered a diverse group of people to the tour using a method adapted from Liz Lerman's four-step structure for giving and receiving feedback. Besides revealing opportunities for improving their tours, the evaluation also fostered a sense of community through a shared experience of vulnerability. Guides were empowered to show up at their best in order to provide others with beautiful, provocative, and engaging experiences with works of art."<sup>2</sup>

*Aja Blanc, practicing artist and designer*

**2005–10**

The program is overseen by Aja Blanc, Museum Educator.

**2003–5**

The program is overseen by Jaime Ursic, M.F.A. 2002, first as Education Fellow and then as Assistant Educator.

2010

**2010**

The Gallery disbands its volunteer docent core and enlists students, alongside staff, to offer all guided tours.

2015

**2015-16**

Returning Guides begin participating in Friday trainings alongside trainees, formalizing both the returning Guides' continued learning and the critical role of peer mentorship between cohorts.

**Dec. 2012**

The Gallery completes a major renovation to connect its three buildings. Visitorship and demand for guided tours increase dramatically in the newly expanded space.

**2016**

The Guides' tours are rebranded as "Highlights Tours."

**2013**

The *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* is devoted to the theme "Teaching with Art," and articles by Pamela Franks, Jessica Sack, and John Walsh discuss the history of the Gallery Guide program.<sup>3</sup>

**2015**

The Gallery Guide program becomes a paid job, a move acknowledging the important work of the Guides and enabling a dramatic expansion of the potential applicant pool.

Elizabeth Manekin and Elizabeth Williams, the John Walsh Fellow in Education, publish an article about the Gallery Guide program.<sup>4</sup>

"When I took over the Gallery Guide program, it was already strong. I added more structure and a more refined focus on pedagogy. I think that, in turn, strengthened the quality of the Guides' teaching and cultivated a real sense of community and commitment—to one another and the Gallery."

*Elizabeth Manekin, Head of University Programs and Academic Projects, Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

**2016-17**

The program is overseen by Ryan Hill, the Nolen Curator of Education and Academic Affairs.

**2010-16**

The program is overseen by Elizabeth Manekin, first as the John Walsh Fellow and later as Museum Educator and then Assistant Curator of Education.

**2017-18**

Daniel Jones, Ph.D. 2020 and a former Wurtele Gallery Teacher, is hired as Museum Educator for one year. Among other duties, he assumes oversight of the Gallery Guide program.

2020

2025

**2020-21**

The training of Gallery Guides goes completely remote during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. In lieu of in-person Highlights Tours, pairs of Guides offer virtual programs on Zoom in a new series called "Double Take: Looking at Art with Gallery Guides."

**2022-23**

The Education Department hires Audrey Steinkamp, B.A. 2022, as the inaugural Postbaccalaureate Fellow in Student Engagement, to support the Gallery Guide program and to use it as a platform to increase and expand opportunities for cocurricular undergraduate engagement at the Gallery.

**2024**

The *Gallery Guide Guide* is published.

**2018-20**

Sydney Skelton Simon, B.A. 2007 and a former Gallery Guide, is hired as the Bradley Assistant Curator of Academic Affairs and is assigned oversight of the Gallery Guide program alongside university-level curricular engagement with the collection.

**2023-present**

Raymond Carlson, B.A. 2011, is hired as Manager of Student Engagement, a new position created in the Education Department to assume oversight of the Gallery Guide program and continue deepening opportunities for undergraduate engagement.

**2020-23**

Molleen Theodore, then Associate Curator of Public Programs, joins Sydney to co-run the program. Sydney retains leadership of the first-year Gallery Guide trainees, and Molleen begins overseeing the returning Guides, including continuation of their training (often jointly with the new Guides) and management of their Highlights Tours.

## Meeting the Moment

In 2018 Sydney Skelton Simon was hired as the Bradley Assistant Curator of Academic Affairs and assumed oversight of the Gallery Guide program alongside her primary area of responsibility, university-level curricular engagement with the collections. While the Gallery Guide program had been sustained by Education Department staff in the two academic years following Elizabeth Manekin's departure, it was clear that some students were feeling adrift as a result of the instability of the program's leadership created by staff turnover and that their frustrations around inequities in the museum were brewing. Sydney focused on rebuilding community while respecting the legacy of pedagogical rigor. Since Sydney's management of the program—first conceived as a temporary solution—was turning into a yearslong commitment, a departmental decision was made in 2020 to divide this responsibility with Molleen Theodore, then Associate Curator of Public Programs. The Highlights Tours delivered by the Gallery Guides were a significant public program offering that had hitherto fallen outside of Molleen's purview, so this partnership was a good solution for near-term sustainability.

In addition to this new oversight model, a number of other major events in the 2019–20 academic year catalyzed significant changes in the Gallery Guide program. November 2019 saw the opening of the exhibition *Place, Nations, Generations, Beings: 200 Years of Indigenous North American Art*, curated by undergraduates K. N. McCleary (Little Shell Chippewa–Cree), B.A. 2018, J.D. candidate; Leah Tamar Shrestinian, B.A. 2018, Head Gallery Guide in the 2017–18 academic year; and Joseph Zordan (Bad River Ojibwe), B.A. 2019. Teaching with and programming for this watershed exhibition ignited a substantial shift in the Education Department's approach to nearly all aspects of its work. In February 2020, Crystal Feimster, Associate Professor in the Department of African American Studies and the American Studies Program, and Johanna Obenda, then the Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman–Joan Whitney Payson Fellow in Academic Affairs and Outreach, led a discussion about methods and challenges of teaching traumatic subject matter, in the framework of an exhibition at the Gallery of John Wilson's studies for *The Incident*, a 1952 mural depicting a racial-terror lynching. Describing her pedagogical practice, Feimster shared that she teaches to the most vulnerable person in the room. Hearing this prompted us to reconsider how we thought about audience engagement and care, as well as intent and impact. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic sent everyone home. Throughout that spring, we scrambled to complete training on the new-to-us Zoom platform. The racial reckoning that swept across



the country, alongside renewed local and national attention to museums, also compelled important changes in our approach to the training of the Guides. In summer 2020, nearly three hundred students, alumni, and Gallery fellows and staff signed an open letter to Stephanie Wiles, the Henry J. Heinz II Director, asking that the Gallery commit to being an anti-racist organization through a list of recommended actions.<sup>5</sup>

The following academic year, with most Yale instruction happening remotely, limited access to our offices and the galleries, and strict social-distancing measures in place for museum visitors, we kept the Gallery Guide program going on Zoom. We decided not to hire a new class of trainees but rather to focus on supporting and sustaining the returning Guides. In the fall semester, we developed a new series of virtual programs called “Double Take: Looking at Art with Gallery Guides,” in which we adapted the core elements of in-person Highlights Tours to the Zoom Webinar platform. In our continued weekly trainings and in the development of this new program format, we foregrounded our collective commitment to anti-racism, inclusivity, and equity. To support this work, we hired equity and justice consultant Rebecca KellyG to work with the Guides for two training sessions and, subsequently, incorporated critical lessons from those meetings into a variety of the structures of our practice. These included developing Community Agreements; adapting the templates that trainees use to develop their research and analysis of objects in order to prompt them to account for expanded historical, contextual, and critical frameworks; and incorporating

multiple avenues for debriefing, reflection, and feedback into all aspects of the training.

In September 2021, we resumed in-gallery meetings and hired a new class of trainees. Guides whose training had been interrupted in spring 2020 completed their evaluation tours that fall in preparation to, finally, offer their Highlights Tours to visitors starting in December 2021. This return to the Gallery after a year of remote work and programming allowed us to refresh the training program and commit to three major areas of focus: planning and reflection, diversifying the voices and perspectives we feature, and mentorship. We recalibrated our engagement with the Gallery's global collections, including [where to start training](#). We changed what we asked of collection curators when they are introducing their galleries to the Guides. We assigned readings to bring additional voices into the conversation and reached out to a broader array of staff to lead sessions. We scheduled planning and debrief meetings with all guests invited to trainings. And, in collaboration with the Head Guides, we implemented more structured forms of peer and staff mentorship. We presented on this topic at a Gallery all-staff meeting at the beginning of the 2021–22 academic year to share our ambitions with colleagues. We wanted to ensure their familiarity with the Gallery Guide program and the nature of the students' work because we ask so many of them to support it.

The *Gallery Guide Guide* describes the new approaches we developed between 2020 and 2023, as well as important continuities carried over from previous years. By laying out our training program in detail, we hope this guide will serve not only as a record of the work we have done but also as a model that colleagues in other museums can look to for inspiration.

## Where to Start

*Sydney Skelton Simon, B.A. 2007, the Bradley Associate Curator of Academic Affairs*

Student feedback compelled us to examine whose stories we prioritize and when. For the first two years that I oversaw the Gallery Guide program, I brought students on their first day of training to look at *General George Washington at Trenton*, a 1792 portrait by the American artist John Trumbull. It seemed a natural starting point: the painting rewards close looking, which allowed us to unpack its politics and complicate the narrative it constructs, and it is tied to the history of the Gallery, which was founded with a gift of paintings by Trumbull to Yale in 1832. But many Guides, and especially Guides of color, challenged us to decenter this canonical narrative and to explore other points of entry into the collection. While the Guides are introduced to Trumbull and the origins of the American Paintings and Sculpture collection area later in the academic year, the portrait need not serve as a center out of which to work. In subsequent years, we started our collective close looking with a contemporary sculpture by a Ghanaian artist: El Anatsui's *Society Woman's Cloth (Gold)* (2006).





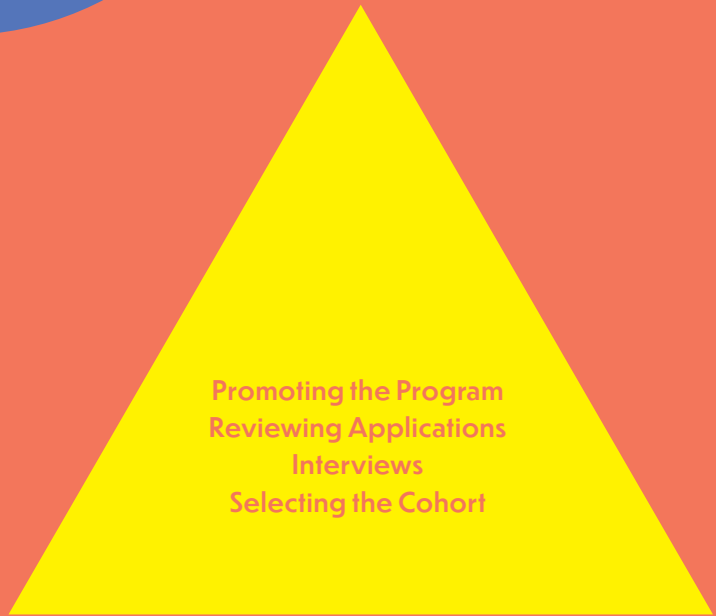
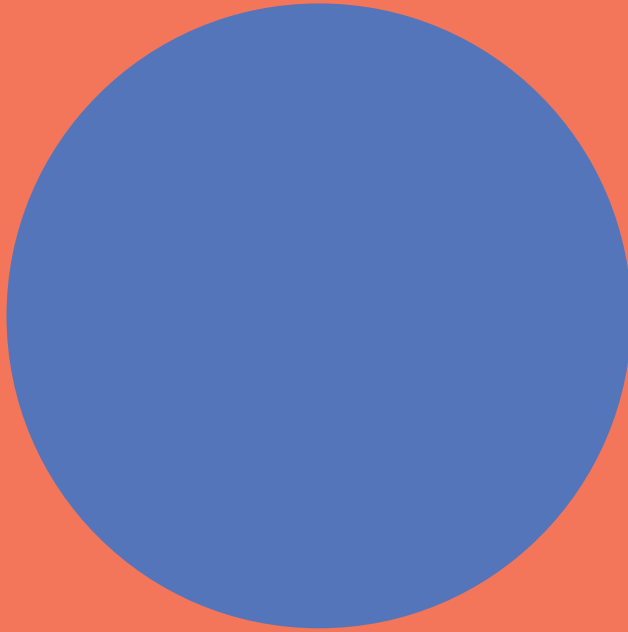
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# The Hiring Process

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The Gallery Guide program is a coveted paid opportunity on campus and typically attracts scores of applications. Every year, we hire a class of twelve trainees to join about twenty returning Guides. The number of new trainees is limited by restrictions on group sizes in the galleries and by our capacity as staff to mentor and train students. What follows is a detailed account of the hiring process.

## Promoting the Program

We post the job to the Gallery's website and to the Yale Student Employment site by early August. Application questions on the Yale Student Employment site are standardized across the University, so we ask students to supplement their applications with answers to two questions, submitted in a PDF not to exceed one single-spaced page. The questions are:

1. Why do you want to be a Gallery Guide?
2. Describe a time when you taught someone something. What did you learn?

To attract as diverse a candidate pool as possible, we advertise the opportunity widely. The Gallery's Graphic Design team creates several eye-catching posters that are circulated extensively on campus, including through students' residential colleges, affinity groups and cultural centers, and the networks of current Guides. We promote the program at the Undergraduate Night of the Arts, an evening reception at the Gallery during

which returning Guides offer brief tours, and at the University's Bazaar of Undergraduate Organizations—both of which happen in early September. We also host a drop-in Meet and Greet for prospective applicants to mingle with returning Guides and ask any questions they have about the program before the application deadline, which is typically the second Sunday of the semester.



# Interested in teaching?

## Apply to be a Gallery Guide.

Meet current Gallery Guides and learn more about this paid opportunity for Yale undergraduates.

Friday, September 8, 2023 | 3:00–4:30 pm  
Meet in the Gallery's lobby.

For more information, contact Raymond Carlson at [raymond.carlson@yale.edu](mailto:raymond.carlson@yale.edu).  
Apply at [yaleundergrad.org](http://yaleundergrad.org) by 10 noon on Sunday, September 10.  
Free and open to the public | [artgallery.yale.edu](http://artgallery.yale.edu)  
101 Chapel Street, New Haven, Connecticut | 203.432.0600



YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY

# Do you love art?

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YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY

# Want to work in a museum?

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Meet in the Gallery's lobby.

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## Reviewing Applications

Next, applications are collated and shared with the Gallery Guide leadership team, which includes Education Department staff managers and the Head Gallery Guides. At the outset, we discuss the criteria to consider when reviewing applications. Guides must be available during training times (if they have a standing conflict, like a class that overlaps, we ask them to apply next year) and must have at least two years left in their undergraduate careers. Seniors and graduate students are ineligible.

We are looking for candidates who demonstrate an eagerness to learn, a genuine curiosity about the perspectives of others, and excitement about art, museums, and facilitating conversations. Prior museum experience is not required, nor is art-historical training. We are cautious about students who appear to be overextended already, as we recognize the program requires a time commitment equivalent to a class each semester. And we look to build a cohort that reflects a range of majors, experience, backgrounds, and interests. We meet on the Friday after applications are due to select twenty top candidates to interview. In advance of that meeting, we also invite the returning Guides to offer referrals in support of any applicants they may have met at the Meet and Greet or in other contexts.

## Interviews

We conduct interviews in the galleries, with at least two members of the Gallery Guide leadership team (ideally, one staff representative and one of the Head Guides). We meet each candidate in the lobby at their scheduled time and bring them into an adjacent gallery for a brief conversation. We ask them questions about their interest in the program, their passions and strengths,



and how the Gallery Guide role would fit in with their other commitments. We also gather in front of a nearby object, where we model close looking and invite observations about this work of art, with which the candidate is presumably unfamiliar. The candidate has a chance to ask us any questions they have about the program. We typically spend about fifteen minutes with each candidate. Though most students are nervous about this interview, we find this format allows their personalities to shine and tends to serve as a good measure of their interest in the Gallery Guide program. Overall, the process is designed to draw out important connections between teaching and learning, as well as to model an inclusive approach to looking in which listening is as important as sharing. We aim to build a diverse, enthusiastic, and committed community of students.



## Selecting the Cohort

At the end of this interview period, the members of the Gallery Guide leadership team meet again to deliberate and select a training class of twelve students. There is no formula for this selection process, but we carefully consider everything we have learned about each interviewee and strive to build a diverse cohort of Guides whom we think would thrive in the program. These students receive an offer and are asked to accept within a few days so that we can convene our new class for their first training session on the Thursday of the following week. The whole process takes the full month of September. We typically turn down dozens of applicants—many impressive and curious students who have expressed a strong interest in working at the Gallery. We have been experimenting with ways to capture that interest and find other opportunities—whether programmatic or employment based—to share with these students so that they, too, may find a place at the Gallery.

Each fall, we rehire the Guides who are returning in their second, third, and fourth years in the program; these students comprise the “returning Gallery Guides.” We do not require them to reapply for their positions, but we do ask them to recommit to the program in August before we add them to our payroll.





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## How We Come Together

For the full academic year, new Gallery Guides meet for ninety-minute training sessions every Thursday and Friday afternoon, and returning Guides meet for two hours on Fridays. In some Friday sessions, the new and returning Guides train separately, and in other Friday sessions they train together.

We hold two first days of training: one for the returning Guides and one for the new Guides. The returning Guides' first day of training typically falls in the third week of the fall semester. We talk through the syllabus together and review expectations related not only to the workload but also to being present and practicing active participation and listening. As much as we feel a sense of responsibility to these students, we also want the Guides to feel responsible to one another, to the program, and to themselves. Training for the new Guides begins a couple weeks later, following the four-week hiring process described in the previous section. In their first training session, we orient the new Guides to the museum, and as with the returning Guides, we review important Gallery rules, go over the training syllabus, establish expectations for participation in the program, and set personal goals for the year.

In fall 2022, that year's Co-Head Guides, Akio Tamura-Ho, B.A. 2023, and Adin Feder, B.A. 2023, led the trainees in drafting a set of Community Agreements, governing how the new Guides would show up for training. For the rest of the year, at the beginning of training every Thursday, the Head Guides would





tap one of the new Guides to pick a Community Agreement that resonated with them that day and might be helpful in the session ahead. In addition to setting the tone for training, this practice served as a reminder of how to be present, and it welcomed guests into the community of Guides.

The first joint training session of the year involves two components: first, new and returning Guides go on one of several Highlights Tours led by experienced returning Guides, and then everyone participates in a conversation about the role of the Gallery Guides in the ecosystem of the museum and as facilitators of important conversations with the visiting public. For new Guides, this offers a clear sense of what they are building toward as they embark on their yearlong training. For returning Guides, this reconnects them with the core of their work and establishes their role as peer mentors for the trainees.

## Building Trust

As a Guide community, we all commit to being “in the editing phase,” a phrase we learned from Dina Bailey, whom we hired to lead a session for the Guides in fall 2022 (see p. 46). That is an acknowledgment that our work is always evolving and that feedback and reflection are necessary to the process. By establishing trust and building community throughout the year, we open ourselves up to giving and receiving feedback and to reflecting together.

Every training session begins with introductions and an icebreaker. Gathered in a loose circle and led by one of the Head Guides, everyone shares their name, pronouns, and response to an icebreaker question—sometimes simple, often silly, always insightful. This practice is a chance to check in and to share openly: we build trust by being vulnerable with one another. It is also an opportunity to include invited guests in the Guide community.

Active listening is an essential skill in our work: it fosters trust and understanding, and it supports us in giving and receiving

### Icebreakers

*Sofia Ortega-Guerrero, B.A. 2023, 2021–22 Co-Head Guide*

Gallery Guide pedagogy is centered on interactive, question-based learning. Fittingly, icebreaker questions provide a point of entry to training. Before delving into each session, the Guides take turns reintroducing themselves and answering a low-stakes and intentionally subjective question, such as “What is your most used emoji?” and “What is your favorite font?” The opening icebreaker invites Guides to be present and authentic with one another. After taking a moment to laugh and lightheartedly share, we are better prepared to speak up and engage with one another throughout the rest of our training session. With growing stores of inside jokes and idiosyncratic tidbits, we build a deeper sense of community and strengthen peer mentorship, one icebreaker at a time.

feedback and in facilitating conversation. Active listening involves being present, patient, empathetic, and attentive to verbal and nonverbal cues. We model and develop this ability throughout training and in specially designed exercises, such as Listening Partners.

## Listening Partners

*Conor Downey, B.S. 2022, 2021–22 Co-Head Guide*

Listening Partners is a short, one-on-one listening session that builds connections within the Gallery Guide program while tapping into gallery-teaching skills. Guides are asked to partner up and find a quiet place to sit together. Each of the Guides spends up to five minutes articulating their answer to a given prompt while their partner listens attentively. After five minutes, we ask the Guides to switch who speaks and who listens. The listener must attend closely to their partner, being fully present without anticipating their own responses. Early in the year, Guides often struggle to speak for a full five minutes, but over time the Guides become more comfortable holding the floor and reflecting on the fly. At its core, Listening Partners is an exercise in community building. The exercise opens space for vulnerability and empathy, allowing the Guides to build strong, supportive connections with other individuals in the program.



## Pod Families

One key to creating a welcoming environment for all students is to develop a strong network of support and mentorship. The Head Guides are instrumental in this process. Borrowing terminology that became familiar during the pandemic, the 2021–22 Co-Head Guides, Sofia Ortega-Guerrero, B.A. 2023, and Conor Downey, B.S. 2022, organized small “pod families” of new and returning Guides to encourage close connections and peer mentorship, as well as to build trust and relationships across class years, majors, and residential colleges. This approach is now baked into the program. Pod families are especially helpful at the beginning of the year, when we are getting to know one another, and they continue to serve as an organizing approach throughout the year. We use pod families to divide into groups in training, for object presentations and feedback, and more. Guides inevitably make strong connections within and beyond their pods.

## Clear Communication

We prioritize transparent and reliable communication about what we are doing and why. In 2021 we created a project site for the Gallery Guide program on Canvas, the learning-management platform used at Yale. The site provides a place to distribute readings, collect object papers and other assignments, post summaries of trainings and additional useful resources, and host discussion threads on a variety of topics. Among the Gallery Guide leadership team, we intentionally document the program with templated meeting, training, and debriefing agendas. The Head Guides send clearly structured weekly emails to the Guides, often putting their personal spin on these messages. And, of course, Education Department staff are available to the Guides and are forthcoming about the fact that the program is a work in progress.

## Traditions

The Gallery Guide program is a serious commitment for students, and we take care to include moments of levity and celebration throughout the year; some are long-standing annual traditions, some newly created. For the Friday training nearest to Halloween, for instance, Guides are invited to dress up as works of art from the collection. We host a study break with treats and activities before finals at the end of the fall and spring semesters, and in April we throw a celebration for the graduating seniors, at which we also reflect on the year.

Some traditions develop outside of formal Guide training. In recent years, the Guides have organized casual post-training Thursday dinners at a Yale dining hall; in the interest of being inclusive, the museum has covered the cost for any student not on a meal plan. The Head Guides host additional gatherings, such as a welcome party for the new cohort of Guides that is entirely student organized, with financial support from the Gallery.

### Dress Up as a Work of Art

*Chloé Glass, B.A. 2022, Gallery Guide*

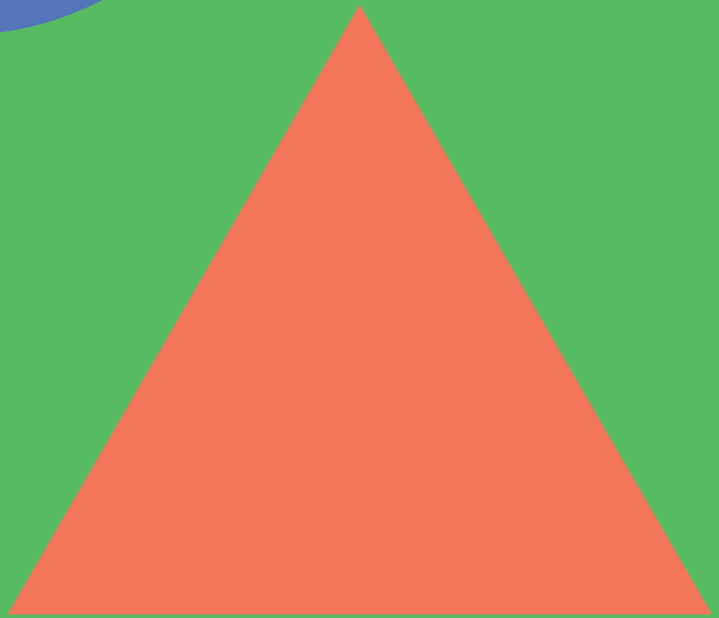
The Guides' annual tradition of dressing up like a work of art in the collection encourages us to engage creatively with the objects we present on our Highlights Tours and to celebrate the unique perspective we each contribute to the program. Wire and shapes cut from construction paper become a miniature version of a mobile by the twentieth-century American sculptor Alexander Calder; a black hat and collared shirt evoke the Dutch painter Frans Hals's austere portrait of Heer Bodolphe (1643); and bits of recycled soda cans, woven together, shine like *Society Woman's Cloth (Gold)* (2006), a tapestry by the Ghanaian artist El Anatsui. When I walked into training, I was struck by how my fellow Guides' imaginative reinterpretations brought the collection to life.

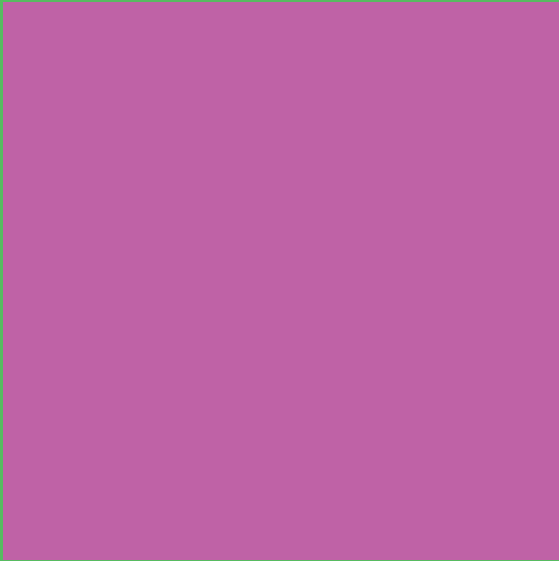






# The First Year of Training:





Learning to Look  
Four Objects  
Cultivating a Critical Mindset  
Additional Skills  
Evaluation Tours

# Building the Tour

## In this section, we describe the elements of the first year of training, in which new Gallery Guides develop their four-object Highlights Tours.

### Learning to Look

Close looking is a foundational skill of the Gallery Guide training program, since the aim of Highlights Tours is to engage museumgoers in sustained and deep looking as they share their perspectives on what they see. We hope that the Guides will form connections with the artworks on view and will inspire the formation of similar connections by the visitors who join them on tours. In their very first training session, after introductions and reviewing expectations for the program, we go into the galleries to look closely at a work of art together. The purpose is to establish a practice in which looking and sharing observations always constitute the first step in engaging with an art object. Research and interpretation come after, and build upon, sustained looking.

The second week of training is focused almost exclusively on close and careful looking. For many years, the Guides have met with the art historian John Walsh, who models a method of engagement that is observation driven. Walsh has been deeply enmeshed in the training of student educators at the Gallery since 2007. Focusing on just one work of art for an entire hour, he shares contextualizing information only as needed. The session tends to reveal to students just how deep they can go with their own capacities of perception. In advance of this session, the Guides read Jennifer L. Roberts's essay "The Power of Patience," in which the Harvard art history professor describes an

assignment that requires students to spend three hours looking at an artwork, noting that many details and insights take time to emerge.<sup>6</sup>

The next session is devoted to the art of description and is designed to help students write a thorough and clearly organized visual description of the objects they choose for their tours. Working in pairs in a gallery with a variety of





three-dimensional objects on view, the Guides engage in an exercise called **Back-to-Back Drawing** to practice translating what they see into words that are precise and descriptive enough to convey an image of that object to someone else. After everyone has had the chance to be both describer and recorder, we reconvene to share reflections about the experience. The Guides typically learn the importance of establishing the overall shape, medium, and size of an object before homing in on fine details; there are also, inevitably, a variety of other takeaways that inform their own approaches to the objects they will go on to select for their tours.

## Back-to-Back Drawing

*Sydney Skelton Simon*

This fun exercise helps the Guides develop skills in close looking and visual description. Guides pair up, standing or sitting back-to-back at an object. The one who can see the object describes it to the other, who attempts to create a drawing based only on their partner's explanation. The Guides then switch roles and repeat the exercise with another object.



## Four Objects

Each Guide chooses four objects over the course of the first year of training. Alongside the skills developed in training together, the Guides follow a set structure to develop their facility in leading an informed conversation with each of their selected objects. Listed below are the steps of that structured workflow, which the Guides repeat for each of their four objects. The process is intentionally scaffolded in the first year, designed to equip the Guides with the tools and processes needed to continue adding objects and developing new tour themes in subsequent years of the program.

### Step 1: Select an object.

Guides select an object based on their own interests, though they must keep some practical considerations in mind: the work must not be slated to go off view before the end of the academic year, and it should be installed somewhere a group can gather around. The four objects on their Highlights Tour must draw from four different collection areas and represent a diversity of media, time periods, and geographies. Guides are required to submit their choices of an object for approval before going too far in the subsequent steps.

### Step 2: Look at the object.

Guides spend time looking at the object before immersing themselves in scholarship about it. We ask them to start with a fulsome visual description of the artwork, from which they will develop research questions and an analytic framework.

### Step 3: Research the object.

Guides are introduced to a variety of Gallery and Yale Library resources for researching their objects. They have a training session with an arts librarian at Yale and are strongly encouraged to reach out directly to curatorial departments to connect with relevant staff members and to review object files.

### Step 4: Write an object paper.

Guides are provided a template for writing an object paper about the object. These are not like typical seminar papers but rather are meant to be working documents in which to record observations, research, analysis, and presentation ideas. Guides are asked to flesh out their notes in complete sentences and paragraphs. It is critical that they articulate clearly and succinctly what they have observed and read about the object in order to clarify their own thoughts. We also encourage them to return to the object throughout the writing process to check their analysis against the work of art itself.

## **Object Paper Template**

Title:

Artist / Culture:

Date:

Accession Number:

Collection Area:

Your Name:

### **Visual Description:**

Using objective language, provide a full description of your piece. Base this description on what you can see rather than what you've learned or heard about the object. What you write here should be based on your own sustained engagement with the object.

### **Artist Bio / Cultural Context:**

This section should explore what you can find out about the artist(s) or maker(s) and social or historical context. This is where you should ask and address these questions, contributed to the Gallery Guide program by equity and justice consultant Rebecca KellyG:

**Who?** Who created the work, and who was the intended audience?

**What?** What or who is depicted, represented, or evoked?

**Where?** Where did the object come from?

**When?** When was this work created? What else should we know about that historical context?

**Why?** Why was (and is) the work valued?

### **Visual Analysis:**

In this section, you can interpret your object based on visual evidence, art-historical / historical research, artist biography, and other relevant sources.

### **Present Context:**

In this section, examine how this object is displayed and contextualized at the Gallery. Where did it come from, and how did it enter Yale's collection? How is it presented to visitors? How does it relate to surrounding objects and architecture?

### **Relation to Theme:**

How does this piece relate to your theme? What aspects of your theme are at play here? If you've not yet decided on a theme, what potential themes or ideas does this object inspire?

### **Presentation Ideas:**

How might you present this object to an audience? What questions will you ask to engage them? When will you deliver various components of your research? Are there supplementary materials that will help move the conversation forward?

### **Bibliography:**

List the relevant reading you did to find this information. Please give complete citations.



**Step 5:  
Receive  
feedback on  
the object  
paper.**

The object paper is reviewed by an Education Department staff leader and one of the Head Guides, who offer extensive comments. These comments may be questions asking the Guide to clarify or expand on what they have written, suggestions for additional resources to consult, or tips to help them either consider topics to focus on or form generative questions to ask on their tours. Guides are expected to keep working on each of their object papers after receiving this written feedback; they revise and resubmit the first two papers in January, following the winter break.

**Written Feedback on the Object Paper**

*Adin Feder, B.A. 2023, 2022–23 Co-Head Guide*

Feedback is an opportunity to help Guides flesh out their ideas about an object and return to it with fresh eyes. During my own training year, I learned a lot from the way Sydney and the Head Guides helped me notice fine details such as scale and texture and prompted me to zoom out and consider new pieces of context. When reviewing object papers as Co-Head Guide in 2022–23, I tried to help Guides ground their analyses in visual evidence so that their conversations on tours would remain concrete and accessible. When a Guide struggled to articulate a clear direction for those conversations, I suggested broader frameworks to encourage reflection on what makes the object special.

**Step 6:  
Prepare an  
object-tour  
script.**

After receiving their object paper back with comments, the Guides prepare to lead their first conversation at their selected object, in a training session. We offer a model for preparing a loose object-tour script that can help them identify key ideas from their paper and develop an inquiry-based structure for the conversation. Like the object paper, the tour script is meant to be a working document that they will revise repeatedly as they practice and receive feedback.

**Step 7:  
Lead an  
object tour.**

In a joint training session with the returning Guides, each trainee leads a ten-minute conversation at their object for some new and returning Guides, which is followed by five to ten minutes of constructive feedback from the group. Early in the spring semester, a session is devoted to two-object tours, in which the Guides lead ten-minute conversations at each of their first two objects and work on transitioning between them.

**Repeat steps 1–7 for each of the four objects.**



## Cultivating a Critical Mindset

Today, many undergraduates come to us eager to apply a critical lens to the museum, but they do not necessarily arrive with the language and context with which to engage in a nuanced way with challenging museological topics. We structure training to encourage the Guides to question curatorial choices, as well as to study the colonial history of the museum and issues of provenance and repatriation. The students are excited to implement these considerations into their work by highlighting lesser-known stories, being transparent with Gallery visitors about the complexities of museum collections, and actively decentering whiteness in their tours. We find the Guides receptive to experimental and inclusive approaches to public engagement.

### Collection Talks

Collection curators play a crucial role in the training and mentoring of Gallery Guides. In hour-long training sessions that we call Collection Talks, we introduce Guides to all twelve of the museum's collection areas and the curators who oversee them. Our aims for these sessions are threefold:

1. Introduce the Guides to the collection curators. We want the Guides to know whom to contact with questions or for guidance on their individual object research.
2. Introduce each collection area and the curators' perspectives. We want the Guides to see how each curator approaches the objects in their field so that they can experience and learn from a variety of perspectives.
3. Spark dialogue. We invite collection curators to discuss some of the challenges with the collections and ask that they be open to the students' questions and critical observations.

### Training and Mentoring

*Mark D. Mitchell, the Holcombe T. Green Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture*

As a collection curator, I am grateful for the thoughtful, dedicated, and often passionate interest of the Gallery Guides. I use my meetings with them—both as a group and individually—as chances to reveal and refine new ideas and approaches to our collection. I share a commitment to the program because the Guides are mature partners: they enrich what we do and in many cases go on to contribute to the museum in other roles, including in the various curatorial offices. Guides often approach me after our introductory group meetings to ask about opportunities in the Department of American Paintings and Sculpture, which I take as a promising sign of a connection made. Of course, the Gallery Guide program provides an ideal point of entry into museums in other directions as well, a doorway to the many forms of inspiration and engagement that art creates.

## Discussing Challenges of Collecting and Display

*Ruth Barnes, the Thomas Jaffe Curator of Indo-Pacific Art*

I consider the Education Department crucial for making our collections available to the widest possible audience, and the Gallery Guides play a key role in this. For me, studying and communicating about museum objects always starts with the object itself. The materials and techniques evident in a given work reveal much about the culture that produced it. I encourage students to begin with a description of what they see. I then talk with them about the cultural and historical context. It is essential to me that they understand the social environment from which the object emerged, especially if it is one very different from their own.

Recently, I have begun to address the histories of and problems around collecting and display in a museum context. My own concerns go back to the very outset of my academic research, when I realized that studying and publishing certain works of art could enhance their appeal for collectors and their value on the art market. This effect can be positive when it helps support workshops of makers, but it can also be destructive, even leading to the extinction of an artistic expertise in the place of origin. I now think it is imperative that we discuss these issues with our student Guides to encourage them to observe critically and, potentially, help us find new ways of displaying and presenting our collections.

In the 2021–22 academic year, we moved away from the long-standing format of asking collection curators to give a sixty-minute general overview of their galleries. Though the old approach accomplished many important goals, there were a few limitations: an hour was not enough time for a comprehensive overview; the collection curators appeared to students as singular, authoritative voices speaking for a whole collection area; and Guides often did not feel welcome to ask challenging questions.

Now, we ask curators to focus on just three or four objects, which allows key ideas to surface through more sustained looking and dialogue. We also give collection curators the option of assigning the Guides a text to read in advance of their collection talks; this is an opportunity to introduce into training additional

voices and perspectives on the Gallery and its collections. Perhaps most importantly, this approach demonstrates to the Guides that expertise is an ongoing process, often messy and unresolved. After each collection talk, we devote the final twenty or so minutes of training to a debrief, led by the Head Guides, to reflect on key takeaways from the session.





### Meeting with Other Museum Professionals

Guides meet with several other staff members throughout their first year of training, with the goal of helping them both to develop a nuanced understanding of the complexity and variety of museum work and to consider different perspectives and approaches to works of art. This includes learning about museum labels and writing alt text for accessible digital publications with the Director of Publications and Editorial Services, discussing legal and ethical issues related to ownership histories with the Curator of Provenance Research, and gaining insight into the work conservators do to research, clean, and treat collection objects. Once or twice a year, the Guides visit other museums to participate in their tours and meet with personnel at these institutions. The shared experience of these field trips connects the cohort, builds empathy with other tour guides, and offers an opportunity for joint reflection.

### Debriefs

Part of being in community is checking in with one another. In training sessions that involve invited guests, we allot about twenty minutes for a debrief after the guest has left. The debrief is led by one of the Head Guides and can take a number of forms, including personal written reflections, Turn-and-Talk exercises, or group dialogue. This regular debrief practice helps surface issues that have come up or that the Guides are working

## Turn-and-Talks

*Akio Tamura-Ho, B.A. 2023, 2022–23 Co-Head Guide*

Because big group discussions can sometimes be intimidating, we implemented Turn-and-Talks during our debriefs. The Guides take several minutes to first respond to a set of reflection questions with the person sitting next to them, before we turn to a conversation among the whole group. This pedagogical tool helps each Guide express their thoughts and get to know their peers one-on-one. I have also noticed that it can lead to a more lively group discussion!

through. Guides hear and learn from one another’s perspectives on shared experiences, a crucial ingredient in fostering a tight-knit community. The debriefs also help to reinforce lessons learned and key takeaways from each of the training sessions.

At the end of each week of training, the Guides may also receive an online survey that invites written reflections on the session(s), including what was especially useful, what could have been better, and anything else they might like to share. Written responses help the Guides process what they are learning and experiencing and enable us to be alert to the Guides’ needs and questions in developing sessions, designing the syllabus, and reflecting on our own pedagogical styles and methods.

## Debriefs

*Conor Downey, B.S. 2022, 2021–22 Co-Head Guide*

As Co-Head Guide in 2021–22, I led a debrief on debriefs. I asked the Guides what our group goals for the debriefs ought to be in order to establish norms and a mutual understanding of how we would use the time together. They highlighted the importance of debriefing as an opportunity to share frustrations or discomfort with the presentation style or material, to hear how people experienced the same content in different ways, and to surface new questions and interests. Debriefing also provides time to discuss ideas for potential tours and strategies for presenting or looking at objects together.

## Outside Consultants

Advancing the work of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Belonging (DEIA/B) within the museum through a student-centered program can be complicated, and we recognize that we have much to learn in this arena. We have therefore worked closely with other staff members and outside consultants to guide these endeavors, and we have relied on texts to bring even more voices into the conversation.

In the last few years, we have been supported by consultants who bring expertise and practices to the Guides’ training.

## Approaches to Discussing Gender and Art

*Bix Archer, B.A. 2019, M.F.A. candidate Yale School of Art, Gallery Guide*

In spring 2022, I led a Gallery Guide training session on the topic of engaging gender in artworks, with a focus on creating a space of inquiry during tours that is both inclusive and critical. We began by reading guidelines from a peer institution for speaking about gender and discussed what strategies Guides could incorporate into or adapt for their own teaching. I then modeled different ways of considering the role of gender by leading conversations at two different contemporary artworks. Next, the Guides reflected on the experience in terms of the teaching approach and how it altered their perception of objects. We considered how ideas of gender in a work of art are co-constructed by the viewer and the artist, as well as by the object itself and the context in which it is viewed. Finally, the Guides developed their own questions around a work of art as related to notions of gender.

For example, the arts equity and justice consultant Rebecca KellyG led sessions focused on context, perspective, and self-accountability in fall 2020 and spring 2022. Also in spring 2022, Bix Archer, B.A. 2019, a former Gallery Guide who at the time of this writing is an M.F.A. candidate at the Yale School of Art, shared approaches to discussing gender and art rooted in her post-Yale experience as a museum educator at the Brooklyn Museum. In fall 2022, with Dina Bailey, Chief Executive Officer of Mountain Top Vision and a trained educator and consultant who worked with the Gallery on its DEIA/B action plan, the group workshopped giving and receiving feedback as well as facilitating conversations. These sessions have all been held jointly for new and returning Guides. In spring 2023, the new Guides also met with K. N. McCleary and Leah Tamar Shrestinian to discuss thoughtful ways to include Indigenous North American art and perspectives in their Highlights Tours.

## Learning from Dina Bailey

*Jiayi "Joyce" Liao, MC '25, Gallery Guide*

A major takeaway for me from Dina Bailey's session was the concept of the Four Truths: Forensic Truth (what we most commonly consider facts), Personal Truth (people's lived experiences), Social Truth (narratives widely accepted by a societal group), and Reconciliatory Truth (narratives that contribute to remedying a perceived injustice). It is crucial in our work as Guides to acknowledge that different truths can be equally valid, rather than presenting an "authoritative" voice. I believe that creating space for everyone to share their own perspectives, as well as recognizing a range of interpretations, can enrich our conversations around artworks.







## Additional Skills

### Asking Questions

Throughout the year, we offer training sessions focused on cultivating specific skills needed by the Guides to lead effective conversations at each of their chosen objects and to pull these conversations together into a cohesive Highlights Tour.

Inquiry is at the heart of the conversational Highlights Tours designed and led by the Guides. In advance of the trainees' first object tours, we devote a session to formulating generative questions that encourage visitors to look closely at and think critically about each of the artworks on the tour. Asking questions of visitors encourages active engagement, invites a variety of perspectives, serves to build collective knowledge, and makes accessible the act of looking at, as well as of drawing meaning from, works of art. Guides are often surprised to learn how slight shifts in language (e.g., "What do you see?" versus "What do you notice?") affect the kinds of answers visitors are likely to give. We provide a handout that presents different types of questions and tips for how (and how not) to use them, and together we practice this with a variety of objects in the galleries. We return to this key skill in several training sessions throughout the year.



## Framing as an Interpretive Strategy

In addition to questions, framing is another tool that Guides can use to focus and deepen the conversation at each object. In 2015 Elizabeth Manekin, Jessica Sack, and Elizabeth Williams—who at the time were the Education Department staff members responsible for training students to teach—wrote an article in which they described framing as “the lens through which an object is experienced and connected with other objects.”<sup>7</sup> Framing refers to the information or topic that the Guides introduce to visitors, often in relation to the themes of their tours, in order to focus the conversation. In a training session, we lead the Guides in a generative word list activity to reveal how wide-ranging observations and perspectives can be when no framework is given, and how the experience of tour participants can be influenced by the introduction of information or a thematic connection. There are myriad ways to read and understand any given work of art; framing is a critical tool for deepening the conversation in the time each Guide spends at an object.

### Generative Word List

*Sydney Skelton Simon*

In this exercise, developed by Jessica Sack, the Jan and Frederick Mayer Curator of Public Education, Guides are invited to sit in front of an unfamiliar work of art and make a list of words or phrases that come to mind as they look. This can be descriptive, metaphoric, or even emotional language that they associate with what they see. After a few minutes, each Guide pairs up with someone who had a distinctly different view of the object, and they share their lists with each other. We follow this with a larger group discussion about the experience of sharing these lists: Were there any surprises in your partner’s list? Did anything your partner wrote help you see something differently? The point of this exercise is to demonstrate the variety of ways an individual might approach a work of art when given no direction, depending on their physical perspective as well as their own interests, background, and expectations. It also shows how much richer the act of looking is made by bringing multiple perspectives to bear on an object.

## Developing a Tour Theme

Once each trainee has learned two objects, we devote training time to strategies for developing their tour themes. Themes for tours should be broad enough to allow for many future additions to the tour. They should be a point of entry (a frame) rather than a conclusion or argument about the works on the tour. They should be easy to explain and grounded in what is visible in the objects. We typically begin with an exercise designed to get their creative juices flowing, in which trainees draw out connections between two or more objects from among the many they have already come to know through trainings and their own research—whether in terms of a shared material, color, or shape; processes involved in the making or use of the objects; shared narrative

features; or manifold other links. After brainstorming with various combinations of objects, trainees then focus on their own two works to flesh out possibilities for thematic resonances between them. At this stage in training, Guides learn that connections can be found between virtually any combination of objects, which is why we encourage them to pick ones that pique their interest and to then develop a tour theme from them, rather than picking a theme first and finding examples that illustrate the theme.

## Transitions

One of the joys of being on a Highlights Tour is how the experience of guided close looking at an object necessarily informs what one sees in the next artwork featured on the tour. A training session focused on transitions teaches Guides to make the most of the cumulative experience of moving from object to object by developing skills for wrapping up the conversation at one work, signaling what is coming up, and, upon arriving at the next object, referring back to ideas and observations previously raised in the tour.

## Incorporating Gallery History and Architecture

We introduce Guides to many histories of the Gallery over the course of the year, including background on the founding of the museum in 1832, its past and present collection areas and acquisition practices, and its relationship with Indigenous North American people and makers.<sup>8</sup> The Gallery currently encompasses three historic buildings, which Highlights Tours move through. Guides learn about the distinctive features of the architecture of each building and reflect on how the design of the galleries affects the presentation and reception of the collections. One training session is devoted to strategies for effectively incorporating information about the Gallery's history and archi-

ture into the Highlights Tours. This serves to orient visitors and to flesh out additional connections among the Guides' four selected objects.





## Public Speaking

Public-speaking skills are essential to leading effective Highlights Tours. We work with the Guides on clarity and confidence in their speech, on being present in the conversation they are leading, and on being mindful of their body positioning as they gather folks around an object. We begin a training session with a series of vocal warm-up exercises and then divide the trainees into small groups in which they practice facilitating close looking at objects about which they know little or nothing. At predetermined locations throughout the Gallery, each trainee takes a turn leading a discussion using just two questions, while also responding to observations and keeping the group engaged in close looking for ten minutes. The questions, adapted from a facilitation method known as Visual Thinking Strategies, are “What do you see?” and “What do you see that makes you say that?”<sup>9</sup>



### Vocal Warm-Ups

*Elizabeth Harnett, Program Coordinator, Education Department*

As a professionally trained actor, I share with the Guides tools to unlock the power of our voices in order to communicate beyond mere words. Emphasizing that the body is an instrument, I start with vocal warm-ups and relaxation exercises. Next, I have the Guides say aloud their Community Agreements using various acting verbs or tactics, such as motivate, amuse, defrost, and enlighten. They are then prompted to speak the line “That’s an interesting observation” while conveying attitudes like affirmation, deflection, certainty, and surprise. These exercises emphasize the power of intention and attitude to convey meaning through the inflection in one’s voice.



## Introductions

All Highlights Tours begin in the Gallery's lobby, and a training session is devoted to helping the Guides develop the introductions they will give as they assemble a group of visitors for the tours. They practice introducing themselves, the Gallery, the format of the Highlights Tour, and their own themes; sharing Community Agreements as well as Gallery rules; and grabbing stools before heading with their group into the galleries. We also use this training session to acquaint the Guides with staff from the Visitor Services and Security Departments, who are their partners in the lobby and the galleries. They learn about the role of these two units in ensuring a positive and safe visitor experience.

## Putting It All Together

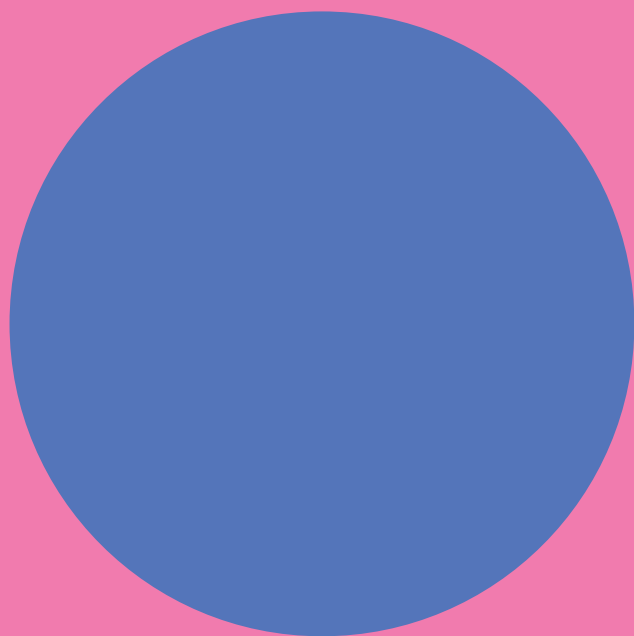
In the final joint training session before evaluation tours begin in April, trainees have an opportunity to work with returning Guides to put together all the pieces from the course of the academic year. The trainees use this time to map out a sensible tour route through the galleries and determine which aspects of the Gallery's history and architecture to point out and when.



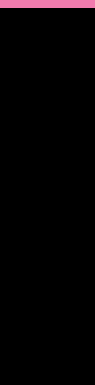
## Evaluation Tours

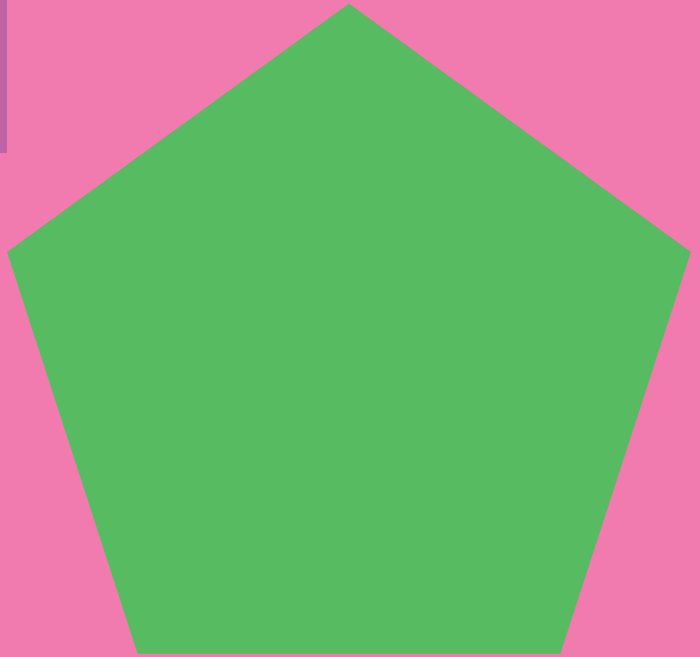
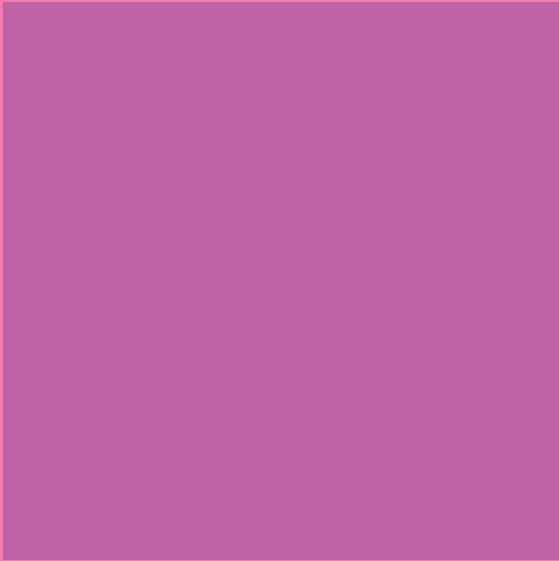
In April the new Guides each present their complete Highlights Tour to an audience of Gallery staff. This marks the culmination of their training and the last step before debuting their tours to the visiting public. All Gallery staff are invited to participate as visitors in these evaluation tours; this offers the Guides a new group of enthusiastic tour-goers to practice with, and it helps Gallery staff better understand (and celebrate) the work of these students, who serve as ambassadors for the Gallery and its collections. At the end of the evaluation tour, we offer a brief round of feedback, typically asking each participant to share one thing they really liked and one thing they would suggest for improving the experience. The program leadership team schedules an additional fifteen minutes with the Guide for personal reflection and constructive feedback. We also assemble and share extensive written feedback based on notes made during the evaluation tour, along with a compilation of the feedback offered by Gallery staff. The written feedback following the evaluation tour is meant to help Guides sharpen their Highlights Tours as they begin offering them to the public.





**Returning  
Gallery  
Guides**





In this section, we describe the work of the returning Gallery Guides, who have completed their full first year of training.

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## Leading Highlights Tours

Once the Guides successfully complete their evaluation tours, they are ready to give tours to the public. Ideally, they will give one public tour in May, before they leave for the summer, while the experience of the evaluation tour and the feedback they received are still fresh. When students return in the fall, they enter the returning class of Gallery Guides. We expect them to give approximately two Highlights Tours per month. Inevitably, works move or go off view, and we keep the Guides apprised of relevant changes to the gallery spaces. Building on the solid foundation of their first year of training, Guides are equipped to, on their own, do the work of reaching out to collection curators, conducting research, and practicing with friends as they add new objects to their repertoires. We also devote time in training for returning Guides to present objects and receive feedback from the group.

## Logistics

Though the frequency, timing, and promotion of tours have fluctuated over the years, we aim to make them as regular and predictable as possible. Before the pandemic, we offered Highlights Tours on Thursdays at 6:30 pm, Fridays at 2:30 pm, and Saturdays and Sundays at 1:30 pm and 2:30 pm during periods when classes were in session. During breaks, we presented tours only on the weekends. As we continued to grapple with the disruption of the pandemic, we were mindful of the capacity of students and staff as we added programming. In December 2021, the Guides returned to offering limited Highlights Tours, and we have been deliberate in rebuilding our roster since. During the 2022–23 academic year, the Guides gave Highlights Tours on Saturdays and Sundays at 1:30 pm and occasionally on Thursdays at 6:00 pm (the Gallery is open until 8:00 pm on Thursdays from September through June), and only while classes were in session. In the 2023–24 academic year, Guides offered tours on Thursdays at 6:30 pm and on Saturdays and Sundays at 1:30 pm and 2:30 pm.

The Highlights Tours are listed in the Gallery's online calendar, in its monthly e-newsletter, and on Instagram as stories. These promotions are generic in that they advertise that a Highlights Tour will occur but not the name of the Guide nor the tour's theme. While more personalized information might





draw different audiences, Guides sometimes swap tour times or cancel at the last minute, and we try to minimize the disruption of these changes. Students promote their own tours and often bring a group of friends or visitors along with them. We have experimented with other strategies for getting the word out, including personalized graphics that the Guides can share on their own social media feeds.

Many Gallery visitors find out about tours when they arrive at the museum, through a conversation with a Visitor Services staff member or by spotting a Gallery Guide holding a Highlights Tour sign.

We aim to have two Guides available for every tour time, and we limit the group for each tour to fifteen people. Having two Guides allows us to accommodate up to thirty people at a time, a number we rarely exceed; it also protects us in case of a last-minute cancellation. Guides sign up for tour dates and times on a Google Doc, and they receive a calendar invite for their chosen tour time as well as a reminder as the tour date approaches.

Guides arrive fifteen minutes before their tours are scheduled to begin. They have a list of tasks: check in with Visitor Services and retrieve the laminated Community Agreements sign; make sure there is a stanchion announcing their tour time; and roll a rack of stools to the area where the tour will congregate. In the remaining time, the Guides can mill around the lobby and invite visitors to join their tours. Members of the Visitor Services staff also send participants their way. As visitors gather, the Guides encourage them to store their belongings in lockers.

Sometimes the two Guides stagger their start times, especially if the groups are slow to form. If a group is quite small, Guides have the option to offer a joint tour, the path of which they can decide together. This is an opportunity for peer observation and feedback and to think flexibly about the tour and theme. We equip the Guides with knowledge, skills, and options, and we trust they will make sound decisions. While an Education Department staff member is typically present for the tour, we also rely on other Gallery staff, such as from the Visitor

Services and Security Departments, to support the Guides in maintaining a group size of fifteen or fewer and reinforcing Gallery rules. As mentioned earlier, during the training of new Guides we devote time in the spring for them to meet Visitor Services and Security colleagues: we want the Guides to know who they are, and our colleagues to know the Guides.

## Visitor Experience

Every Highlights Tour begins with a welcome and introduction in the lobby, where the Guides share a bit about themselves and their theme. They review the rules of the museum and the format and conversational style of the tours. With that, they set out three Community Agreements, which are printed on a laminated sign:

1. Your participation is welcome.
2. Create space for different perspectives.
3. Looking together, we can learn a lot.



With these three agreements, Guides make clear to visitors that everyone is invited to contribute to the conversation, that a diversity of perspectives is welcome, and that the group will exchange and build knowledge together. Being clear in intention and expectation from the beginning supports the Guides if discussion topics get challenging.

Although the Guides write in-depth papers about each of their objects, the tours they lead are unscripted. Guides might bring notes if that makes them feel more confident, and they might read a quotation or two, but they are not reading extensively from a paper. Guides are welcome to show carefully chosen supplemental material on an iPad or a laminated printout, such as a detail or comparative image, with the goal of encouraging visitors to look more closely.

## Community Agreements

*Bri Wu, B.A. 2022, 2020–21 Co-Head Guide*

We were lucky to have Rebecca KellyG lead a training session on Zoom in fall 2020. She welcomed us with ten Community Agreements, which Conor Downey and I edited down to three for the very first of the Guides' program offerings in the 2020–21 academic year: a discussion of the sculptor Alberto Giacometti's *Mains tenant le vide* (Hands Holding the Void; 1934), within the series "Double Take: Looking at Art with Gallery Guides." These agreements proved particularly important in the Zoom Webinar environment because they established warmth and encouraged lively, considerate dialogue. When we returned to in-person tours, the Community Agreements continued to be useful, not only in gently supporting respectful conversation but also in orienting visitors to our one-of-a-kind, participatory tours.

We say no two tours are the same, and we mean it. Recent tour themes have been as varied as “Oh, the places you’ll go” and “Borders and Boundaries.” As Guides lead their groups out of the lobby and into the galleries, they are embarking on a

singular tour that will be shaped by visitors’ contributions. The point of entry into each of the four objects may vary: at one, the Guide may ask the tour-goers to make a visual inventory; at another, visitors may be prompted to observe from a distance; or the Guide may ask them to identify a detail. At each object, the Guide encourages observations and questions, shares factual and contextual information, and connects the object to the larger theme. Between objects, the Guide pauses to share information about the history of the museum and the architecture of the building in which the group is

congregated. As students continue to offer their inquiry-based tours, they hone the vital skills of facilitating conversation, actively listening, and inclusively responding to observations, comments, and questions. In an effort to make the tours as accessible as possible, we ask that Guides use elevators rather than stairs as they move through the galleries.

At the conclusion of the tour, Guides lead the visitors back to the lobby. In addition to fielding questions and sharing further opportunities for engagement, Guides are responsible for directing visitors to return their stools and for returning the Community Agreements sign. At this stage, Guides also invite

## “Oh, the places you’ll go”

*Jenny Mao, BK '24, Gallery Guide*

The theme of my Highlights Tour is “Oh, the places you’ll go.” I love learning about the biographies of works of art—the journeys they have taken before reaching the Gallery—and as an engineering major I am very excited about objects in motion. The newest addition to my tour is *White Disk* (1958), a whimsical, spinning steel mobile by the American sculptor Alexander Calder. It reminds people of a phylogenetic tree, of flower petals, and of the solar system. The best part about leading public tours is that I get to collect such earnest observations and interesting questions; I always want to know what people think.

## “Borders and Boundaries”

*Sofia Kouri, MY '24, Gallery Guide*

I study architecture, so, perhaps predictably, my thinking gravitates toward the spatial: how physical objects suggest space, exist in space, and move through space. It is a privilege to share that perspective on my tour “Borders and Boundaries,” which includes two early twentieth-century paintings—one an abstract work by Josef Albers and the other Georgia O’Keeffe’s rendering of her New Mexico home—along with a nineteenth-century Indonesian textile and an eighteenth-century room from a colonial home in Branford, Connecticut. The Gallery Guide program has allowed me to think through the relationship between art and architecture. It is also helping me understand not only what it means to design physical things for an already heavily designed world but also the historical legacies those designed objects carry.

the tour-goers to share their feedback by completing an online visitor survey, via a QR code, in which they are asked to reflect on how welcome they felt to participate as well as to identify something they learned and anything we could have done to improve the experience. In the 2022–23 academic year, we required new Guides to attend a public Highlights Tour and submit their own reflections on Canvas—not as a critique of the returning Guides but rather as an opportunity for the new Guides to experience a full tour and use it to think through their own practice. As the last step after giving a public Highlights Tour, we ask the Guides to describe, in an online survey, the experience and the level of audience engagement. The Guides also record how many people attended their tour, useful statistics as we consider our future program offerings. This kind of ongoing, 360-degree feedback supports Guides as they experiment with new objects, pedagogical strategies, and themes.

## Visitor Surveys

*Audrey Steinkamp, B.A. 2022, 2022–23 Postbaccalaureate Fellow in Student Engagement*

When public programming went virtual during the pandemic, the Gallery incorporated online surveys to gather immediate feedback from participants. As the Guides began to offer regular, in-person tours again, we wanted to solicit feedback in the galleries. The Guides were already in the habit of holding a laminated sign with their three Community Agreements at the beginning of each tour, so I suggested that we keep the convenience of online surveys by making them accessible via QR code on the back of the sign. After each tour, visitors are invited to use their smartphone to scan the code, which leads to a short form that can be completed on the spot. As part of opening up a line of communication with visitors, we have received some wonderful anecdotes about their experiences.

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## Continued Training

The corps of returning Gallery Guides meets for training every Friday for two hours, ninety minutes of which overlap with the new Guides. This regular meeting time is devoted to skill building, fostering community, deepening critical engagement with the museum, and mentorship. Certain sessions are designed exclusively for the returning Guides to build upon their interests and tour-giving experiences. We set aside thirty minutes each week to check in with returning Guides about their Highlights Tours.

Returning Guides set individual goals at their first training of the year. We reflect on these goals at the end of the fall semester and again at the end of the academic year. The Guides' own goals help inform how we structure individual training sessions





and how we design the syllabus as a whole. One such aim might be to add a new object, either to expand a Guide's repertoire or to replace a work that has gone off view. Guides who speak multiple languages sometimes offer their tour in a second language, broadening the audience of people who might engage with the museum. Presenting tours that are inclusive of our surrounding community is important, and the Guides explore ways to bring in New Haven residents and students alike. Many Guides indicate a desire to become more confident in their delivery of tours, and this might manifest in a skill-based session focused on public speaking or a session devoted to presenting unfamiliar objects. We cultivate a critical mindset among the Guides, and often that inspires visitors to apply a critical lens as well. The returning Guides benefit from sessions in which they can workshop challenges they have experienced on tours, whether addressing complicated or painful histories, acknowledging the settler-colonial context of the museum, or redirecting a thoughtless or offensive comment from an audience member.

Throughout the year, the returning Guides meet with collection curators, conservators, and other staff members to learn about reinstallations, special exhibitions, works in progress, and new acquisitions, initiatives, and challenges. While the new



Guides focus on becoming acquainted with each collection area, the returning Guides have an opportunity to delve deeper. A reinstatement of the permanent collection is a chance to hear from the relevant curator or curators on the process, what is driving their decisions, and the stories they are trying to tell. Returning Guides often have a walkthrough with the curator of a special exhibition. While the Guides will not necessarily add objects from a temporary exhibition into their tours, they learn from hearing about the curator's approach, and as ambassadors of the museum they can then direct visitors to the show. The Conservation Department at the Gallery also has much to contribute, and a trip to Yale's Shared Conservation Lab can highlight the depth of these professionals' involvement in the preservation and presentation of art. As the museum has devoted greater resources and attention to issues of provenance and restitution, the Guides have benefited from sessions with the Curator of Provenance Research. The returning Guides appreciate a glimpse into the leadership and future of the museum: an open session with the Gallery's director or chief curator is an opportunity to ask questions and understand the role of the Guides in the larger museum ecosystem. In these sessions and beyond, staff members from across the museum serve as mentors to the Guides.



## Mentorship

Mentorship is a key element of the returning Guides' responsibilities. In joint sessions for new and returning Gallery Guides, as well as outside of training, returning Guides lend advice and support to the new Guides and to one another. They provide feedback on object tours, they workshop ideas, and they model engagement strategies. The returning Guides are present for all four of the trainees' single-object tours. They serve as a ready audience for the incoming Guides during the presentation portion and provide oral feedback and advice immediately afterward. The returning Guides have the wisdom of lived experience to suggest alternate approaches or to field questions, such as, What if a visitor raises a tough issue, dominates the conversation, or gets too close to a work of art?

### Oral Feedback on Object Tours

*Elizabeth Levie, BR '24, Fall 2023 Co-Head Guide*

In training, new Guides practice presenting their objects to other Guides in small groups and then receive immediate feedback. The comments cover both style (pacing, volume, energy, etc.) and content (whether the information was helpful or confusing, whether the questions were generative or limiting). We typically go around in a circle, which often results in people echoing one another's perspectives and thus emphasizing particularly salient points. Having multiple new Guides present to the same group means that more than one person receives feedback during a given session, which can help ease the feeling of being in the hot seat. It is also helpful for new Guides to hear the comments offered to their peers; when giving constructive criticism, I often think about what might be applicable to multiple presenters. Additionally, new Guides in the group participate in evaluating one another's tours, which creates a collaborative rather than hierarchical learning environment. For returning Guides, offering feedback is an opportunity to pay close attention and to articulate what makes a tour successful.



## Additional Museum Opportunities

The museum itself becomes a site of community for the Guides. Although completion of the Gallery Guide training year is not required in order to work in other areas of the museum, the Guide program is a launching pad for many. An inquiry to a collection curator or conservator might develop into a research project. A session with the Gallery's editor might turn into a work-study position or a follow-up conversation on possible museum

### The Program as a Launching Pad

*Luis Guevara-Flores, JE '25, Gallery Guide*

As an aspiring art history major, I was enticed to come to Yale in part because of the Gallery. Direct access to such a robust, global collection was something that I had not had back home, and I knew that I wanted to take advantage of it. I joined the Gallery Guide program in my sophomore year. As I became comfortable in the museum, I sought further employment in the Department of Prints and Drawings and with the Curator of Provenance Research. By offering training in public speaking, in conducting research, and in making art more accessible, the Gallery Guide program allowed me to expand my studies beyond the classroom and to gain crucial hands-on experience.

career paths. Opportunities abound for students interested in additional museum work, whether in the form of bursary jobs, internships, student-driven curatorial projects, public-education training, or the chance to design public programs such as E-Gallery Talks. Within the Education Department, the Gallery Guides help out in a variety of ways, adapting their tours to the needs of the museum and building on their skill sets in the process. On weekends when we anticipate increased attendance, we think imaginatively with the Guides to present a version of their tours that can accommodate a greater number of people over a

longer period of time. For Yale Family Weekend, for example, Guides might offer more frequent tours that are shorter in duration, focusing on fewer objects. To help accommodate tours by request, such as from members of a visiting alumni class, a local community organization, or incoming students, experienced Guides adapt their public tours to the group in question. In one instance, a Guide worked with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions to record a portion of their Highlights Tour for a video sharing the wonders of the Gallery with prospective students. Upon graduation, many Guides note that they spent

### E-Gallery Talks

*Molleen Theodore, the Jane and Gerald Katcher Curator of Programs*

During the pandemic, the Public Programs team began producing a series of short, prerecorded videos called E-Gallery Talks. Each summer, we have invited interested Guides to create one. Like Highlights Tours, the E-Gallery Talks are object-based and encourage visitors to look closely, but the format, length, and style of engagement are quite distinct. These videos live on Instagram and YouTube and amplify Guides' voices in new ways.



more time in the Gallery than they did in any traditional classroom on campus.

Beyond their own engagement, Gallery Guides also encourage other students to visit the museum by inviting them on tours, sharing news of public programs, and making their peers aware of the resources of the Gallery. There is tremendous potential to build out broader student-engagement activities through this network of Guides. In the 2022–23 academic year, and through the efforts of Audrey Steinkamp, Postbaccalaureate Fellow in Student Engagement, we were able to organize a number of student-focused events, including a Halloween scavenger hunt, a series of study days around reading week and finals, and a Valentine’s Day “Hearts and Crafts” event. All of these efforts share a goal of making the Gallery an integral part of students’ cocurricular lives.

## Halloween Scavenger Hunt

*Audrey Steinkamp, B.A. 2022, 2022–23 Postbaccalaureate Fellow in Student Engagement*

In 2022 the training session for which the Guides dressed up as works of art was only the beginning of our Halloween celebrations. I organized a Halloween scavenger hunt for students and asked the Guides to help run it. Across both days of the weekend, Guides worked alongside me to explain the rules of the hunt and to pack prize bags for over two hundred participants. When they were not working, many Guides participated in the hunt themselves, using the event as an opportunity to introduce their friends to the Gallery and to their role within it.

# Sample Training Syllabus

This is an edited version of the Gallery Guide Training Syllabus from the 2022–23 academic year; it omits any readings assigned by staff members who led sessions and public programs that the Guides were encouraged to attend. Typically, changes are made to the training syllabus throughout the year, with new or revised session topics in response to students' needs and feedback.



## **Gallery Guide Training Syllabus, 2022–23**

**Thursdays, 3:30–5:00 pm / Fridays, 3:00–4:30 pm**

**Meet in the lobby, unless otherwise advised.**

The Gallery Guide program is a paid opportunity for Yale undergraduates to develop and lead interactive, close-looking tours of the museum for the visiting public. Students participate in a yearlong training program overseen by education curators, in which they learn about the collection and how to lead inclusive, interdisciplinary conversations around works of art. In addition to becoming critical and observant museumgoers, Gallery Guides develop transferable skills in public speaking, visual literacy, research, and creative thinking.

Returning Gallery Guides offer regular Highlights Tours to the public at scheduled times. Additionally, returning Guides continue to develop their skills, add objects to their repertoire, serve as mentors to the class of trainees, and participate in the community of Guides.

The training for Guides is overseen by Sydney Skelton Simon, the Bradley Associate Curator of Academic Affairs, and Molleen Theodore, the Jane and Gerald Katcher Curator of Programs, with support from Audrey Steinkamp, B.A. 2022, Postbaccalaureate Fellow in Student Engagement. Elizabeth Kitson, Senior Administrative Assistant in the Education Department, provides administrative support for the program, including approving time cards.

### **Fostering Inclusivity and Mutual Respect in the Program**

Learning is most effective in a comfortable, challenging, and fun environment. As such, we as a group must cultivate mutual respect for ideas, freedom to speak in training, and a professional tone. Please come to training with an open mind and be receptive to different perspectives. If you encounter discriminatory behavior or are made to feel disrespected or hurt by your peers, Gallery staff, and/or our visiting public, come talk to your Head Gallery Guides and/or any one of the curators in the Education Department. You are most welcome to contact Liliana Milkova, the Nolen Curator of Education and Academic Affairs, in confidence if an incident arises involving Education Department staff members.

### **Social Dimensions and Mentorship**

The Gallery Guide program is a supportive social community with features built in to foster friendships and mentorship. From creative icebreakers and paired-looking exercises to local field trips and intragroup social events, the program offers Gallery Guides opportunities to build trust and relationships across class years, majors, and residential colleges. Guides are encouraged to get to know each other inside and outside of the Gallery. During training, Guides have structured time to learn about one another's lives, interests, and personalities. Regular socials and dinners outside the museum create casual settings for interactions with fellow Guides. New and returning Gallery Guides are also sorted into small pod families (two new Guides + two returning Guides), which engender close connections and peer mentorship. Like other student groups and clubs on campus, the Gallery Guide program holds friendship and peer support at its core.

## **Public Programs**

You are encouraged to attend Gallery programs, to join in the Gallery's community of visitors, and to experience and learn from a variety of presentation styles and engagement strategies. Please use the Gallery Guide project site's discussion board on Canvas to log your attendance at and responses to programs you attend. We encourage you to create a dialogue on this platform. Your feedback on programs—the content, format, and audience involvement as well as what went well and what could have been better—is always welcome. You may consider time spent attending a public program as work time and record it on your timesheet, provided you have written a short response on the Canvas site.

## **Pretraining for Returning Gallery Guides (RGGs)**

Thurs., Sept. 1 – Gallery Open House for First-Year Arts Weekend, 6:00–8:00 pm

*RGGs take groups of students on one-object tours and share information about the program and the Gallery. In advance of this event, RGGs should visit the museum and locate their objects.*

Fri., Sept. 2 – No training because Monday classes meet.

Fri., Sept. 9 – Gallery Guide Meet and Greet, 3:00–4:30 pm

*This is an informal, drop-in gathering in the Gallery lobby that gives prospective applicants a chance to meet RGGs and learn about the program.*

Fri., Sept. 16 – **RGG**: Mandatory Gallery Guide Orientation

*(Re)introductions, review syllabus and expectations, set goals. Get reacquainted with the galleries and the collection in preparation for Highlights Tours.*

Fri., Sept. 23 – **RGG**: Exhibition Tour, *Bámigbóyè: A Master Sculptor of the Yorùbá*

*Tradition*, with James Green, the Frances and Benjamin Benenson Foundation Associate Curator of African Art

## **Application and Interview Timeline for New Gallery Guides (NGGs)**

Sun., Sept. 11 – Applications Due

*Fill out the online application through the Yale Student Employment website and upload a one-page PDF with answers to two questions: 1) Why do you want to be a Gallery Guide? 2) Describe a time when you taught someone something. What did you learn? Both parts of the application must be received by 11:59 pm on Sunday, September 11, to be considered.*

Tues., Sept. 13–Fri., Sept. 16 – Applications Reviewed

*Invitations to in-gallery interviews will be sent by Sunday, September 18.*

Tues., Sept. 20–Fri., Sept. 23 – In-Gallery Interviews

*Up to 20 applicants will be interviewed. Deliberations should take place on Friday, September 23, with offers extended by Sunday, September 25. Notifications will be sent out to applicants who were not selected on Monday, September 26.*

## Week 1

Thurs., Sept. 29 – **NGG**: Training Begins: Introductions and Expectations  
*Review the training syllabus, set community norms and personal goals for the year, and prime ourselves to establish two critical skills: close looking and careful listening.*

Fri., Sept. 30 – **NGG** and **RGG**: The Role of Gallery Guides  
*Highlights Tours led by select RGGs, followed by conversations about the role of Guides in the ecosystem of the museum and as facilitators of important conversations with our visiting public.*

*Sat., Oct. 1–Sun., Oct. 2 – **NGG**: Scavenger Hunt / Gallery Orientation with Pod Partner*

## Week 2

Thurs., Oct. 6 – **NGG**: How to Look at Art, with John Walsh, Director Emeritus of the J. Paul Getty Museum, in Los Angeles  
Reading: Jennifer L. Roberts, “The Power of Patience,” *Harvard Magazine*, November–December 2013, 40–43.

Fri., Oct. 7 – **NGG** and **RGG**: How to Choose an Object and the Art of Description: Back-to-Back Drawing

*Sat., Oct. 8–Sun., Oct. 9 – **RGG**: Family Weekend  
RGGs offer tours Saturday and Sunday, 1:00–2:30 pm.*

*Sun., Oct. 9 – **NGG**: Deadline to Select First Object  
Upload as a Word document to the Gallery Guide Canvas site.  
Object selection will be confirmed by Tuesday, October 11.*

## Week 3

Thurs., Oct. 13 – **NGG**: Collection Talk, with Patricia (Pat) Kane, Friends of American Arts Curator of American Decorative Arts, and John Stuart Gordon, the Benjamin Attmore Hewitt Curator of American Decorative Arts

Fri., Oct. 14 –

**NGG**: How to Research Art, with Tess Collwell, Arts Librarian for Research Services, Robert B. Haas Family Arts Library, Yale University

**RGG**: Looking at Art, with John Walsh

*Sun., Oct. 16 – **NGG**: Deadline to Submit Visual Description of First Object  
Upload as a Word document to the Gallery Guide Canvas site.  
Feedback on visual description will be shared by Saturday, October 22.*

*October Recess, Oct. 19–21 – No Training*

## **Week 4**

Thurs., Oct. 27 – **NGG**: Collection Talk, with James Green

Fri., Oct. 28 – **NGG** and **RGG**: Asking Questions  
*Come dressed as a work of art to celebrate Halloween.*

*Sun., Oct. 30 – **NGG**: Deadline to Submit First Object Paper  
Upload as a Word document to the Gallery Guide Canvas site.  
Feedback on object paper will be shared by Tuesday, November 8.*

## **Week 5**

Thurs., Nov. 3 – **NGG**: Collection Talk, with Mark Mitchell, the Holcombe T. Green  
Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture

Fri., Nov. 4 – **NGG** and **RGG**: Feedback and Facilitating Conversations with Dina Bailey,  
Chief Executive Officer of Mountain Top Vision and the Gallery's DEIA/B consultant

Sat., Nov. 5 – **NGG**: Field Trip to the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art and the  
Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, both in Hartford, Conn.

## **Week 6**

**NGG**: *Work on first object-tour script to prepare for first object tours on Friday,  
November 11*

Thurs., Nov. 10 – **NGG**: Framing as an Interpretive Strategy and Moving from Object  
Paper to Tour Script  
Reading: Elizabeth Manekin, Jessica Sack, and Elizabeth Williams, "Framing as an  
Interpretive Strategy," in *Interpreting the Art Museum: A Collection of Essays and  
Case Studies*, ed. Graeme Farnell (Edinburgh: MuseumsEtc, 2015), 108–21.

Fri., Nov. 11 – **NGG** and **RGG**: NGG First Object Tours

*Sun., Nov. 13 – **NGG**: Deadline to Select Second Object  
Upload as a Word document to the Gallery Guide Canvas site.  
Object selection will be confirmed by Tuesday, November 15.*

## **Week 7**

Thurs., Nov. 17 – **NGG**: Collection Talk, with Laurence (Larry) Kanter, Chief Curator and  
the Lionel Goldfrank III Curator of European Art

Fri., Nov. 18 – No Training

*November Recess, Nov. 21–25 – No Training*

*Sun., Nov. 27 – **NGG**: Deadline to Submit Second Object Paper  
Upload as a Word document to the Gallery Guide Canvas site.  
Feedback on object paper will be shared by Tuesday, December 5.*

## Week 8

Thurs., Dec. 1 – **NGG**: Collection Talk, with Susan B. Matheson, the Molly and Walter Bareiss Curator of Ancient Art, and Lisa Brody, Associate Curator of Ancient Art

Fri., Dec. 2 –

**NGG**: Making Connections and Developing a Tour Theme

Reading: Olga Hubbard, “Concepts as Context: Thematic Museum Education and Its Influence on Meaning Making,” *International Journal of Art and Design Education* 33, no. 1 (2014): 103–15.

**RGG**: Exhibition Tour, *Fazal Sheikh: Exposures*, with Judy Ditner, the Richard Benson Associate Curator of Photography and Digital Media, and Yechen Zhao, the Marcia Brady Tucker Fellow, Department of Photography

## Week 9

**NGG**: *Work on second object-tour script to prepare for second object tours on Friday, December 9.*

Thurs., Dec. 8 – **NGG**: Collection Talk, with Keely Orgeman, the Seymour H. Knox, Jr., Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, and Margaret Ewing, the Horace W. Goldsmith Assistant Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art

Fri., Dec. 9 – **NGG** and **RGG**: NGG Second Object Tours and Revisiting Goals from the Beginning of the Semester

*Mon., Dec. 12 – **NGG**: Revise first two object papers and resubmit on Canvas by Tuesday, January 17.*

## Spring Semester

### Week 10

*Tues., Jan. 17 – **NGG**: Deadline to Submit Winter Assignment  
Upload as a Word document to the Gallery Guide Canvas site.  
Feedback will be shared by Friday, January 27.*

Thurs., Jan. 19 – **NGG**: Collection Talk, with Ruth Barnes, the Thomas Jaffe Curator of Indo-Pacific Art

Fri., Jan. 20 – No training because Monday classes meet.

### Week 11

Thurs., Jan. 26 – **NGG**: Conversation, with K. N. McCleary (B.A. 2018, J.D. student, Yale Law School) and Leah Tamar Shrestinian (B.A. 2018, Head Guide 2017–18), curators of *Place, Nations, Generations, Beings: 200 Years of Indigenous North American Art* (on view Nov. 2019–Feb. 2021)

Reading: K. N. McCleary and Leah Tamar Shrestinian, “Entangled Pasts, Collaborative Futures: Reimagining Indigenous North American Art at Yale,” in



K. N. McCleary and Leah Tamar Shrestinian with Joseph Zordan, *Place, Nations, Generations, Beings: 200 Years of Indigenous North American Art*, exh. cat. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Art Gallery, 2019), 17–35.

Fri., Jan. 27 – **NGG** and **RGG**: RGG New Object Tours

*Sun., Jan. 29 – **NGG**: Deadline to Select Third Object  
Upload as a Word document to the Gallery Guide Canvas site.  
Object selection will be confirmed by Tuesday, January 31.*

### **Week 12**

**NGG**: Revise tour script for first two objects to prepare for two-object tours on Friday, February 3.

Thurs., Feb. 2 – **NGG**: Publications, Labels, and Alt Text, with Tiffany Sprague, Director of Publications and Editorial Services, and Transitions

Fri., Feb. 3 – **NGG** and **RGG**: NGG Two-Object Tours

### **Week 13**

Thurs., Feb. 9 – **NGG**: Collection Talk, with Sadako Ohki, Japan Foundation Associate Curator of Japanese Art

Fri., Feb. 10 –

**NGG**: Collection Talk, with Emily Pearce Seigerman, the Ben Lee Damsky Assistant Curator of Numismatics

**RGG**: Collection Talk, with Keely Orgeman and Margaret Ewing

*Sun., Feb. 12 – **NGG**: Deadline to Submit Third Object Paper  
Upload as a Word document to the Gallery Guide Canvas site.  
Feedback on object paper will be shared by Tuesday, February 20.*

### **Week 14**

Thurs., Feb. 16 – **NGG**: Collection Talk, with Denise Leidy, the Ruth and Bruce Dayton Curator of Asian Art

Fri., Feb. 17 – **NGG** and **RGG**: Pod Group Activity

### **Week 15**

**NGG**: Work on third object-tour script to prepare for third object tours on Friday, February 24.

Thurs., Feb. 23 – **NGG**: Incorporating Gallery Architecture and History, with Jessica Sack, the Jan and Frederick Mayer Curator of Public Education

Fri., Feb. 24 – **NGG** and **RGG**: NGG Third Object Tours

*Sun. Feb. 26 – **NGG**: Deadline to Select Fourth Object  
Upload as a Word document to the Gallery Guide Canvas site.  
Object selection will be confirmed by Tuesday, February 28.*

### **Week 16**

Thurs., Mar. 2 – **NGG**: Exhibition Tour, *Crafting Worldviews: Art and Science in Europe, 1500–1800*, with Jessie Park, the Nina and Lee Griggs Assistant Curator of European Art

Fri., Mar. 3 –

**NGG**: Provenance, with Antonia Bartoli, Curator of Provenance Research

**RGG**: Indigenous Representation and Collaboration, with Royce K. Young Wolf, Postdoctoral Associate in Native American Art and Curation

### **Week 17**

Thurs., Mar. 9 – **NGG**: Conservation, with Irma Passeri, the Susan Morse Hilles Chief Conservator, and Anne Turner Gunnison, the Alan J. Dworsky Senior Associate Conservator of Objects

Fri., Mar. 10 – No Training

*Sun., March 12 – **NGG**: Deadline to Submit Fourth Object Paper  
Upload as a Word document to the Gallery Guide Canvas site.  
Feedback on object paper will be shared by Tuesday, March 27.*

*Spring Break, Mar. 13–24 – No Training*

### **Week 18**

**NGG**: *Work on fourth object-tour script to prepare for fourth object tours on Friday, March 31.*

Thurs., Mar. 30 – **NGG**: Presentation Style and Public Speaking, with Elizabeth Harnett, Program Coordinator, Education Department

Fri., Mar. 31 – **NGG** and **RGG**: NGG Fourth Object Tours

### **Week 19**

Thurs., Apr. 6 – **NGG**: Introductions and Putting It All Together

Fri., Apr. 7 – **NGG** and **RGG**: Practice for Evaluation Tours, led by Head Guides  
(Good Friday, staff holiday)

**NGG**: *In Weeks 20, 21, and 22, the NGGs give their evaluation tours to an audience of Gallery staff and fellow Guides. Each NGG signs up for a tour slot in one of the weeks below. They lead an hour-long Highlights Tour for the assembled group, who are invited*

*to come together as a supportive and engaged audience. Immediately following the tour, participants are invited to offer feedback (usually lasting about 10 minutes). The final 15 minutes are set aside for additional constructive reflection and feedback with Sydney, Audrey, and the Head Guides. After the tours, Sydney compiles extensive written feedback to share with each NGG, designed to help sharpen their tours as Guides move toward the public debut.*

## **Week 20**

*Evaluation Tours:*

*Tues., Apr. 11, 3:30–5:00 pm*

*Wed., Apr. 12, 3:30–5:00 pm*

*Thurs., Apr. 13, 3:30–5:00 pm*

*Fri., Apr. 14, 3:00–4:30 pm*

Thurs., Apr. 13 – **NGG**: Practice for Evaluation Tours

Fri., Apr. 14 –

**NGG**: Practice for Evaluation Tours

**RGG**: Roundtable Discussion, with Larry Kanter

## **Week 21**

*Evaluation Tours:*

*Tues., Apr. 18, 3:30–5:00 pm*

*Wed., Apr. 19, 11:00 am–12:30 pm*

*Wed., Apr. 19, 3:30–5:00 pm*

*Thurs., Apr. 20, 3:30–5:00 pm*

Thurs., Apr. 20 – **NGG**: Practice for Evaluation Tours

Fri., Apr. 21 –

**NGG**: Practice for Evaluation Tours

**RGG**: Field Trip to Museum of Modern Art, New York

## **Week 22**

*Evaluation Tours:*

*Tues., Apr. 25, 3:30–5:00 pm*

*Wed., Apr. 26, 3:30–5:00 pm*

*Thurs., Apr. 27, 3:30–5:00 pm*

*Fri., Apr. 28, 1:00–2:30 pm*

Fri., Apr. 28 – **NGG** and **RGG**: End-of-Year Celebration



# Acknowledgments

First and foremost, we are grateful to the students who have participated in and shaped the Gallery Guide program over the past twenty-six years. From the beginning, they have brought energy and fresh ideas. Through their work, the student Guides have enriched our lives, as well as those of countless visitors, staff members, and their peers in the program.

This guide documents changes we implemented over three years of jointly managing the program. These changes were catalyzed by students, who have been strong advocates for bringing a critical lens to the museum and advancing DEIA/B at the Gallery. One of the joys of running this program is that the student Guides are willing partners for change, receptive to interrogating assumptions and trying new approaches. We collect a lot of feedback and hear often about the impact of the program on the Guides themselves, but make no mistake: we learn a lot from them, too.

There are moments when, in the process of learning, we undergo a fundamental change and become inspired to approach our work anew. One such occasion was the exhibition *Place, Nations, Generations, Beings: 200 Years of Indigenous North American Art*, curated by undergraduates K. N. McCleary, Leah Tamar Shrestinian, and Joseph Zordan, that opened in November 2019. *Place, Nations, Generations, Beings* and the students who heralded its message gave us a model for how to allow space for multiple narratives, how to be intentional with language and our positionality, and how to move forward with care, especially toward those who historically have been excluded. We write from the traditional homelands of the Algonquian-speaking peoples and nations, including the Mohegan, Mashantucket Pequot, Eastern Pequot, Schaghticoke, Golden Hill Paugussett, Niantic, and Quinnipiac, who have stewarded through generations the lands and waterways of what is now the state of Connecticut. With respect and an acknowledgment that this work will never be done, we continue to educate ourselves about and honor the enduring relationship that exists between these peoples and nations and this land.

The profound shift brought about by *Place, Nations, Generations, Beings* was magnified by the events that followed, including a global pandemic and domestic protests against racial violence and inequities. Throughout this time, students have steadfastly amplified the voices of those who are most vulnerable and have called on the museum to



practice racial and cultural justice. We have tried to respond to that call through our work, in part by foregrounding inclusive pedagogical and community-based practices. Still, we recognize that violent and oppressive forces contributed to shaping the development of Yale University and its collections and that the museum continues to be a difficult place for many members of the campus and local communities. Our work is ongoing, and we are always learning. The feedback we receive from students, colleagues, and visitors challenges us, sustains us, and propels us forward.

Many colleagues, past and present, have given their time, expertise, and care to the Gallery Guide program. We did not build (or even rebuild) the program from scratch. Activities and other elements of training have been in development since 1998, with contributions from many—including the folks who previously managed the Guides: Ellen M. Alvord, Jaime Ursic, Aja Blanc, Elizabeth Manekin, Ryan Hill, and Daniel Jones. We collaborate, as did they, with colleagues across the Gallery, the Yale community, and beyond to develop and nurture the program. Indeed, staff in nearly every department at the museum interface in some way with the Gallery Guide program, from hiring the students in September to attending their evaluation tours in April and innumerable touch points in between. We especially want to acknowledge the staff in the curatorial departments who lead training sessions and facilitate students' individual object research. Likewise, our colleagues in the Security and Visitor Services Departments are indispensable in-gallery partners to the Guides as they deliver their Highlights Tours. Managing the Guide program gave us an opportunity to work with colleagues in dynamic and illuminating ways, offering a window into the operations of virtually every department at the museum.

Pulling together this *Gallery Guide Guide* was an immensely rewarding experience. The task of articulating all the elements of this complex program gave us clarity not only about what we are doing, but also about why we do this work and the impact it can have. We began to conceive of this guide in the 2021–22 academic year and had productive initial conversations with then Head Guides Sofia Ortega-Guerrero and Conor Downey. Starting in October 2022, we scheduled lengthy blocks of time in which to cowrite, a practice that allowed us to reflect in a new way on the shared project of overseeing the Gallery Guide program. We are grateful

to the people who contributed their voices to this publication: Ellen M. Alvord, Bix Archer, Ruth Barnes, Aja Blanc, Conor Downey, Adin Feder, Chloé Glass, Luis Guevara-Flores, Elizabeth Harnett, Sofía Kourí, Elizabeth Levie, Jiayi “Joyce” Liao, Elizabeth Manekin, Jenny Mao, Mark Mitchell, Sofia Ortega-Guerrero, Audrey Steinkamp, Akio Tamura-Ho, and Bri Wu. Within the Education Department, Liliana Milkova, the Nolen Curator of Education and Academic Affairs, and Jessica Sack, the Jan and Frederick Mayer Curator of Public Education, were invaluable interlocutors as we developed the guide. We are also grateful to Raymond Carlson, who began as the inaugural Manager of Student Engagement in September 2023, for his perspective on this publication as he assumed responsibility for running the program.

We frequently field inquiries about the Gallery Guide program from folks at other museums, and we knew that a resource like this would find an enthusiastic audience. The initial vision for the design and structure was inspired by the *DAP Toolbox* published by the Broad, in Los Angeles, a graphically exciting and informative guide to the history and structure of their Diversity Apprenticeship Program (DAP).<sup>10</sup> We are grateful to Stephanie Wiles, the Henry J. Heinz II Director, and Tiffany Sprague, Director of Publications and Editorial Services, for recognizing the promise of a publication like this, to Julia Oswald for managing the project and editing the text, and to Chris Chew, Graphic Designer, for shaping the dynamic and visually enticing product you see here. Its pages are further enlivened by the work of Jessica Smolinski, Documentation Photographer.

We are sincerely thankful to everyone who has touched this work and been touched by it.

# Afterword: Reflection and Feedback

We hope this *Gallery Guide Guide* is a helpful resource, whether you are starting a new student-guide program, refining an existing one, or simply looking for inspiration for engagement more generally. We have viewed the program as an incubator of ideas and practices, and while it has informed our work in academic affairs and public programs, its lessons are wide-reaching. Preparing this guide has been an opportunity for us to reflect on our work and on that of many committed colleagues, past and present; to revisit the history and evolution of the program; and to refine our goals for its future. Over its more than twenty-five-year history, the Gallery Guide program has evolved in numerous ways, alongside a museum that has grown substantially in staff, physical footprint, and collections. In the last five years, we have adapted the program to meet increasingly complex needs and have had to make hard choices about how to allocate our time in training. Fostering community, learning the collection, and building critical skills are consistent pillars of training, but our priorities might shift depending on what the year brings and what needs the students have.

Reflection and feedback have become integral to our practice, in the program and beyond. By putting this *Gallery Guide Guide* out in the world, we hope to connect with you, its readers. We invite you to reach out to us with questions and to share your own challenges and successes. Our ambition is for reflection and feedback to continue to drive the Gallery Guide program's development—and to keep meeting the moment, as the moment changes. We are grateful to the hundreds of students who have participated in the program in the past quarter century and who have shaped it over the years, and to those who will shape it in the future. Their questions, challenges, and successes fuel the program. Guides pursue a variety of career paths after graduation, only some in art history or museums, but all of them continue to have relationships with cultural institutions in some capacity. Their collective commitment to the ideals undergirding the Gallery Guide program offers hope for a future of museums as inclusive and collaborative spaces.

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## Endnotes

- 1 Jules David Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 1–19.
- 2 Liz Lerman, "Critical Response Process," <https://lizlerman.com/critical-response-process/>.
- 3 Pamela Franks, "A Twenty-First-Century Teaching Museum: The Expanded Yale University Art Gallery," *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* (2013): 22–37; and Pamela Franks, Jessica Sack, and John Walsh, "Looking to Learn, Learning to Teach," *ibid.*, 38–49.
- 4 Elizabeth Manekin and Elizabeth Williams, "Teaching Students to Teach: A Case Study from the Yale University Art Gallery," *Journal of Museum Education* 40, no. 3 (October 2015): 278–87.
- 5 "Open Letter to the Yale University Art Gallery," signed by 277 Yale University students and alumni and Yale University Art Gallery fellows and staff, collectively drafted between May 25 and June 3, 2020, <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe5gCRNziX2T8VpTRKL6a-yxS7aeVrDdbanhZQ8ZFOnl8UweA/viewform>; and Stephanie Wiles, letter of reply to the Yale University Art Gallery community, June 5, 2020, <https://mailchi.mp/yale/nw788uvfez-204672?e=18ae8308f6>.
- 6 Jennifer L. Roberts, "The Power of Patience," *Harvard Magazine*, November–December 2013, 40–43, <https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2013/11/the-power-of-patience>.
- 7 Elizabeth Manekin, Jessica Sack, and Elizabeth Williams, "Framing as an Interpretive Strategy," in *Interpreting the Art Museum: A Collection of Essays and Case Studies*, ed. Graeme Farnell (Edinburgh: MuseumsEtc, 2015), 109.
- 8 A key text for deepening Guides' understanding of the history of the Gallery and of Yale vis-à-vis the Indigenous people whose land it now occupies has been K. N. McCleary and Leah Tamar Shrestinian, "Entangled Pasts, Collaborative Futures: Reimagining Indigenous North American Art at Yale," in K. N. McCleary and Leah Tamar Shrestinian with Joseph Zordan, *Place, Nations, Generations, Beings: 200 Years of Indigenous North American Art*, exh. cat. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Art Gallery, 2019), 17–35.
- 9 Philip Yenawine, *Visual Thinking Strategies: Using Art to Deepen Learning across School Disciplines* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Press, 2013).
- 10 George Luna-Peña, Program Manager for the DAP, gave a presentation about the program at the Gallery in May 2022. A full PDF of the *DAP Toolbox* is available on the Broad's website, <https://www.thebroad.org/dap/toolbox>.





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