



2016-2017 Block Museum Fellow Talia Shabtay leads an exhibition tour.

Unique fellowship puts interdisciplinary scholar in Block Museum

Northwestern's Block Museum and The Graduate School team up to change the face of museum fellowships

EVANSTON - The Block Museum of Art and The Graduate School announce the creation of an annual interdisciplinary fellowship enabling graduate students from any school or department across Northwestern University to work within the museum for a full academic year. The fellow will serve alongside the Block's art history fellow, appointed annually from the art history department's doctoral program.

The new Block Museum fellowship, explicitly intended for students studying outside of arts disciplines, is the first of its kind in the nation. The unique position recognizes the increasingly interdisciplinary work of art museums and the growing numbers of students, beyond art history, engaged in research involving visual culture and museum studies.

“In recent years, faculty and graduate students from anthropology, psychology, music, performance studies, the McCormick School of Engineering and the Kellogg School of Management, among other departments and schools, have become engaged with the Block’s programs and research opportunities,” says Lisa Corrin, the Block’s Ellen Philips Katz Director.

“Our interdisciplinary fellowship program expands this participation, allowing graduates across Northwestern to work on exhibitions and publications, to use the Block as a laboratory for collecting data, and even to observe the daily operations of the Museum in connection with analyses of organizational culture. Having students actively involved with every area of the Block is the museum’s highest priority, and it’s the heart and soul of its teaching and learning mission.”

Art history graduate fellows have long been integral members of the museum staff, providing support for exhibition and collection research, curation, writing and catalog production. Focusing on projects that are matched to their interests and fields of study, fellows often explore ideas that complement their dissertations. Graduate student involvement with exhibitions at the Block greatly raises the visibility of students’ own research. For example, “The Left Front: Radical Art in the ‘Red Decade,’” a 2014 exhibition curated by two doctoral candidates, was the subject of articles in *The New Yorker*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*.

“Graduate students from all disciplines embedded in the art museum will bring new insights to research as well as new methodologies from outside museology and art history,” says Teresa K. Woodruff, dean of The Graduate School and associate provost for graduate education. “These students will ask questions differently and have the capacity to use art as a dynamic springboard for discussions of ideas that are relevant across fields. The Block is a museum for all of Northwestern, and through this partnership, the museum has become a research site for all of Northwestern as well.”

Beth Derderian, Ph.D. candidate in anthropology, has been named the inaugural Block Museum interdisciplinary fellow for 2017-18. Derderian brings a research focus on the intersection of global and local cultural practices in the United Arab Emirates. She is joined by Tamar Kharatishvili, who will serve as the 2017-18 Block Museum art history doctoral fellow. Kharatishvili’s current research looks at histories of transportation technology and cultural identity. The 2017-18 graduate fellows will work closely with Corinne Granof, Block Museum curator of academic programs, and Janet Dees, the Steven and Lisa Munster Tananbaum Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art.

“The Block Museum offers students a model for how to think about academic inquiry across disciplines and, crucially, how to present those concepts in the wider world,” Granof said. “The Fellowships are unique opportunities for students studying at a graduate level to gain experiences in careers that go beyond academic fields and to learn how intellectual inquiry can be extended to broader audiences.”