

FY 2014 SFAC Request

1. **Executive Summary: Mission and means of accomplishing goals; justification of Blaffer Art Museum's student fees allocation in terms of student benefits.**

Blaffer Art Museum's mission is to further the understanding of contemporary art through exhibitions, publications, and public programs of merit and distinction. It serves as a resource for the exploration of visual art and contemporary culture for the students, faculty, and staff of the University of Houston and beyond. As the gateway between the University of Houston and the City of Houston, Blaffer Art Museum is a catalyst for creative innovation, experimentation, and scholarship. Its exhibitions and programs are free and open to the public, create community through dialogue and participation, and inspire an appreciation for the visual arts as a vital force in shaping contemporary culture.

The museum accomplishes this mission through many activities that involve UH students, including, but not limited to (not in priority order):

- The presentation and origination of exhibitions and publications of the highest aesthetic caliber, coordinated with participation from a corps of student employees/volunteers;
- Lectures, tours, film screenings, and performances by visiting artists and scholars, free and open to students and the public;
- Collaborative programming for and by students in the newly renovated museum courtyard (completed summer 2013);
- Educational outreach programs for predominantly high-school aged youth and up, guided by some highly trained, paid UH students from various backgrounds, such as Art/Art History and Education;
- Formal internship program where students can receive credit hours for their work;
- **School of Art Annual Student Exhibition and Masters of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition** developed in collaboration with the School of Art.

Blaffer Art Museum reaches the larger population of university students through student outreach volunteers; paid and unpaid museum internships; curricular tie-ins through professor and curator guided tours in the museum in fields including Architecture, Philosophy, Education, Comparative Cultural Studies and English; hands-on teaching experience for educators-in-training; and more broadly through the opportunity to explore ideas and culture through visual art.

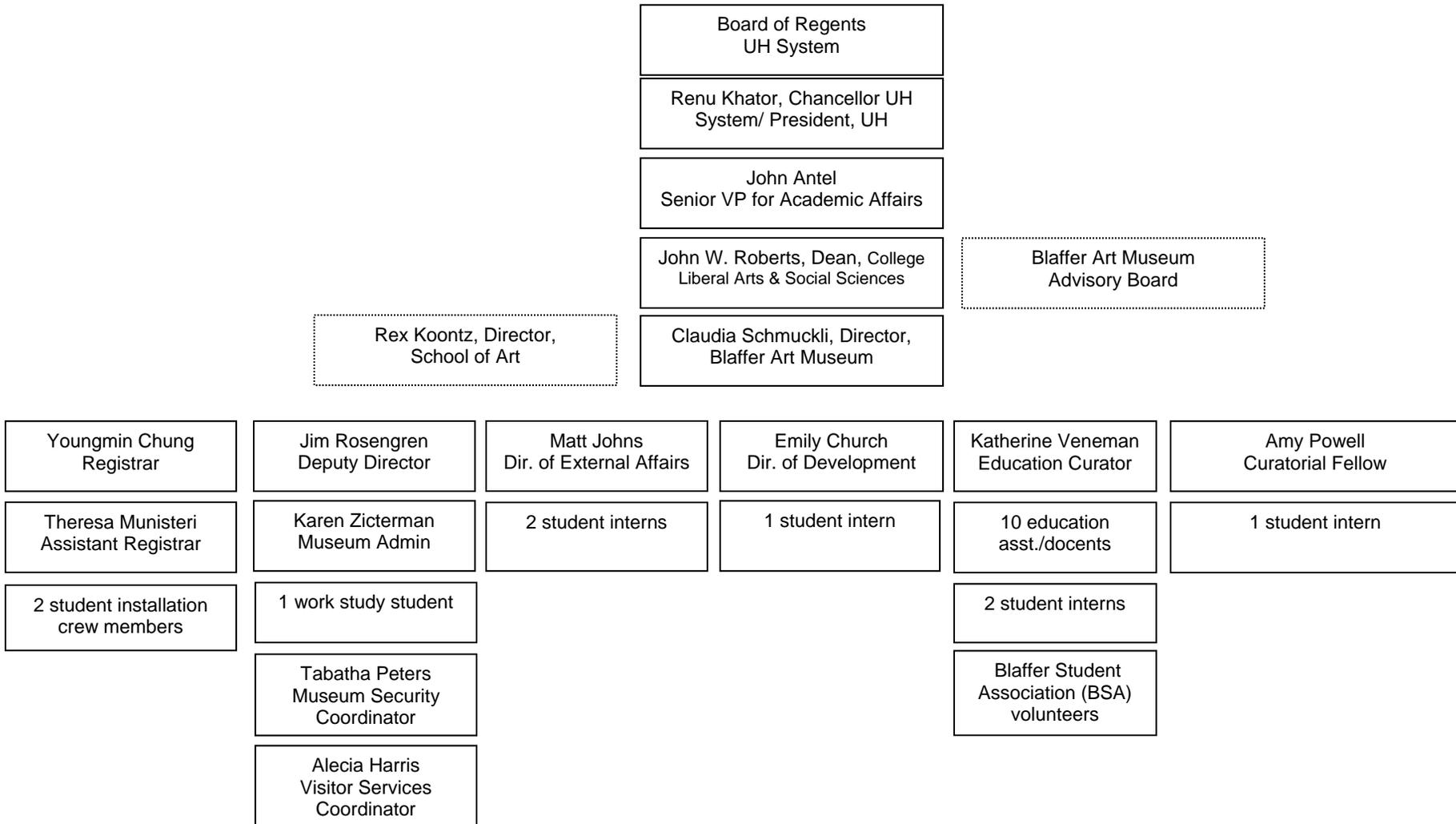
One significant aspect of the museum's service to University students is via the **School of Art Annual Student Exhibition** and **School of Art Masters Thesis Exhibition**. These exciting annual events bring in friends, family, and audiences interested in seeing the next generation of rising stars from the UH program. The reputation of UH Fine Arts graduates is local, national, and international in scope, and therefore these debut exhibitions have great popular appeal to both the campus and greater Houston communities. Students in the School of Art benefit from working with Blaffer's professional museum staff to realize the students' projects.

A second way in which Blaffer serves the student population is through the **Blaffer Student Association (BSA)**. Founded in 2005, the student-led, all volunteer BSA exists to increase student participation in the museum community and promote the arts on campus. The organization provides opportunities for UH students to get involved in planning and promoting Blaffer educational programs such as Gallery Tours and Studio Saturdays, as well as the semi-annual Red Block Bash, a campus-wide celebration of arts on campus, which reaches nearly 1,000 students each year.

Blaffer Art Museum respectfully requests \$20,000 in base support to fund the annual student exhibitions, efforts of the Blaffer Student Association and other student-related programming. FY14 exhibition dates are March 29-April 12, 2014 for the **Masters Thesis Exhibition** and April 26-May 10, 2014 for the **School of Art Annual Student Exhibition**. Blaffer is also requesting a **base-augmentation of \$2,500 to support the expansion of the museum's student tour program and the program's integration into the Department of Student Housing & Residential Life.**

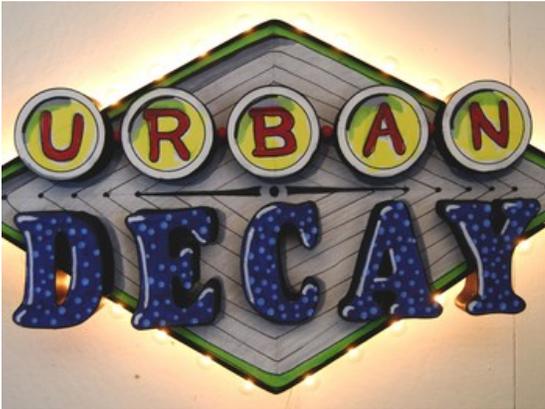
2. Organization Chart

Blaffer Art Museum currently employs 19 students per semester as docents; installation crew; curatorial, marketing, development, and education work-study assistants/interns; as well as museum attendants. The student employees provide invaluable assistance and gain employment and/or professional development experience at Blaffer.



3.Objectives provided with SFAC 2013 request; success in achieving objectives; any changes in objectives, rationale, and success of additional objectives.

For academic year 2011-2012, Blaffer Art Museum set the objectives to present and promote the Student and Masters Thesis Exhibitions and to provide a professional, hi-caliber experience for University of Houston's emerging artists and art students. Despite being closed for renovation during the academic year, Blaffer fulfilled these objectives. As planned and indicated in the SFAC 2013 request, Blaffer moved the Masters Thesis Show to DiverseWorks, and at the request of the School of Art, Blaffer held a large and festive open house with curated student work on display in the Fine Arts Courtyard and surrounding studio areas in lieu of a formal student exhibition. In addition to supporting these exhibitions, SFAC funds were used to promote these events on- and off-campus; hold gallery talks by exhibiting student artists; and to create a high-quality brochure featuring the work and artists featured in the Masters Thesis Exhibition.



For the sixth year, Blaffer Art Museum staff collaborated with the Graphic Design department to produce exhibition marketing materials and a 4-color publication for the Thesis Exhibition. The resulting promotional package included attractive invitations, posters, banners, print and web advertisements, as well as flyers that were posted across campus and in area businesses. Blaffer and the School of Art plan to continue this collaboration as a regular part of the MFA program in the future.

During the run of the exhibition, the MFA candidates also spoke about their work at two Saturday gallery talks. Curatorial Fellow Amy Powell and Curator of Education Katherine Veneman each moderated panels of five exhibiting artists who shared information about their works and practice with an audience comprising both members of the campus population and the community at large. Like the Masters Thesis Exhibition publication that is provided to graduate students as they embark on their new careers, these gallery talks are geared towards the professional development of the students, providing them with an opportunity to practice their public speaking and presentation skills while at the same time bringing their work and the school's program to the attention of the art community in Houston.

In FY 12, KUHF 88.7 FM was again secured for media sponsorship, reaching 250,000+ listeners per week. Advertisements were also placed in the *Daily Cougar*, *Houston Press*, and *Glasstire*. We are pleased to report that the most recent Masters Thesis Exhibitions drew nearly 1,000 visitors, with an additional 550 students attending the arts open house and curated studio event. While this number is lower than past seasons, this was expected given the museum's closure and the relocation of the Masters show to DiverseWorks. We believe that with the high-profile reopening of the renovated museum, the return of the formal student show, as well as the proposed expansion of our student-tour program (see the separate base augmentation support request), we will be able to increase that number to nearly 4,000 in the season ahead.

SFAC funds were also used to provide operating funds for the Blaffer Student Association (BSA), the student-run organization on campus that works to bring art into the lives of the student body. Formed in 2005, the BSA works to create awareness of Blaffer exhibitions, events, and educational outreach programs, while creating and implementing new endeavors in collaboration with its members and the Blaffer staff. *BSA* strives to unite students by building a community that supports the arts and inspires creative enterprise, and *BSA* welcomes and encourages involvement from students in all disciplines.

The *BSA* began with a team of leaders who together created a logo, outlined its mission, and put into practice a plan to create awareness of Blaffer on campus. Each officer of the *BSA* is responsible for specific duties and collaboratively maintaining the group's goals. Through the *BSA*, students promote Blaffer through participating in university events; distributing announcements and invitations to students; and brainstorming on ideas to attract and reach the campus population with evolving programs, workshops, and events. *BSA* regularly participates in campus events including Leadership Luncheons, Frontier Fiesta, Cougar Preview, UH Football tailgating booths, and the *BSA*'s own *Red Block Bash*, a twice-annual welcome back event held in the courtyard of the Fine Arts Building.



The *Red Block Bash* is the largest, most significant event on the *BSA's* calendar, a half-day celebration that welcomes students to campus during each semester. The Bash is held in the Fine Arts courtyard adjacent to the museum where visitors are invited to view the current exhibition and to take part in a series of activities both inside and outside of the museum. At the spring 2012 bash over 200 students participated in activities including a collaborative student dance performance, drawing contest, jazz music performances, and hands-on art making activities. The fall 2012 *Red Block Bash* was an even greater success, coinciding with the UH Arts Open House and following on the heels of the grand reopening of the museum. Drawing a record-breaking 535 students, it featured performances by six

student groups, including The Anthem and the Men of Moores, as well as face painting, a mural activity, jewelry making, henna tattooing, and many other creative activities.

4. Discuss means for evaluating success in reaching objectives; their importance as compared to other objectives; data for number of persons served; any assessment measures used to evaluate program success.

Exhibition/event attendance is the most quantifiable measure of Blaffer's success in presenting the Student and MFA exhibitions, as well as with other exhibitions and events it mounts each year. Attendance is tallied manually by a museum attendant stationed at the museum's reception desk, or in the case of outdoor events, at a check-in table. The 2012 Masters Thesis Exhibition drew 881 visitors (this figure was provided by DiverseWorks, but we believe it to be incomplete as DiverseWorks is not staffed to track attendance at all times), and the student open house welcomed an additional 550 (because there was no formal exhibition we could track attendance only for the open house and not for subsequent visitors to the curated studio spaces in the days following). As noted before, these numbers are lower than past years because we were closed for a major renovation.

For 2012/13 presentations, Blaffer expects to reach closer to 4,000 people. In order to achieve this result, the museum will continue to promote the Student and MFA exhibitions through a concerted marketing campaign that includes print and digital materials, signage and strategic mailings. We will collaborate further with the School of Art for the opening receptions and exhibition programming. Simultaneous and much-anticipated "Open Studio" events in the Fine Arts building will continue to create a festive atmosphere for visitors and provide students with a vehicle to show works in progress. Blaffer also expects to attract more visitors through the expanded programming capacity afforded by the museum's renovation. The new multi-use media gallery and artist studio space in the museum will allow Blaffer to show interactive media, host artist talks, and screen films in conjunction with the student shows. They also provide space for the expanded tour program Blaffer is proposing for FY14 (see separate base augmentation request). Blaffer staff will also work with the BSA to brainstorm ideas for programming these spaces to bring a greater number of UH students into the museum.

Qualitative measures are also taken into account in assessing the success of the programs SFAC funds. Each fall art students, faculty, and museum staff discuss the overall exhibitions presentations and work to establish tactics that accommodate both student and museum goals. And a new bi-weekly programming meeting among Blaffer's curatorial, education and marketing staff includes representatives from the BSA as we look at developing programming that will more deeply engage a broader swath of students in art on campus. The record-breaking attendance at this fall's Red Block Bash suggests that such collaboration is already paying off. Finally, for 2012-2013, Blaffer has designed a new survey tool to track demographics and ensure that all museum stakeholders from students to faculty to the general public have a way of providing feedback about the types of programs they wish to see at the museum.

5. Please discuss any budget or organizational changes from your last SFAC request, their impact on your programs, and your reason for implementing them.

Blaffer's budget for FY12 was changed as renovation delays meant the museum was closed for the entire academic year. While this affected the museum's ability to fundraise (the annual gala was postponed to FY13), these losses were off-set by decreased staff costs and the postponement of several exhibitions from FY12 to FY13. The renovation delays

did not affect the budget for the SFAC funded Student and MFA shows, both of which took place as outlined in the SFAC 2013 request.

Since the last request, Blaffer has filled several staff positions that had been empty (Curatorial Fellow, Director of External Affairs, Director of Development, and Assistant Registrar). With the renovation, the museum is now operating with a slightly increased budget (\$1.6 million) to account for the expanded programming afforded by the new space. As in the past, **Blaffer Art Museum respectfully requests \$20,000 base-funding for the coming fiscal year towards the promotion and presentation of the 2013/14 Student and MFA Exhibitions, the efforts of the Blaffer Student Association, as well as other student-related programming.** In FY 14, Blaffer again anticipates spending roughly \$15,000 on the two student exhibitions, nearly \$3,000 for *BSA* programming, and an additional \$2,000 on other student-related programming, such as film screenings in the media gallery and Fine Arts Courtyard, lunchtime student performances, workshops in the art studio, among many other exciting things. **Blaffer is also making a base-allocation augmentation request of \$2,500 to support Blaffer's efforts to expand its tour program to all first and second-year residents on campus.** Please see separate application for details on this program.

Advertising continues to play a crucial role in the success of both the student shows and student programming at the museum. While the museum is able to raise and expend promotional dollars from public agencies and foundations with specific funding interests (e.g., tourism), these dollars are often restricted, making SFAC funds crucial to the student shows' success. With our keen focus on student participation strategies and outreach volunteerism, the potential for growth via these student exhibition audiences is an exciting opportunity for the museum, the students, and the University. Student exhibitions are eagerly anticipated by the campus population and the community, and provide students a professional venue for their work. Director of External Affairs, Matt Johns, has developed a comprehensive marketing plan that allows the museum to take a holistic view of promoting its exhibitions and programs, including the SFAC funded student exhibitions and *BSA* events, in an effective and cost-efficient manner.

Furthermore, adjunct training programs such as docenting, student internships, and participation on the exhibition installation crew also provide professional experience for many students in art-related fields of study. During next academic year, students can look forward to working side-by-side with renowned artists Zineb Sedira, Anton Ginzburg, and Henning Bohl. And with *Feast: The Art of Radical Hospitality*, students will have the opportunity to take part in many of the 11 artist-orchestrated meals and participatory programs that are being presented as part of the exhibition. And, of course, MFA students participating in the thesis show will once again benefit from having a professional exhibition on record, as well as beautiful presentation materials for their portfolio.

Blaffer expects its operating budget to continue to grow over the next few years as it capitalizes on its new capacities for programming. In addition to the expanded student tour program detailed in our base-augmentation request, Blaffer has created two new public programs: On Screen @ Blaffer, a film series that will take place in the museum's new media gallery, and a new Artist and Scholars lecture series, which is offered in collaboration with the School of Art. Both programs are designed to speak to students and the public alike. Meanwhile, Blaffer will also continue to expand its off-site Windows Into Houston series at 110 Milam in downtown and through a proposed collaboration with the Houston Downtown Alliance in Market Square. These efforts come at a time that the museum is gaining increased recognition on a national and international level for primary research in contemporary art. Blaffer would like to build on the recent attention, which includes a two-page spread on the Blaffer exhibition *Tony Feher* in the October 17, 2012 *Houston Chronicle*, a summer 2012 "critic's picks" selection in the field-leading periodical *Art Forum*, and accolades from the *Houston Press* for Best Contemporary Art Show for Johan Grimontprez and Best Curator for Blaffer Director Claudia Schmuckli (both 2011). All of these will contribute to the university's tier one efforts and the student experience on campus.

6. Please list your FY 14 strategic initiatives and action steps.

As the Art Museum of the University of Houston, Blaffer serves both campus and community audiences with exhibitions and programs that are relevant to the concerns of our time. In the fall of 2010, the management and board of the Blaffer decided it was appropriate and useful to update the museum's strategic plan with a view to its mission. Recent developments at Blaffer and the University of Houston made it an opportune time for reassessment: there was new executive management at both the university and museum, the arts were enjoying a strategic focus by the university, and the building renovation project provided positioning to redefine the museum's visibility and accessibility. The

process for updating the Blaffer Art Museum strategic plan was interactive, with continued involvement from staff, board members, and campus stake-holders and took over 12 months. The top three strategic goals which emerged from this process were:

1. Develop targeted and proactive relationships with Admissions, Orientation and University of Houston colleges, schools and centers in order to increase the cross-functional collaboration with staff and faculty so that the Blaffer Art Museum is an important creative partner in academic curricula and public programs.
2. Lead an initiative to create an engaging experiential social venue in the arts courtyard to enhance the quality of student life on campus.
3. Increase and expand public programs for the Houston visual arts community.

The **School of Art Annual Student Exhibition** and the **Masters Thesis Exhibition**, as well as the BSA and other student-related programming, speak to all three of these goals. The student shows are often the first professional presentations of UH art students' work. They are important first steps in a professional artist's career. Ultimately, the exhibitions serve to introduce the community to the caliber of work being created in the School of Art. Likewise, the **Blaffer Student Association** and student-oriented events complement and round out their academic experience, providing rich social experiences and means of deepening their ties to and connections with other student and the university.

To that end, in 2013/14, Blaffer Art Museum offers the following action steps, in priority order, to present and promote both the Student and MFA exhibitions on campus and in the community, and to support the BSA and other student programming.

- Presentation of the Masters Thesis Exhibition (March 29-April 12, 2014) and the School of Art Annual Student Exhibition (April 26-May 10, 2014) in a way that meets the highest standards for professional excellence;
- Professional production of color exhibition announcements and fliers, distributed widely throughout campus and the community, to alert students and constituents about events and programs;
- Creation of an outstanding quality exhibition publication produced by UH Graphic Design student(s) that promotes the MFA candidates and works on view, available to the general public;
- An appropriate advertising schedule, to include the *Daily Cougar*, KUHF radio spots, signage around campus, and other print mechanisms as funding permits;
- Deeper collaboration with the School of Art on all student exhibitions and related programming as graduate programs in Art History and Arts Leadership expand, including regular meetings in the fall prior to the springtime exhibitions and continued discussions of incorporating the museum into the curriculum of existing and new courses.
- Artist Talks and other special lectures/events led by knowledgeable and engaging speakers, which are free and open to the community, giving museum-goers greater insights into the works on view and giving students a forum in which they may share their creativity with an audience.
- Grassroots outreach tactics as designed and implemented by the *Blaffer Student Association (BSA)*, including, but not limited to the twice-annual *Red Block Bash*;
- Generation and promotion of more collaborative programming with University of Houston entities, such as the Dr. Fish events/programs occurring on and off campus on April 8, 2013 in collaboration with the Honors College, the College of Optometry, and the School of Art; and
- Direct communications and correspondence with student organizations such as the Council of Ethnic Organizations and the Student Program Board for exhibitions like *Feast*.

Ultimately, SFAC funds allow for increased visibility and marketing of Blaffer Art Museum student exhibitions and activities. In turn, these allow the museum to give appropriate recognition to the scholarship of UH Art students, as well as promote and educate the community through Blaffer's many exhibitions and educational outreach programs with the assistance of the Blaffer Student Association.

7. What are other possible sources of funding available to your unit and what efforts are being made to access them?

Blaffer Art Museum raises 100% of funds required to cover exhibitions, publications, education, and programming costs, with University support limited to indirect facility and partial salary support. Grants from public agencies, corporations, foundations, and individuals are solicited and received for specific programs and exhibitions on an as-needed basis. These funding sources are often earmarked as restricted use funds, unavailable for student exhibitions. SFAC funding is the only resource available to fund programs and activities devoted specifically to the UH student population. The School of Art has no direct fundraising staff and is unable to contribute any financial support for its student-related projects. Blaffer recognizes the importance of the student exhibitions and dedicates significant time and effort to achieve an excellent presentation, and the museum is greatly appreciative of support from the Student Fees Advisory Committee, which is vital in ensuring the success of these two exhibitions, as well as to the success of the Blaffer Student Association (BSA).

8. List any overlap between the Blaffer Art Museum and other units providing services to students.

Blaffer Art Museum is the sole professional art museum on the main campus of the University of Houston and the only public university museum in the region. Blaffer presents programs and exhibitions that are relevant and intellectually stimulating to the university community. Blaffer works diligently to provide cultural programs of the highest quality for all the student body, and our exhibitions and programs are not merely attended by students, but they are often integrated into their curriculum. These year-round offerings are unique to Blaffer in that no other unit has the professional staff, fundraising ability, or secured facility to present professional art exhibitions of this sort on campus.

Blaffer regularly collaborates with other campus departments to create stimulating programs that maximize our impact on campus and the community. In the past, Blaffer Art Museum has collaborated with the School of Art; the School of Theatre and Dance; the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts; the College of Education; the College of Law; the Bauer College of Business; Honors College; Student Program Board; Office of Human Resources, among many other departments. In the upcoming months, Blaffer will be pleased to add the College of Optometry, the Hilton College, the LGBT Center, and the Council of Ethnic Organizations to that list.

The museum also reaches the university community through the *Committee on Visual Culture (CoVC)*; a volunteer group of university faculty and staff from various departments who work together to promote the museum and educate students through collaborative programs and curriculum enhancement. The *CoVC* meets once a semester to talk about upcoming exhibitions and discuss opportunities to encourage further university involvement using the museum as an “educational resource.”

Finally, Blaffer is unique in offering its award-winning *Young Artist Apprenticeship Program (YAAP)*. Each year *YAAP* reaches at-risk high school juniors and seniors by matching 8-12 teens with two Artist Mentors, who are accomplished professional artists and teachers, and in some cases former UH students. Led by these mentors, *YAAP* students work together to make art informed by a current Blaffer exhibition. In addition, *YAAP* students collaborate with university students, visit with Blaffer staff and advisory board members, and take field trips to other museums. And each session two outstanding students awarded a partial scholarship to the University of Houston.

Blaffer Art Museum is proud of its success in fulfilling its mission of serving as an educational resource for all UH students, and is excited about the continued growth of campus interest in the visual arts via the Tier One message of student success.



See you at the museum!