



For immediate release

A Grant From The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Seeds a \$1.2 Million Initiative at Skidmore College to Explore Diversity and Collections at the Tang Teaching Museum

SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y. (April 11, 2016) — The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has awarded a substantial grant to Skidmore College to seed a \$1.2 million, three-year initiative to strengthen the ways the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery uses its collection to explore issues of identity and race, and to create new research resources and enhance public engagement with its collection both on campus and in the region. The grant from The Andrew Mellon Foundation totals \$840,000, with the Ellsworth Kelly Foundation and Skidmore College providing \$360,000 in matching funds. The initiative is a key part of the College's commitment to diversity, integrative learning, and community engagement.

"We are extremely appreciative and grateful for the support that The Andrew Mellon Foundation is providing for this project," said Skidmore College President Philip Glotzbach. "The Mellon Foundation has been enormously important to Skidmore over the years, and I believe this latest grant represents a significant step forward for the Tang Museum. The focus on diversity, access, and collections will bolster the work the College does to ensure that every Skidmore student develops the intercultural understanding and global awareness necessary to thrive in this complex and increasingly interconnected world."

The new funding will enable Skidmore students, faculty, and staff, as well as researchers and the public nationally and internationally to engage in new and innovative ways with the Tang Teaching Museum's growing collection. In particular, the initiative will allow for original scholarship on works of art that have been recently given to the Museum, by notable contemporary African American artists such as Nayland Blake, Willie Cole, Lorna Simpson, Kara Walker, and Carrie Mae Weems, as well as by other living artists of many identities working in various types of media.

“The Tang Museum’s collection is particularly strong in works of art that speak about race and identity—in the last five years, more than half our exhibitions focused on either diverse or traditionally underrepresented artists, such as our current survey of painter Alma Thomas,” said Ian Berry, Dayton Director of the Tang Museum. “We are excited to deepen the use of the collection to explore these ideas, realities, and questions, and this generous grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation makes that possible. A leading part of our mission is to foster inclusion and critical discussions through the arts, and we are continuing to grow both our collection and our programming to serve as a national model on this front.”

On campus, the initiative will include College faculty members working with Museum staff and students to develop new course content that crosses disciplinary lines and uses collection objects as the catalyst for conversations and innovative curricular development. Through this work in object-based learning, faculty and students will bring out the numerous connections between works of art in the collection and contemporary issues of critical importance. The Museum will also bring visiting artists and scholars to campus to engage with faculty, students, staff, and members of the broader community, through public events such as dialogues, workshops, performances, and exhibitions.

In addition to these programs, the project will allow for a range of other initiatives at the Museum, including a documentary and research project focusing on more than 1,500 works in the collection. This will lead to an enhanced digital archive for use by students, faculty, staff, scholars, researchers, and the public, allowing for rich experiences of the Museum's collection for people anywhere in the world.

For the project, the Tang will work with other institutions of higher education, such as the New York Six Liberal Arts Consortium and area community colleges, as well as area school districts and community groups that serve racially diverse populations in the region. This kind of educational work on multiple levels will allow the Museum to expand upon Skidmore's liberal arts mission with students from various backgrounds.

About the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Founded in 1969, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation endeavors to strengthen, promote, and, where necessary, defend the contributions of the humanities and the arts to human flourishing and to the well-being of diverse and democratic societies by supporting exemplary institutions of higher education and culture as they renew and provide access to an invaluable heritage of ambitious, path-breaking work. Additional information is available at mellon.org.

About Skidmore College

Located in Saratoga Spring, N.Y., Skidmore is a coeducational liberal arts college with an enrollment of 2,450 students from 45 states and 70 countries. The College grants the bachelor of arts and the bachelor of science degree, with majors in 42 academic disciplines and self-determined majors, as well as double majors and minors. Nearly 60 percent of Skidmore's students spend a semester or a year off campus during their academic careers, and annually about 25 percent of the student body engages in research with a faculty member, including more than 80 in the Summer Student-Faculty Research Program. Skidmore was granted a charter for Phi Beta Kappa in 1970 and also recognizes academic achievement through election to a select list of other honor societies. The College prides itself on its creative approaches to academic and co-curricular life and actively supports the belief that "Creative Thought Matters." For more information, visit skidmore.edu.

About the Tang Teaching Museum

The Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College is a pioneer of interdisciplinary exploration and learning. A cultural anchor of New York's Capital Region, the institution's approach has become a model for university art museums across the country—with exhibition programs and series that bring together the visual and performing arts with fields of study such as history, chemistry, economics, and physics. The Tang has one of the most rigorous faculty-engagement initiatives in the nation, the Mellon Seminar, and robust publication and touring exhibition initiatives that extend the institution's reach far beyond its walls. The Tang Teaching Museum's building, designed by architect Antoine Predock, serves as a visual metaphor for the convergence of ideas and exchange the intuition catalyzes. The Museum celebrated its 15th anniversary in 2015. More information at skidmore.edu/tang.

###

For more information, please contact:

Michael Janairo
Assistant Director for Engagement
Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum
And Art Gallery at Skidmore College
518-580-5542
mjanairo@skidmore.edu

Isabel Sinistore
Resnicow and Associates
212-671-5175
isinistore@resnicow.com

Whitney Wei
Resnicow and Associates
212-671-5179
wwei@resnicow.com