

ACKLANDARTMUSEUM

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Emily Kass to leave the Ackland Art Museum after successful eight-year tenure

Emily Kass, Director of the Ackland Art Museum at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill since 2006, has announced that she will leave the Museum on July 18, 2014.

“Looking ahead,” Kass said, “I know that the Ackland will continue to grow and build on its national and international reputation. The Ackland is, and will remain, among the finest public university art museums in the country.”

Kass led the Ackland through a period of significant growth and development. During her tenure, attendance increased from 33,000 to 80,000 annual visitors and program participants. Kass’ vision for university engagement has been hallmarked by collaboration with the schools of Medicine, Education, Government, and Social Work as well as departments across the College of Arts and Sciences. The involvement of university students and faculty at the Museum grew from fewer than 2,500 to more than 11,000 annually over the last eight years.

According to Carol Tresolini, Vice Provost for Academic Initiatives, “Emily has linked the Ackland tightly to the University’s academic mission and programs, invigorating student and faculty engagement with the museum’s collection.” University access to the permanent collection was expanded in 2009 through the creation of the Ackland’s Study Gallery, allowing faculty members to create small exhibitions related to courses ranging from art history to geography to biology. The Ackland’s internship program has served 39 graduate and 23 undergraduate students in the past five years. In addition to university students, 5,000 students and teachers from a nine-county area attend K-12 curriculum-based school tours at the Ackland each year. The Ackland Museum Store, which opened in 2011 on the corner of East Franklin and Columbia Streets, has become a popular downtown destination and supports the work of area artists and artisans.

Kass implemented an ambitious exhibition schedule that reached new audiences. *Circa 1958: Breaking Ground in American Art* (2008) honored the museum’s 50th anniversary and *Carolina Collects: 150 Years of Modern and Contemporary Art from Alumni Collections* (2011) celebrated the investment of Carolina alumni in the visual arts. *More Love: Art, Politics, and Sharing since the 1990s* (2013) received an award

of Excellence from the Association of Art Museum Curators in 2014. Several exhibitions organized under her leadership have toured nationally, including *More Love* and *Thornton Dial: Thoughts on Paper* (2012). In addition, 2009's *At the Heart of Progress: Coal, Iron, and Steam Since 1750* was shown in museums in France and England.

Kass has overseen several significant gallery re-installations of the Ackland's permanent collection, including *Art and Cultural Exchange along the Silk Road*, *The Western Tradition*, and the galleries of Asian art. Over 2,700 works have been acquired, strengthening the encyclopedic nature of the Ackland's permanent collection. Moreover, conservation of the permanent collection has been a priority of Kass', with a multiyear initiative to conserve the 84 most important Asian screens and scrolls. A four-year project to fully digitize the 17,000-piece permanent collection will be completed later this year, with searchable access available through the Ackland's website.

During Kass' tenure, major funding for Museum projects and endowments has included private support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Samuel A. Kress Foundation, The William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust, and public support from the Institute for Museum and Library Services, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the NC Arts Council.

Kass describes her contributions this way: "I have had the privilege of working with a talented team of professionals on the staff, with faculty members, a supportive National Advisory Board, and with the community. Together, we have advanced the Museum's program in profound ways. I leave the museum with a solid foundation, knowing that the next director will continue to build upon the strengths of the Ackland."