

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS: 2017 CCL/MELLON FOUNDATION SEMINAR

### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FOURTH ANNUAL CCL/MELLON FOUNDATION SEMINAR IN CURATORIAL PRACTICE

*New York City, August 3, 2017* — This summer, the Center for Curatorial Leadership (CCL) hosted fifteen art history doctoral students in New York City for the CCL/Mellon Foundation Seminar in Curatorial Practice. Designed to offer emerging scholars the knowledge and skills to pursue curatorial work, the Seminar included in-depth visits to museum collections and special exhibitions alongside mentorship, coursework, and conversations with leaders in the field.

“The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation’s continued support has enabled CCL to engage an emerging generation of museum professionals,” explains Elizabeth Easton, Director and Co-Founder of the CCL. “This year, we were impressed by a cohort of students who recognized the high potential of curatorial practice for expanding the possibilities of their scholarly work.”

2017 participant Chanon Kenji Praepipatmongkol, doctoral candidate at the University of Michigan, noted: “So many of the sessions reminded me of why I wanted to work in museums in the first place, and opened my eyes to new opportunities I had never thought of before. The whole experience was nothing short of transformative in the way I think about my research and my career.”

Highlights from the two weeks include:

#### COLLECTION & EXHIBITION TOURS

Seminar participants toured nearly one dozen NYC-area museums over the course of the program for exhibition tours, conversations with curators, and insight into the unique inner workings of various institutions. The curriculum introduced the students to a diverse spread of institutional models. Sessions at museums including The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Brooklyn Museum revealed the complexities of encyclopedic programming; The Museum of Modern Art, the New Museum, and The 8th Floor spoke to the challenges of using modern and contemporary art to reflect timely social and political viewpoints; and the National Museum of the American Indian and The Studio Museum in Harlem provided a nuanced look into culturally specific programs and goals.

The Seminar also provided the opportunity to learn about the organizational processes behind multiple types and formats of exhibitions. At the Whitney Museum, David Breslin, DeMartini Family Curator and Director of the Collection, explained how original themes can be drawn from an institution's holdings to form responsive and rotating permanent collection installations. In her touring retrospective of the artist Robert Rauschenberg, Leah Dickerman, Marlene Hess Curator of Painting and Sculpture at MoMA, spoke to the values of prolonged and focused scholarship. At the Noguchi Museum, Senior Curator Dakin Hart discussed his collaborations with contemporary artists to prompt new readings and points of comparison for sculptor Isamu Noguchi.

#### **GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP**

This year, students were introduced to the primacy of institutional governance through the lens of curators, trustees, and current and former museum directors. Speakers stressed healthy relationships with board members and collectors as well as the fundraising responsibilities incumbent on emerging curators. A discussion with Mariët Westermann of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation centered around philanthropic giving and foundation-wide priorities for effecting change, while longtime museum trustees including CCL Chair and Co-founder Agnes Gund and Metropolitan Museum trustee Shelby White spoke to the need for curators to cultivate strong connections with their museum's board.

#### **MISSION & PURPOSE**

Each year, Seminar students embark on a practicum assignment considering the alignment between a museum's mission statement and its visitor experience. This summer, participants worked in small teams to analyze the Neue Galerie, Jewish Museum, and Cooper Hewitt and made recommendations for their assigned institutions. Group exercises and instruction fostered a deeper understanding of mission statements and the many pieces that influence a visitor's experience of a museum. After two weeks, the teams presented their findings to a set of respondents and discussed the ways that museums articulate their sense of purpose through both large-scale and minute decisions.

—

Through a full and robust schedule of activities, the fifteen students in this year's Seminar demonstrated a thorough understanding of the ways that museums operate, inspire, and serve diverse publics. In providing a focused introduction to the curatorial path and its integration of art historical scholarship with education and audience engagement, the Seminar equipped participants to better contemplate and pursue museum careers.

It was a pleasure to work with the doctoral students in this year's CCL/Mellon Foundation Seminar in Curatorial Practice. We wish them luck in their future pursuits and look forward to learning of their many accomplishments still ahead!

Contact:

Joseph Shaikewitz

646-405-8067

[joseph.shaikewitz@artcurators.org](mailto:joseph.shaikewitz@artcurators.org)