

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS ST. PETE

THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG (MFA) EXPANDS THE SCOPE OF THE MUSEUM STUDIES INSTITUTE WITH NEW INITIATIVES IN COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT, ALONG WITH FORTHCOMING FALL PROGRAMMING SERIES

The Museum Studies Institute serves as the MFA's internal hub for fostering intellectual and creative ideas centered on, and inspired by, the encyclopedic art museum.



ST. PETERSBURG, FL (September 15, 2023) – The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg (MFA), is pleased to announce the next phase of our Museum Studies Institute, with a special emphasis on advancing research related to the Museum's permanent collection. The Museum recently launched a comprehensive initiative that includes placing objects under conservation review, intensifying provenance research, re-evaluating works of art

through the lens of more current and inclusive art historical methodologies, ensuring the completeness of registration records, and collaborating across departments to re-examine familiar objects from a cross-disciplinary perspective. This internal assessment will engage the public through various means. It will be showcased this fall when the Museum opens [The Nature of Art](#), an interdisciplinary exhibition featuring rarely seen objects from the MFA Collection. This exhibition will come to life through the contributions of contemporary artists whose work will interact with the historical pieces in the collection.

The research conducted for the recent *Explore the Vaults: Images Private & Public, c. 1500-1800* exhibition led to the significant reattribution of a work on paper in the MFA Collection. In 1969, the MFA received a remarkable pastel portrait widely believed to have been created by the renowned British painter Francis Cotes. The portrait's subject, an elegant woman wearing a fur-trimmed coat, was identified as Cotes' wife, whom he married in 1765. This attribution went unquestioned for over half a century until it was recently discovered to be incorrect. Current scholarship strongly indicates that the work is, in fact, by Katherine Read, an equally important artist who, despite her historical under-recognition, deserves appreciation. This reattribution will be explored by Senior Curator of Contemporary Art Katherine Pill in the presentation [Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?](#), as part of The Story of Art series. This talk will be held at the MFA on Thursday, September 21, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

As an accredited art museum, the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg adheres to the professional standards set forth by the American Alliance of Museums and the Association of Art Museum Directors. Like peer institutions, the MFA is committed to continuously evaluating and enhancing its processes to ensure full compliance with best practices and the highest standards at all times. "During this time, we are not only reassessing our existing collection management practices but also exploring new curatorial approaches to further enhance our understanding of the MFA Collection," said CEO & Executive Director Anne-Marie Russell. "Amidst an ever-changing world, cross-cultural connoisseurship, aesthetics, and conservation practices provide new models for understanding objects, whether that means including indigenous voices in the curatorial arena, re-evaluating conservation practices regarding objects created for sacred function, or simply shifting more traditional art historical classification systems to expand the communicative possibilities of art objects. The story of art is continuously evolving, as new research unearths discoveries and allows the re-examination of familiar objects with a fresh perspective."

Embarking on a new era, the MFA is drawing inspiration from some of the preeminent encyclopedic art museums worldwide and actively adapting to a changing world that significantly impacts art museum practices. In late Fall of 2022, the Museum Studies Institute was established, serving as the MFA's internal "think tank" that encompasses all the intellectual and creative imaginings generated from, and orbiting around, an encyclopedic art museum. It is the MFA's responsibility to safeguard and preserve works of art—objects that represent the highest aspirations of humankind—in perpetuity. This stewardship is done amid the reality of a dynamic and constantly evolving world.

The MFA educates its staff within the Museum Studies Institute framework to ensure that procedures meet established standards and reflect the ongoing commitment to improving practices. In line with these endeavors and following the path of institutions like the Museum of Fine Arts Boston and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the MFA has initiated the comprehensive process of conducting a thorough provenance review of its collection.

Furthermore, through the Museum Studies Institute, the MFA has welcomed distinguished scholars in the museum field to engage in discussions about topics and ideas related to encyclopedic art museums. Lectures by

renowned experts on the history of art museums, conversations on captivating topics, and symposia examining current challenges—from climate change to inclusivity to new media—allow the MFA to extend internal discussions and engage the greater community in the conversation.

The MFA initiated its public programming for the Museum Studies Institute in the [Winter-Spring 2023 Programming Season](#), welcoming scholars to discuss the history of the encyclopedic museum.

The MFA recently unveiled the [Fall 2023 Programming Season](#) with a continuation of Museum Studies Institute programs, including [The Art of the Americas with Andrew James Hamilton](#).

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ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG

The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg (MFA) has an encyclopedic collection of art from around the globe and across the centuries, with almost 5,000 years of civilization represented in thousands of objects extending from antiquity to the present. The collection includes works by Georgia O’Keefe, Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot, Auguste Rodin, Kehinde Wiley, Jacob Lawrence, and many others, as well as ancient Greek and Roman, Asian, African, Art of the Americas and Native American art. The MFA’s photographic collection is one of the largest and well-respected in the Southeast. The museum’s rotating exhibition galleries feature a diverse selection of temporary exhibitions from all over the world, as well as exhibitions curated from the museum’s extensive collection. In addition to its robust exhibition program, the MFA engages the community through exciting public programs and events and serves students through youth programs and a partnership with the Pinellas County School System. Learn more at mfastpete.org.

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