

CURCOM UPDATE

September 2018



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New Name for Update?

We are looking to change
things up

Send some ideas!

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Welcome Back to us!

Following a long hiatus, *Update* has returned – reinvented for the post-newsletter world we now live in. The CurCom leadership team is considering changing the name of *Update*; we'd like to hear your suggestions.

The annual leadership team meeting at this year's conference in Phoenix focused on CurCom's present and future efforts in the areas of communication with members, scholarship and excellence, building community, our new *Curators Unite!* initiative, professional development opportunities, and a deaccessioning toolkit.

CurCom responded to the call-to-action at AAM's workshop, *Don't Raid the Cookie Jar: Creating Early Interventions to Prevent Deaccessioning Crises*, by reaching out to the Historic House and Sites Network, the Leadership and Management Network, and the Collections Stewardship Network, to create a task force charged with developing an early intervention deaccessioning toolkit. If you are interested in serving on the task force, contact Ellen Endsloew or Sheila Hoffman via aamcurcom@gmail.com.

Sharing expertise with members and the field at large is one of CurCom's primary responsibilities. We constantly seek to identify new delivery methods for professional development programs, and we will be working with AAM staff and other professional networks to create and disseminate more original content in the year to come. AAM's new website is flexible and robust, designed to be a clearinghouse for the latest scholarship in our field. If you have curatorial content that you think should be shared with the field, please send it to me and I will see that it gets posted to our page on the AAM website.

Various members of the CurCom leadership team are involved in new curatorial scholarship ranging from community curation to audience engagement with collection objects. Some of these projects are co-edited volumes; if you are interested in learning more about CurCom's scholarly efforts, please contact me directly and I will put you in touch with the appropriate authors. This is a great way to become involved in CurCom.

Additional opportunities to engage with CurCom include serving on one of our many sub-committees, hosting local meet-ups, organizing CurCom activities at your regional and state museum associations, and more. Our all-volunteer leadership team is only able to do so much; we need your assistance. Tell us what the hot-button topics are in your work; let us know what content you would like us to create; share your own expertise.

One of the topics that we regularly discuss and debate regularly on our monthly leadership team calls is the proliferation of the use and meaning of the words 'curate,' 'curation,' and 'curator' in our society. A few months ago, we had an opportunity to brainstorm with AAM staff about how to address this problem. While cathartic and thought provoking, the dialogue left the leadership team with more questions than answers. The conversation ended with a sobering observation about curators – we have become a verb. How do we respond without incurring charges of elitism?

The popularization of the words curate, curation, and curator would not have happened so quickly and broadly if those words were not perceived as having a certain cache and a connotation of quality. These words elevate whatever one is talking about and make it sound so much better, more sophisticated, a much more exclusive way of saying: 'my favorites.'

How do we embrace the newfound popularity of curating everything from coffee to clothing, using our expertise to explain that curating means more than 'picking,' 'choosing,' or 'selecting'? A good place to start is by highlighting progressive curatorial practices, showcasing the multiple roles that curators play in our field, and breaking down the stereotype of curators stuck in the past.

The CurCom leadership team proposes to challenge the curatorial trope – but we need your help. The stereotypical curators of yesteryear do not represent who curators are today or what they do. Send us your stories; help us hold up and soundly reject the stereotype!

Thank you for your continued support; together we make the curatorial field stronger!

James Burns
CurCom Chairperson

EDITOR'S NOTE:

CurCom members—this newsletter is your space!

In addition to CurCom and any AAM-related news, *Update* is a forum to connect with colleagues, and share announcements or opportunities. Visit any great exhibits? Write a review and share! What's on your museum's calendar? How can this newsletter better suit your interests or needs in the future? Email: aamcurcom@gmail.com

- Stacey Swigart

30th Annual Excellence in Exhibition Competition

Awards were given out in a session at the AAM Annual Meeting in Phoenix, AZ this past May. Look for upcoming profiles on the winners on the AAM blog.

Overall

New York at Its Core

Museum of the City of New York - New York, NY

For: Meaningful and relevant context that is pushing practice to be more relevant and engaging

- Utilization of audience research to create a display of rich objects, stories and scale

Special Achievement

Fossil Discovery Exhibit

Big Bend National Park - Big Bend National Park, TX

For: Encompassing, sustainable design demonstrating innovative approach

- Integration of architecture and space/place
- Design and content closely intertwined

Museum of the American Revolution Core Exhibit

Museum of the American Revolution - Philadelphia, PA

For: Engaging audiences in something they think they know in new ways

- Utilize a strong interpretive framework with an integrative design
- Comprehensive visitor experience – places to play, sit and get around; good utilization of space

One Year Later: Reflecting on Orlando's Pulse

Orange County Regional History Center - Orlando, FL

For: Core focus on audience to develop a community-based exhibit utilizing museum strategies

- Developed a new collection with professional therapeutic sensitivity

Ojos y Manos: Eyes and Hands Garden

Santa Fe Botanical Garden - Santa Fe, NM

For: Unique approach for an outdoor exhibit in response to community

- Thoughtful process attuned to the culture of the region
- Welcoming to diverse local audience and the visiting tourist

African Art Gallery/Threads of Experience

North Carolina Museum of Art - Raleigh, NC

For: Effective Use of Evaluation

- Solid audience research utilized to inform different points of view and not dictate the narrative

Emerging Artists Program at the Museum of the African Diaspora San Francisco, CA

Over the last three years, through the Emerging Artists Program (EAP), the Museum of the African Diaspora has provided California artists the opportunities to generate and exhibit works reflecting the cultural and artistic richness of the African Diaspora in a dynamic gallery setting.

Organized through its Exhibition Department and lead by Exhibitions Associate Soleil Summer, the EAP is a rotating schedule of exhibitions, highlighting emerging artists that present art work focusing specifically on the history and culture of the peoples of Africa, the African American experience, and the African Diaspora. The exhibitions shown as a result of the Emerging Artists Program will continue to display the work of local artists which will be selected by a panel consisting of MoAD staff, local experts of



The Gladioli of El Carmen: Angie Keller

Courtesy: www.moadsf.org

contemporary and fine arts, and community partners.

We strongly believe that the San Francisco Bay Area has many undiscovered artists with potential to impact the national arts scene who have not previously had the access to platforms where the work will garner attention from a wider audience. It is with this program that we dedicate financial and professional resources to artists at the precipice of their careers. Through similar efforts over the past several years, we have identified previously undiscovered artists and helped to launch their careers, broadening the local and national recognition of the Bay Area arts community. Previous applicants have had work displayed in the arts and literature section of the New York Times, become finalists for the Hamiltonian Fellowship, the Whitney Independent Program in

New York, The 19th Street BART Public Art Program and have been selected to be including in Bay Area Now 8 at YBCA by utilizing the tools and experiences provided to them through the Emerging Artists Program.

The artists selected are provided an honorarium and installation support to work directly with the exhibitions team to plan, develop and install their exhibitions. Regular studio visits conducted by MoAD staff aids in the scope of the show and organization of the exhibition. It is in these periods of planning that artists are able to learn

about the inner workings of museum, from press interviews to introductory text, these selected artists are able to garner an insight into arts administration, as well as bring their work to new global audiences in their presentation at MoAD.

- With special thanks to Emily Kuhlmann,
Director of Exhibitions & Curatorial Affairs and
James G. Leventhal, Deputy Director & Chief Development Officer

The Afro-Peruvian women of the southern coastal town, El Carmen, inspired this project, *The Gladioli of El Carmen*. The gladiola, a delicate flower that originated in Africa, was a symbol of strength for the gladiators in Ancient Rome. This combination of delicacy and strength comes to life through my viewfinder as each woman presents herself as she wishes in her most familiar environment, her home. Angie Keller's portraits attempt to correct their marginalization by deliberately centering them in the frame.

INEQUALITY IN BRONZE

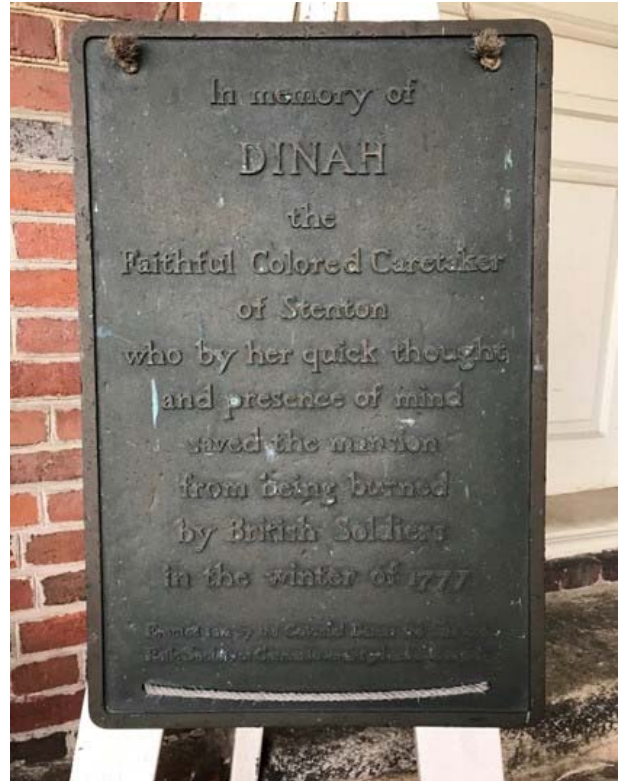
Puts People and Memorials in Conversation at Stenton, in Lower Northwest Philadelphia

By Laura Keim, Stenton Curator

Historic sites can play a role in the current national debate about the meanings of public monuments and memorials deemed racist, insensitive, or inappropriate, by re-contextualizing and interpreting objects that represent the values of the past. Stenton, the c.1730 historic house and plantation seat of Philadelphia's Logan family, recently acquired a 1939 bronze memorial to James Logan, Quaker Colonial Statesman, Stenton's builder, and enslaver of Africans. The anticipated arrival of the Memorial sparked the idea for INEQUALITY IN BRONZE.

The only other bronze memorial at Stenton is a 1912 bronze plaque dedicated to Dinah, a once enslaved woman freed by William and Hannah Logan in 1776. Originally mounted on a granite base in Stenton Park by the Colonial Dames, who administer Stenton, and the Site and Relic Society of Germantown, the plaque now rests on an easel at the back of the house as a reminder of Dinah's contribution to the Stenton story. According to Logan family tradition, Dinah saved the house from burning by the British in November 1777 through her quick wit and forceful personality.

Using the funds provided by a \$300,000 Project Grant from The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage in Philadelphia, Stenton will initiate a two-year facilitated community engagement process with neighbors and key stakeholders that will lead to a new artist-created memorial to Dinah.



Bronze Memorial to Dinah, erected in Stenton Park in 1912. Some of our project discussions will consider the anachronistic language of the plaque, which describes Dinah as a "Faithful Colored Caretaker."

Stenton will work with Atlanta-based Dina Bailey of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience to facilitate the neighborhood engagement components of the project. Neysa Page-Lieberman of Chicago will serve as the Public Art Curator and will coordinate the process to identify the artist as well as the creation and installation of a new memorial to Dinah, that may or may not incorporate the 1912 plaque. The new memorial will elevate Dinah, the woman and her story, placing the memorial to her in conversation with the James Logan Memorial. Irma Gardner-Hammond, a local storyteller, who role-plays as Dinah and shares her story at special events and festivals, will spend time in residence at Stenton growing her historical understanding of Dinah and deepening her interpretation.

Continued





Bronze Memorial to James Logan, originally erected on South Broad Street in 1939. The arrival of the memorial at Stenton sparked the idea for INEQUALITY IN BRONZE.

In addition to creating a physical memorial to Dinah, the project will forge new relationships and deepen those that already exist. INEQUALITY IN BRONZE addresses the absence of memorials to millions of Africans and African Americans who lived as slaves, and whose contributions to our history remain ignored in many public spaces. The project will enhance Stenton's ability to tell stories that include the voices of our immediate neighborhood, and for the first time, Stenton will engage in shared authority with our community.

For more information about INEQUALITY IN BRONZE and other grantees, please visit: pewcenterarts.org/2018grants.

For more about Stenton, please see www.stenton.org.

Reminder: Submission Deadlines for *Update* 2018 - 2019

October 30	Publishing, November 2018
February 1	Publishing, March 2019
June 1	Publishing, July 2019
October 1	Publishing, November 2019

Please include your article text, all images, image credits, hyperlinks, and a brief byline for yourself. Email to: aamcurcom@gmail.com

We're on Facebook, Twitter and *sort of* Instagram.

Lots of great news and museum-related articles to be found on Facebook...we're working on making our Twitter account more robust (follow us!) and would love to share YOUR collection photos on Instagram!

Send photos our way with credits, hashtags and any info you want to share on Instagram. Favorite object, odd object, curious object, collection conundrum?

Please share! Questions, comments, photos...send to aamcurcom@gmail.com

#aamcurcom @aamcurcom



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

What's Happening in the World of Museums?

October 8 - 10, 2018

Southeastern Museums Conference Annual Meeting

Jackson, MS

www.semcdirect.net

October 15 -18, 2018

Alliance of Artists Communities Annual Conference

Philadelphia, PA

<http://artistcommunities.org/conference>

October 17 – 19, 2018

Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums Annual Meeting

Baltimore, MD

<http://midatlanticmuseums.org/>

October 21 - 24, 2018

Western Museums Association Annual Meeting

Tacoma, WA

<http://www.westmuse.org/>

November 7 – 9, 2018

100th NEMA Conference – New England Museum Association

Stamford, CT

<https://www.nemanet.org/>

November 13, 2018

Risk Management for Collections

Museum Association of New York

Troy, NY

<https://nysmuseums.org/event-2956860>

February 17 - 19, 2019

2019 SMA Conference

Small Museum Association

College Park, MD

<https://smallmuseum.org/Conference/>

CurCom Leadership

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James Burns

Executive Director

Arizona Historical Society, Flagstaff,
Tempe, Tucson, Yuma

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Cindy Olsen

Director of Curation and Content
Activation

Little Caesars Enterprises, Detroit,
MI

Secretary

Beth Chilton

Director, Exhibit Professionals Group
Michigan

Immediate Past Chair

Ellen Endslow

Director of Collections/Curator
Chester County Historical Society,
West Chester, Pennsylvania

Submit!

CurCom Update is a great place
to share your recent or
upcoming projects with
colleagues across the country.

Please contact
aamcurcom@gmail.com
to share your story.