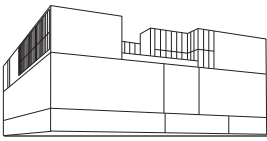


## THE IOWA IDEA

The University of Iowa continues to be a destination university for aspiring artists and art historians. Iowa's commitment to the arts began soon after its founding in 1847, with fine art classes starting in the 1880s and formal programs taking root just after the turn of the century. The innovative "Iowa Idea" of bringing artists and scholars together in an academic context was first formulated in the 1920s by University of Iowa President Walter Jessup and Graduate Dean Carl Seashore. This was a revolutionary concept; for decades, institutions taught art and art history as separate disciplines. With the Iowa Idea, artists trained within a liberal arts environment that would combine studio art courses with the history and theory of art. The historians, in turn, would benefit from their proximity to and inclusion in the creative processes of art production. As such, UI's School of Art and Art History (SAAH), founded in 1938 by Lester Longman, became the model for many arts programs around the nation.

Since coming up with this trailblazing idea, the University of Iowa has seen many leaders in the arts contribute to its consistently top-ranked programs. The UI famously pioneered the embrace of artistic achievement as grounds for advanced degrees. In 1922, the university established that works of music, visual arts, or literature could fulfill the thesis requirements for a master's degree. Soon, the master of fine arts (MFA) degree became the standard for graduate study in the arts. In 1940, Elizabeth Catlett completed her MFA in sculpture at the University of Iowa, becoming the first person, first woman, and first African American to receive the degree. Additionally, the Iowa Idea and MFA led to the inception of one of the university's most famous programs, the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

Notable faculty members and students of the SAAH include Iowa Regionalist Grant Wood; historian and first director of the SAAH Lester Longman; printmaker and creator of the MFA in printmaking Mauricio Lasansky; printmaker and painter Philip Guston; intermedia artist Hans Breder; Museum of Modern Art curator Riva Castleman; painter Oliver Lee Jackson; intermedia feminist artist Ana Mendieta; painter Byron Burford; Pop artist David Hockney; and first scholar to receive a PhD in African art history, Roy Sieber.



## THE ROLE OF THE MUSEUM

When the University of Iowa opened its art museum in 1969, the school had already been collecting art for several decades. Just as the Iowa Idea and SAAH were developing in the early twentieth century, the university worked to expand its art collection. Using the Mark Ranney Memorial Fund, the university purchased key works in the current collection, such as Joan Miró's 1939 *A Drop of Dew Falling from the Wing of a Bird Awakens Rosalie Asleep in the Shade of a Cobweb* and Max Beckmann's 1943 *Karneval*, to serve the teaching, research, and creative mission of the campus. These early acquisitions were followed by Jackson Pollock's *Mural*, gifted by Peggy Guggenheim in 1951; the Owen and Leone Elliott Collection in 1962; and the Maxwell and Elizabeth Stanley Collection of African Art in 1984, all contributing to the extensive possibilities for research and study. These artworks and more distinguish the University of Iowa's Stanley Museum of Art as possessing one of the premier university art collections in the United States.

Since its inception, the Stanley Museum of Art has partnered with SAAH to sponsor annual MFA shows and faculty exhibitions. Furthermore, artworks created by many of the renowned faculty and students are included in the collection. The Stanley has also collaborated with SAAH faculty and graduate students to curate shows that are closely linked to their research, courses, and seminars.

As the new facility opens, the University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art will continue to support the university as a destination for the arts. Future plans include strengthening ties with the SAAH through split faculty and curator positions. In addition to museum responsibilities, the individuals in these positions would teach at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, mentor students pursuing museum careers, and serve as liaisons between the Museum and SAAH.

## SOURCES

The 'Iowa Idea' | School of Art and Art History | College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
The University of Iowa ([uiowa.edu](http://uiowa.edu))

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UI Art Building to be home of new innovation center | Iowa Now ([uiowa.edu](http://uiowa.edu))