

# IOWA

## Stanley Museum of Art

The University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art Receives Mellon Foundation Funding to Support Research on Its Renowned African Art Collection

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Iowa City, IA – The UI Stanley Museum of Art has been awarded a \$400,000 grant from the Mellon Foundation to support in-depth, interdisciplinary research focusing on the provenance of its celebrated collection of African art. The grant will allow the museum to hire a full-time Mellon Curatorial Fellow and two half-time positions—a Mellon Curatorial Assistant for Provenance Research and a Mellon Graduate Assistant. During the two-year grant period, the Stanley’s Curator of African Art, Dr. Cory Gundlach, will supervise this team as they research, document, and publish the provenance (history of ownership) of artworks in the Stanley’s permanent collection, beginning with historical objects from Africa. The Mellon-funded team will also lay the groundwork for provenance research on the Stanley’s collection of indigenous art from the Americas, much of which is from Ancient West Mexico, Peru, and Bolivia.

Additionally, this generous grant from the Mellon Foundation will support public programs offering diverse perspectives on the challenges of provenance research and the recovered histories of objects in the Stanley’s collection, and it will create two University of Iowa courses on African art and Museum Studies, one of which will be co-taught with curatorial staff at the

Sidney and Lois Eskenazi Museum of Art at Indiana University and made available to students at both universities.

“We are tremendously grateful to the Mellon Foundation for supporting this crucial initiative,” said the Stanley’s director, Lauren Lessing, “We are committed to a curatorial practice that centers equity, representation, and reparation. To achieve this, we need to recover the complex histories of the objects in our care, build partnerships with the communities represented in our collection, and teach the next generation of museum professionals. This grant will make all of that possible.”

“I’m honored and excited to work for a university art museum that prioritizes sustained research on the ethical status of historical objects in its permanent collection and that is committed to using that research to manifest social justice,” said Gundlach, “and I’m especially grateful for the Mellon Foundation’s sponsorship of this important work.”

The University of Iowa established the first PhD program in African art history in the United States. Roy Sieber, the first scholar to receive the degree in 1957, helped to create the African Studies Program at Indiana University, Bloomington the following year. The Stanley’s internationally recognized African art collection was developed to support the teaching of African art history, and it has served for over 40 years as an important educational resource as well as a catalyst for scholarly research and creative art.

“For decades, the African art collection in the UI Stanley Museum of Art has made our university a destination for the study of African art and art history,” says Executive Vice President and Provost Kevin Kregel. “The work made possible by this grant will add to that legacy of distinction. But most important, it will honor the history of these extraordinary objects and model the kind of scholarship we hope our students will carry forward into their own professional and academic careers.”

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### **About the University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art**

Founded in 1969 and recently re-opened in a new, state-of-the-art building, the University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art is a leading university art museum that serves as a vital cultural resource for members of the public as well as a multi-disciplinary, creative hub for students across campus. Striving to provide relevant, thought-provoking experiences, the Stanley cultivates experimentation as an innovative teaching and learning center for the university and beyond. As part of the first university to award a graduate degree in studio art (1924), the first to confer an MFA degree (1940), and the first university in the United States to award a PhD in African art history (1957), the museum is home to a renowned collection of more than 17,000 objects from around the world. Admission to the museum is always free for everyone. Learn more about the Stanley at [stanleymuseum.uiowa.edu](https://stanleymuseum.uiowa.edu).

### **About the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation is the largest supporter of the arts and humanities in the United States. Since 1969, the Foundation has been guided by its core belief that the humanities and arts are essential to human understanding. The Foundation believes that the arts and humanities are where we express our complex humanity, and that everyone deserves the beauty, transcendence, and freedom that can be found there. Through our grants, we seek to build just communities enriched by meaning and empowered by critical thinking, where ideas and imagination can thrive. Learn more at [mellon.org](https://mellon.org).

## CAPTIONS

Left to right:

### ***Mwanangana (figure of a chief)***

Chokwe style

First half of the 19th century

Wood

The Stanley Collection of African Art, X1986.576

Unrecorded artist; Angola

### ***Epa headdress***

Yorùbá (Ekiti) style

Mid-20th century

Wood, beads, pigment

The Stanley Collection of African Art, X1986.318

### ***Possibly Oba Fasiku, Alaaye of Ikerin***

Nigerian, ca. 1871–1976

### ***Lupona (royal caryatid stool)***

Luba style

19th century

Wood

The Stanley Collection of African Art, X1986.457

Unrecorded artist; Democratic Republic of the Congo