STRATEGIC PLAN 2018–2022

THE BLOCK MUSEUM AS FRAME OF MIND
We believe deeply in the capacity of art encounters to catalyze thinking about what is at stake for us in our lives.
For our campus community and the many publics we serve, the Block is a space for examining assumptions, reframing questions, and bridging perspectives. **We believe deeply in the capacity of art encounters to catalyze thinking about what is at stake for us in our lives.** What is important if we are to lead meaningful lives? What imprint do we want to leave as a trace of who we are? How can we change history by creating future narratives that allow us to learn from the past? We invite all of our visitors to join us in sharing art experiences as springboards for thinking critically about who we are, where we have been, and where we are going.

The Block’s mission points in a “Northwestern Direction.” Its distinctive identity among academic art museums is inextricably linked to the DNA of the University and what Northwestern refers to as the “And/And”—an emphasis on innovative interdisciplinary study and research.

Rooted in a **process-driven practice that emphasizes dialogue and collaboration**, the Block’s work reaches across the whole spectrum of the University.

**We ask, “How do fields of human endeavor and creativity intersect in unexpected ways that yield entirely new ways of thinking?”**

From the inception of an idea through its realization as an exhibition or engagement program, we connect along the way with an increasingly broad range of academic departments, centers, and institutes, and link to the University’s unique resources. The interplay of process and content results in innovative scholarship and programming, encouraging discussion that begins with artworks and extends far beyond the traditional frame.

This new strategic plan sets out goals that will sustain and amplify this ethos over the next five years. With it, we also embrace Northwestern’s mission to provide an education that prepares our students to live purposefully and to make the world a better and more equitable place for all.

**Lisa Graziose Corrin,**
**Ellen Philips Katz Director**
MISSION

The Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art enriches teaching and learning on the campuses of Northwestern University and in the communities of the surrounding region by:

PRESENTING

art across time, cultures, and media;

CONVENING

interdisciplinary discussions in which art is a springboard for exploring issues and ideas;

COLLECTING

art that supports the Northwestern University curriculum.
TO ENGAGE

To be a dynamic, imaginative, and innovative teaching and learning resource at Northwestern University through an artistic program that is a springboard for thought-provoking discussions relevant to the curriculum and to our lives today.

TO INSPIRE

To develop a new generation of artists, scholars, and arts professionals by providing experiential learning opportunities bridging the classroom and the world beyond the campus.

TO SERVE

To be a crossroad between campus and community, by creating an environment where all visitors feel welcome to participate.
OUR CORE VALUES

• Strive for excellence, innovation, criticality, and rigor in our work.

• Manifest Northwestern’s unique strengths and resources and support its strategic goals, priorities, and values.

• Reflect the University’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in all we do.

• Embody a collaborative spirit and build our work from partnerships.

• Celebrate art as a lived and relevant experience.

• Welcome all voices and be generous to our visitors, and to one another.
HOW WAS OUR STRATEGIC PLAN CREATED?

Students meet with poet Mark Nowak in the exhibition *The Left Front: Radical Art in the “Red Decade” 1929–1940* (2014)
OUR LISTENING TOUR
Beginning in fall 2016, Block senior staff members embarked on a listening tour to learn more from the Museum’s diverse stakeholders about their perceptions of the Block and about how we could become an even more effective resource and partner in the future. With Northwestern students, faculty, and administrators, we discussed changes in teaching and student expectations, emerging research interests, the future of higher education, and opportunities for innovation through interdisciplinary partnerships. We asked our peers about how the campus art museum model is evolving in response to these transformations, and where they thought the most exciting initiatives were taking place within and beyond art museums.

SHAPING OUR PLAN
We shaped our new strategic plan based on these many conversations, staff retreats, and board discussions, and with the input of focus groups facilitated by Northwestern’s Office of Change Management. The names of the interviewees—Northwestern faculty, students, administrators, and donors, as well as Block staff and the Block Board of Advisors, community members, and leaders of peer institutions across the country—are listed on pages 56–61.

OUR NORTHWESTERN DIRECTION
Our plan also reflects the direction Northwestern is taking inside and outside the classroom, on campus and beyond. We consulted the recommendations outlined in The Office of Change Management’s Block Museum Strategic Priorities Focus Report (2016) and reports of the Global Strategy Task Force, the Faculty Task Force for Undergraduate Experience, the Native American Outreach and Inclusion Task Force, We Will (the University’s strategic plan), and the Student Affairs report on African American/Black Student Experience.
REACHING OUR GOALS

The Block has now completed execution of its previous strategic plan, *The Block in 2015*. Begun in 2012, the plan envisioned how the Block would create a solid new foundation with an interdisciplinary teaching mission and an organizational culture built on partnerships.

**BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE CULTURE**

To embrace a collaborative approach on the part of the Block team required extraordinary creativity and openness, unlocking the potential of partnerships. It meant giving agency to talented, committed staff and to our stakeholders in order to make the Block “Our Museum.” Thanks to the team’s work ethic, imagination, and capacity to see and seize opportunities, recognition of the Block’s contributions to Northwestern and to our field has been growing steadily since we began implementing our last strategic plan in 2012.

**BUILDING REPUTATION**

Over the past five years, the Block’s exhibitions, publications and programming have received significant national media attention, competitive grants, and invitations to collaborate on traveling exhibitions in the U.S. and abroad. Locally, the *Chicago Reader* praised the Block for boldly daring to undertake “challenging” and even “radical” projects that reach beyond the ordinary and enliven Chicago’s art scene. Nationally, *The New York Times* and art monthlies such as *Artforum* have recognized the Block for exhibitions addressing complex topics often sidestepped by other museums and for astutely putting its finger on overlooked areas of art history. In 2016 one of its exhibitions was named in the top ten nationally by *The New York Times* art critic Holland Cotter.
“The arts are strengthening.
They show us worlds other than our own and teach us
tolerance, respect, and empathy.
Art is an amazing vehicle for this.”
-NORTHWESTERN ADMINISTRATOR

BUILDING MOMENTUM
Since recharging our teaching mission, the museum has increased its impact well beyond its compact gross floor area of 21,347 square feet. Its success has also meant heightened scrutiny to meet a new standard of excellence. There is now an expectation that the Block will continue to raise the caliber and relevance of its program and expand its connectivity to campus. This reflects the ambition of our stakeholders to see the Block reach its fullest potential.

BUILDING THE FUTURE
There is agreement among our staff and our stakeholders that the Block has reached a pivot point and has fully maximized what its staff, its resources, and its spaces can deliver. This necessitates stepping back and evaluating how best to deploy our time, resources and creativity, and to think about the Block’s distinctive identity.

This new strategic plan will ensure that the Block can sustain and amplify its engaged museum model and fulfill the yearning for transformative art experiences that our campus and community look to us to provide. As one Northwestern administrator so eloquently stated, “The arts are strengthening. They show us worlds other than our own and teach us tolerance, respect and empathy. Art is an amazing vehicle for this.”

BUILDING INVESTMENT
To ensure the Block’s outstanding work can flourish, our most passionate ambassadors, the Block Board of Advisors, now 32 strong, endowed two positions in 2016—Curator of Contemporary Art and Associate Director of Engagement—and created an endowment to support exhibitions, engagement, and collections.
Visitors experience the exhibition *If You Remember, I'll Remember* (2017)
The past five years have been a time for the Block to redefine its identity at Northwestern and among campus art museums by drawing on Northwestern’s strengths and culture.

Interviewees value the Block’s openness—its willingness to think collectively with faculty, students, peer institutions, and the broader community. They emphasized the special opportunity the Block has to be a trailblazer.

In thinking of its future program and even changes to its facility, the consensus was that the Block should strive to be “a machine for learning,” to emulate a “trial and error lab,” to avoid becoming “simply a building with a collection.” Interviewees also identified three areas in which the Block has distinguished itself, stating that the Block is:

- AN INTERDISCIPLINARY POWERHOUSE
- ITS RELATIONSHIPS
- A FRAME OF MIND

“…the foundation of the Block’s identity has become its role as a convener of the arts and a center for interdisciplinary teaching and learning.”

—OFFICE OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT
HOW OUR INTERVIEWEES DESCRIBED US —

“THE BLOCK IS...
AN EXPERIMENTER
ONE OF NORTHWESTERN’S LIVING ROOMS
A CONVENOR OF ALL
A HUB, THINGS VISUAL
A COLLABORATOR,
A CONNECTOR
A BEACON, A BRIDGE
AN ARENA FOR DIALOGUE
A LOUNGE FOR INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS
THAT LEAD WHO KNOWS WHERE
NORTHWESTERN’S
FRONT PORCH
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY
POWERHOUSE”
THE BLOCK IS an Interdisciplinary Powerhouse

The Block’s national reputation for intellectual rigor and originality, and the timeliness of its programs, has been growing consistently. Its mission to exhibit art across time and cultures—not exclusively contemporary art—also makes the Block distinctive since it does not have an encyclopedic collection.

SIGNATURE EXHIBITION STYLE
Block programming places art in a broad historic, social, and political context. Its strong interdisciplinary focus has become its hallmark. Exhibitions showcase Northwestern’s “brain trust”—the scholarship of Block staff, Northwestern faculty and students from across the University.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE
Through discussions with exhibition advisory committees that include scholars working internationally, the Block sharpens cutting-edge scholarship. The global perspective of its program provides a platform for multiple historic narratives. One Northwestern student said, “The Block has a phenomenal dedication to bringing marginalized voices into the art world...dedication to diverse voices has gotten me to come back.”

ART AS A SPRINGBOARD
In keeping with its core value of critical inquiry, the Block takes on bold, big world topics and does not shy away from complex issues and ideas. To quote one Northwestern professor, “As a university art museum the Block pushes things intellectually, politically, artistically, in ways other museums cannot.”

“How do fields of human endeavor and creativity intersect in unexpected ways which yield entirely new ways of thinking?”
Students work with Marc Walton, a faculty member in the McCormick School of Engineering and Materials Sciences, in preparation for the exhibition, *Paint the Eyes Softer: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt* (2018).
A Northwestern student works with visiting artist Marie Watt during a series of community-wide “Equity Sewing Circles” organized by the artist (2017)
THE BLOCK IS its Relationships

The Block fosters connections across campus and community and cultivates a broad audience. Its engagement events integrate imaginative pedagogy and programming both at the Museum and beyond its walls. Innovative engagement strategies have resulted in an unprecedented level of activity, partnerships, and visibility.

COLLABORATOR AND CONNECTOR
Discussion groups and informal gatherings bring together faculty from multiple fields to realize projects relevant to their research and curriculum, and to move art experiences into both the galleries and classrooms across Northwestern. To date, the Block has built partnerships with over sixty university departments and program units, and across nearly all of its schools. The Museum also reaches out to scholars internationally, creating opportunities for connections to Northwestern.

NETWORKER AND PARTNER
Free and open to all, the Block is a bridge between the campus and the diverse local community. Partnerships with local organizations lead to programs designed specifically for their constituencies, with Block staff members serving as resources and facilitating access to other University partners. This approach empowers community groups and schools to develop art experiences to meet their own missions.

“The Block has a phenomenal dedication to bringing marginalized voices into the art world…dedication to diverse voices has gotten me to come back.”

—NORTHWESTERN STUDENT
“The Block knows its work has to have life and legs beyond its area, to be bigger and broader than just an art museum.”

-NORTHWESTERN ALUMNA
THE BLOCK IS a Frame of Mind

A Block “Frame of Mind” takes the Museum’s work beyond its galleries. By permeating the campus, the Block’s program intersects with other areas of inquiry and has a more substantial impact on faculty and students.

A MUSEUM WITHOUT WALLS
The Block embeds projects and programs in Northwestern campus sites—from classrooms to laboratories to practice halls and residence halls—and in community settings including public schools.

TIMELY QUESTIONS
Many Block exhibitions and public programs pose ethical questions, igniting crucial conversations that bring together campus and community. Stated a faculty member, “What kind of human beings do we want to be? What made you the way you are? Art can teach compassion and tolerance, civil behavior and civic behavior—how you see yourself in a broader context. It can provide self-knowledge.”

EXPANSIVE CREATIVITY AND RESEARCH
The Block regularly invites artists to Northwestern to engage with students, faculty, and community groups in and outside the Museum. How artists work, including how they frame questions and even embrace failure, provides alternative models and tools for students’ own inquiry. The expansiveness of an artistic process in the pursuit of the right questions can yield incredible innovation. As one dean stated, “There is great value in the example of the artist’s process as a teaching moment that can highlight patterns of thinking, the importance of tangents, of risk and of failure. Creativity in motion is a great example for students.”

“What kind of human beings do we want to be? What made you the way you are?”

—NORTHEASTERN FACULTY MEMBER
“Creativity in motion is a great example for students.”

-NORTHEASTERN DEAN
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES
STIMULATE STUDENT MEANING-MAKING
AMPLIFY FACULTY PARTNERSHIPS
GALVANIZE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
CULTIVATE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES
ACTIVATE OUR DISTINCTIVE IDENTITY
CREATE OUR FUTURE
“The Block is a beacon for kids who are not just interested in art. The art brings groups of people together.”

-NORTHWESTERN STUDENT
STIMULATE STUDENT MEANING-MAKING

1.

Be a go-to place for student study and research, experiential learning, social gatherings, and discussion of bold, big world issues and ideas.

The entire Museum is a dynamic classroom for learning through art. It is also a space for socializing and student-planned activities, and a site for expansive discussions in which art becomes a window to new ways of seeing, thinking, and processing the complexities of both history and the present. The Block strives for all students to see themselves reflected in the Museum.

The Block’s programs stimulate students to make meaning from their education and their life experiences. The content encourages them to probe, affirm, or revise their values, assumptions, and perspectives, and to develop a more nuanced view of the world. Our process-based practice provides an organizational model that emphasizes negotiating difference, shared problem solving, and civil disagreement.

Many students are multicautes with interdisciplinary interests who seek outlets for pursuing their passions and sharing them with others. They particularly gravitate toward opportunities to design experiences for themselves and toward places in which people with different opinions can come together for meaningful exchanges. The Block can be, to quote one student, “a beacon for kids who are not just interested in art—the art brings groups of people together.” The Museum’s programs and spaces should support a range of learning styles and respond to changes in social behaviors.

While the Block’s student offerings are strong, a recent student survey shows that, while 100 percent of interviewees are aware of the Block as a campus resource, only 50 percent have actually visited the Museum. Increasing participation to match awareness is essential if the Block is to be at the center of university life.

Experiential learning opportunities such as student-curated exhibitions connect classroom learning to life after graduation. Block staff members provide exceptional mentoring and provide access to the professional pipeline.
**ACTIONS FOR IMPACT**

- Launch a listening tour by meeting with student organizations and student leaders to discuss undergraduate ownership and usage of the Block. Use findings to inform the Museum’s programs and operations and empower students.

- Invest in research and mentoring opportunities for students, especially those from underrepresented groups.

- Work with undergraduate and graduate student groups on integrated communications and marketing strategies to raise student awareness of and participation in the Block.

- With students, evaluate the role, activities, and effectiveness of the Block Student Advisory Committee and implement recommendations.

- Redesign the Block’s inner and outer lobby spaces to expand gathering space for students.

- Host annual welcome events for first generation, low income, and underrepresented students.

- Initiate a new graduate fellowship, funded by the Graduate School and drawing students from any Northwestern school or academic department.

- With partners in Admissions and Alumni Relations and Development, fully integrate the Block into the campus welcome experience, ensuring inclusion in programs, printed material, and tours.
Students studying with Anthropology professor Soyini Madison perform in the Block gallery (2014)
The “ideas-driven” dimension of the Block is valued by faculty across disciplines—in STEM fields as well as the arts, humanities, and social sciences. The caliber, range, and themes of the Block’s programs are the traditional mainstay of a liberal arts education, in particular its “moral terrain” and teaching critical inquiry, close looking, and associative thinking.

For many faculty, “the visual” is a dimension of their research, and their courses incorporate art, media, and visual culture studies. Faculty view the Block as an ideal entity to support the pursuit of these interests. They recommend developing a structure that will lead to even more faculty-museum partnerships, promote interdepartmental collaborations with the Museum as a convener, and nourish emergent and innovative scholarship.

Faculty are strongly interested in teaching with art but noted that the Block’s collection should expand to include more examples of global contemporary art, for which the demand is greatest. They highly value the campus artist visits with workshops, seminars, and informal exchanges. Improving online access to the collection will also increase object-based teaching—faculty would like to see even more opportunities for students to engage with material objects in the Museum as part of their courses.

Faculty view the Block’s participatory and dialogic approach to teaching with art as a valuable pedagogical model, capable of bringing “a different kind of teaching ethics into the classroom.” To encourage more use of the Museum in teaching, the Block can host collection orientations for faculty and facilitate faculty exchange of teaching ideas via its website.

With its ability to convene faculty from across the campus, the Block is also an ideal space for helping to create community. Improving its gathering spaces would encourage faculty to think of the Block as a space for connecting with one another.
ACTIONS FOR IMPACT

◆ Introduce a structure for developing faculty-museum collaborations and collecting feedback on the Museum’s effectiveness as a teaching resource.

◆ Ensure all new faculty receive orientation to the Block’s teaching and learning resources and make the Block part of their orientation experience.

◆ With faculty input, develop and implement a strategy for increasing their participation in the Museum’s global contemporary art program, the development of the contemporary art collection, and shaping artist visits.

◆ Implement recommendations from the Office of Change Management’s Block Cinema Review and transition to an expansive media arts focus.

◆ Increase awareness of the Block’s availability for faculty gatherings and social events to build community.

◆ Host collection orientations and develop a platform for faculty to exchange ideas for object-based teaching.

◆ Digitize collection and transition to user-friendly software to provide improved faculty access to the collection online.

◆ With Northwestern’s libraries, develop a strategy for future collaborations, collection development, and opportunities to impact teaching.
Associate Professor of Screen Cultures, Miriam Petty, chats with Professor Michael Gillespie, City University of New York, after taking part in the Black Arts Initiative conference, *Temporalities and Territories* (2017)
Middle school students in Evanston's Y.O.U. (Youth & Opportunity United) program experience the exhibition *If You Remember, I'll Remember* (2017).
Free and open to all, the Block is one of the outward-looking venues at Northwestern that offers broad public access to the “brain trust” and resources of a major research university.

The Block is a proactive advocate for the Chicagoland creative community. It collects and exhibits the work of artists who make their home here and features the region’s scholars, artists, and museum professionals in its programs. The Block’s exhibitions have recently been the basis of courses taught at other institutions of higher education. Increasingly, the Block is considered a meaningful contributor to Chicagoland’s reputation as a major arts capital. However, the Museum should seek synergies with a broader range of cultural partners to build upon this perception.

The Block works in tandem with community and educational partners to create programming designed specifically for their constituencies.

Inspired by exhibitions, programs have included discussions centered on social justice, equity and inclusion, the continuing impact of historical trauma, and the celebration of shared regional history. This customized approach ensures the Block is relevant to these partners.

The Block is seeing continued growth in audience numbers, and visitors come from increasingly greater distances to participate in its programs. Yet many view visiting a university campus as an intimidating prospect. If the Block is to be a strong bridge between the campus and the community, it should invest in its relationships and earn a reputation for being a welcoming, available, and generous community resource. Similarly, a diverse cultural scene enhances Evanston’s vitality; the Block should expand its leadership role by sharing its connections and experience to help strengthen this dynamic arts landscape.

Ensure the Block has a stake in Chicagoland’s cultural landscape while making it a relevant art museum for its surrounding communities.
ACTIONS FOR IMPACT

- Launch a listening tour in Chicago, Evanston, and the North Shore to evaluate and develop the Block's role in the cultural community.

- Increase representation from Chicagoland, Evanston, and the North Shore on the Block Board of Advisors.

- Develop a museum community relations plan with Northwestern’s Office of Neighborhood and Community Relations.

- Implement family-focused programming as a summer community highlight.

- Roll out a Block awareness campaign targeting Chicagoland, Evanston, and the North Shore.

- Create projects with artists that engage the communities surrounding Northwestern’s campuses.

- Work with educators to develop opportunities to use the Block’s collection and exhibitions in middle school and high school classes.

- Review Visitor Services skill sets, training, staffing, and practices to ensure optimum visitor experience.
Evanston community members join the Block and students and teachers from Chicago's Old Town School of Folk Music for a musical happening at the opening of William Blake and The Age of Aquarius (2017)
Bisi Silva, Director of The Center for Contemporary Art, Lagos, Nigeria, participates in the Block’s Visual Vanguard speaker series and meets with faculty and students in Northwestern’s Program of African Studies (2017)
Encourage a broad view of human experience, culture, and history, and be a magnet for global exchange by bringing the world to Northwestern and taking Northwestern to the world.

The Block’s exhibitions and programs embody a global perspective that encourages cultural empathy—the ability to consider contexts beyond our own and to see the world and understand its history from a broad point of view. A global perspective acknowledges our interdependence, engenders tolerant behavior, and inspires work toward the common good.

The Block has the staff expertise, international connections, and programmatic scope to develop exhibitions that find “intersections, interconnections, and transactions that cross borders,” a goal of Northwestern’s Global Task Force Report. Its international partnerships support Northwestern’s aspiration to raise its visibility abroad.

The Block actively collaborates with institutions, artists, and scholars internationally and connects Northwestern faculty and students to what is happening in the arts and humanities globally. The Block’s program also connects to the histories and experiences of the diverse communities of Chicagoland, especially its immigrant populations, and shares their narratives with the public. This is a rich area for the Museum to mine, which complements its collection and its context as well as Northwestern’s own.

The Block’s program offers expansive opportunities for collaboration with area studies programs such as the Keyman Modern Turkish Studies Program, Asian Studies Program, Middle East and North African Studies Program, Program of African Studies, and Native American and Indigenous Studies Cluster, as well as with departments of foreign languages and the world-renowned Melville S. Herskovits Library of African Studies.
**ACTIONS FOR IMPACT**

- Actively seek exhibitions and programs with a global perspective and position the local in relation to the global.

- Develop opportunities for partnerships outside the U.S. and take Block exhibitions abroad.

- Broaden curricular use of Block Cinema in global education.

- With the Melville J. Herskovits Library for African Studies, develop opportunities for collaboration, including acquisitions, scholarship, and artist projects.

- Collaborate with the Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Studies and area studies programs on publications, international partnerships, and traveling exhibitions.

- Focus the Block’s art acquisition strategy on expanding the collection’s global perspective, especially in contemporary art.

- Develop an engagement strategy for Northwestern’s international students.

- Expand communications strategy to broaden awareness of the Museum beyond the continental United States.
Opening of the exhibition *Everything is Fine*, 2017 MFA thesis show of Northwestern's Department of Art Theory and Practice
The Block has brought imagination and entrepreneurial spirit to “curating” its identity. It must now bring the same creativity to curating its reputation by building broader familiarity with its approach, its program, and its niche among academic art museums. Attending to this as a continuing priority will build capacity. It will enable the Museum to expand relationships with faculty, students, and peers; to attract new audiences; to help elevate visibility of the University’s eminence; and to expand the Block’s support base.

Disseminating the Block’s work through traveling exhibitions and publications and sharing case studies of its practices among cultural sector peers will continue to significantly amplify its reputation. The Block’s projects receive national media coverage, particularly when they travel. Its publications feature landmark scholarship; a recent book was named by *The New York Times* one of the best art books of 2017.

To ensure that thought-provoking art experiences are part of the everyday life on campus, the Block is exploring opportunities for commissioning temporary artworks responding to the unique spaces and context of Northwestern. The Museum’s Block Cinema program is highly regarded in Chicago and nationally. Improving its alignment within the Block’s overall identity will also bolster the Museum’s visibility and reputation.

Excellence in the arts is among Northwestern’s most distinguished legacies. As an effective bridge-builder with a prime location within the new Arts Circle neighborhood, the Block’s program connects the dots between visual, performing, media, and literary arts. University investment in the Arts Circle’s marketing efforts has raised the profile of all artistic fields as part of Northwestern’s identity. The Block has benefited immensely from its intersection with this University initiative.
ACTIONS FOR IMPACT

- Focus on fostering landmark scholarship and innovative exhibitions and expanding peer partnerships across distinguished museums.

- Document and disseminate the Block’s scholarship through the print publications program, digital content, and staff participation in conferences.

- Conduct a strategic planning process to develop and implement an integrated programming, engagement, and communications plan for Block Cinema.

- When Block exhibitions travel, work closely with the University to maximize the impact on the reputation of the Museum and the University.

- Evaluate and expand the Block’s communications efforts to achieve cohesive, effective, and far-reaching communications on campus, regionally and nationally, and in partnership with the Arts Circle.

- Create and roll out a new website and graphic “attitude” reflecting the Block’s distinctive identity.

- Share the Block’s work through a digital publishing platform.

- Introduce a campus art program by commissioning temporary artworks outside the Museum’s galleries.
Audience members gather in the museum lobby for a screening at Block Cinema (2017)
A Block Student Advisory Board member welcomes her friends to the Block Museum during Wildcat Welcome, Northwestern's annual freshman orientation (2017)
6 CREATE OUR FUTURE

Maintain momentum and ensure the sustainability of the Block’s work while preserving its core values.

Investments that leverage the Block’s recent achievements and the Museum’s adventurousness and entrepreneurial vivacity build capacity to ensure a sustainable future. The Block’s continuing success adds dimension to Northwestern’s reputation and promotes its legacy in the arts, which is exceptional among major research universities in the United States.

Expanding the Museum’s base of annual contributions by creating a pipeline for future support will ensure its program meets the standards of excellence now expected of Northwestern’s art museum. The Block’s forthcoming 40th birthday in 2020 is an auspicious date for focusing on new support for the Museum and for its collection.

To retain the Block’s exceptional staff and maintain its “culture of yes,” it is important to balance opportunism and creativity with turnkey approaches and activities to anchor daily operations. When recruiting staff and volunteer leadership, the Block should continue to reflect its core value of diversity and inclusion.

Improvements to the design and size of the Museum’s facility would greatly enhance its ability to serve students, faculty, and the broader community. The Museum lacks adequate teaching spaces, gallery spaces for presentations of its collection, and the flexibility to accommodate a robust range of teaching and learning platforms. Its galleries are not scaled for organizing or receiving significant exhibitions from major institutions. This limits the Block’s ability to partner with distinguished peer institutions and, consequently, limits visibility for the Museum and for Northwestern.

As the Museum takes considered action to continue the successes of recent years, the Block frames its future not as a fixed destination but as a constant reframing of ideas, perspectives, and relationships. This frame of mind will position the Museum for its next chapter.
ACTIONS FOR IMPACT

- Develop a stewardship strategy to create a reliable base of annual support and continue to increase the Block’s endowment.

- Diversify staff and volunteer leadership by reviewing recruitment processes and working closely with appropriate University departments and external advisors.

- Invest in the Block staff through professional development and work-life balance.

- Review, update, and create new internal protocols and processes for maximizing the efficiency of the Museum’s operations.

- Launch initiatives to honor the Block’s 40th birthday in 2020, including an art acquisition and collection support campaign.

- Inaugurate a collecting council to support the Block’s collection.

- In anticipation of a future renovation and expansion, review the Block’s facility needs and current site.

- Develop a strategy for leading a successful capital campaign and a business plan to sustain future operations.
A student visits the exhibition William Blake and the Age of Aquarius (2017)
1980
Distinguished art collectors and benefactors, Mary and Leigh Block, donate funds for the construction of an art exhibition venue. In recognition of their gift, the University names the changing exhibition space the Mary and Leigh Block Gallery.

1988
The Blocks transfer ownership of their important collection of outdoor European modernist sculpture to Northwestern and the Mary and Leigh Block Gallery.

1998
In recognition of its growing collection and its expanding programming, the Gallery becomes the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art.

2000
The Museum opens a newly reconstructed facility designed by acclaimed Chicago architect Dirk Lohan (grandson of Mies van der Rohe).

2008
The Block is formally accredited by the American Association of Museums.

2012
The Block rewrites its mission and vision statements to emphasize its role as a museum committed to teaching, learning, and serving as a community resource.
“The Block doesn’t behave like a stand-alone museum. You feel it exists because of Northwestern.”

—NORTHEASTERN FACULTY MEMBER

Artist Walter Kitundu creates *Tracing the Building* (2016), a participatory light installation in the Block’s lobby.
$20 million endowment

$3 million operating budget

Open 36 weeks of the year

40,000 total visitors
  including 6,800 public program attendees and 2,250 cinema attendees

400 annual events
  including

  99 tours & research visits
  152 classes
  105 public programs
  40 cinema screenings
6,000 WORKS IN THE COLLECTION

32 BOARD OF ADVISORS MEMBERS
25 FULL-TIME STAFF
30 STUDENT DOCENTS
15 STUDENT WORKERS
2 GRADUATE FELLOWS

90,000 ANNUAL WEB VISITORS

15K EMAIL SUBSCRIBERS
14K FOLLOWERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA
150 ANNUAL PRESS MENTIONS

60 CAMPUS COLLABORATORS
18 PARTNER DEPARTMENTS
14 NATIONAL AND REGIONAL FOUNDATIONS FUNDERS:

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE FROM YOUR CAMPUS ART MUSEUM?
INTERVIEWEES

**NORTHWESTERN COMMUNITY**

- **Julie Allen** Associate Vice-President Schools and Programs, Alumni Relations and Development
- **Alan Anderson** Executive Director, Neighborhood and Community Relations
- **Martin Antonetti** Director of Distinctive Collections, Northwestern Libraries
- **Mary Baglivo** Former Vice President, Global Marketing and Communications
- **Jabbar Bennett** Associate Provost & Chief Diversity Officer, Diversity and Inclusion
- **Debra Ann Blade** Assistant Director of Building Services, Marketing & Promotions, Recreation Services at Norris University Center
- **Bruce Carruthers** Director, Buffett Institute for Global Studies and John D. MacArthur Chair and Professor of Sociology
- **Diane Claussen** Managing Director, Wirtz Center for Theater and Interpretation
- **Huey Copeland** Associate Professor of Art History and former Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, The Graduate School
- **Scott Curtis** Director, Program in Communication, Northwestern University in Qatar
- **John D’Angelo** Vice President of Facilities Management
- **Everette E. Dennis** Dean and Chief Executive Officer, Northwestern University in Qatar
- **Rob Donahue** Associate Director, Center for Civic Engagement
- **Jesus Escobar** Harold H. and Virginia Anderson Chair, Department of Art History
- **Reg Gibbons** Frances Hooper Chair in the Arts and Humanities, Director, Center for the Writing Arts
- **Elena Gonzales** Visiting Scholar, American Studies
- **Heidi Gross** Assistant Director, Center for Civic Engagement
- **Devorah Grynspan** Vice-President for International Relations and Director, International Program Development
- **Esmerelda Kale** George & Mary LeCron Foster Curator, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies, Distinctive Collections, Northwestern Libraries
- **Melissa Kaufman** Executive Director, The Garage
- **Scott Krafft** Curator, Northwestern Libraries
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Janet Dees, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, provides insight into an artwork in the exhibition *If You Remember, I’ll Remember* (2017)
AN ARENA FOR DIALOGUE
A HUB, A COLLABORATOR, A CONNECTOR, A BEACON, A BRIDGE
A CONVENOR OF ALL THINGS VISUAL
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY POWERHOUSE
NORTHWESTERN’S FRONT PORCH
NORTHWESTERN’S FRONT PORCH
LOUNGE FOR INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS THAT LEAD WHO KNOWS WHERE