

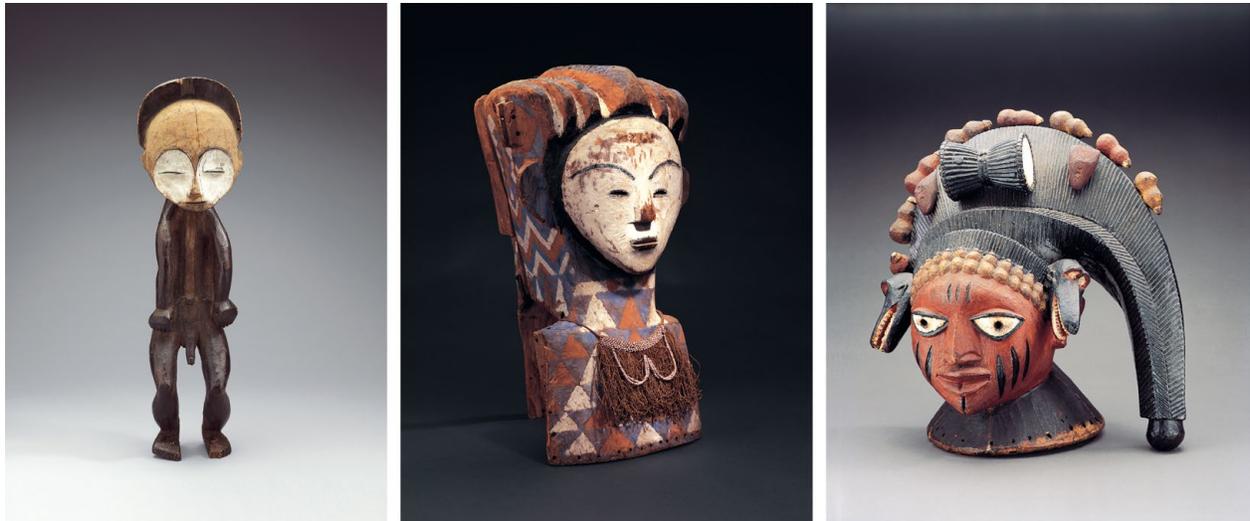
Fowler

MUSEUM AT UCLA

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THE FOWLER MUSEUM AT UCLA TO LAUNCH CURATORIAL RESEARCH INITIATIVE ON ITS AFRICAN ART COLLECTION SUPPORTED BY A \$600,000 GRANT FROM THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION



Los Angeles—The Fowler Museum at UCLA has been awarded a \$600,000 grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to conduct collaborative interdisciplinary research on the Museum’s African art collection, among the five largest in the United States. The 40-month project, beginning in February 2019, will focus on the Fowler’s distinguished **Sir Henry Wellcome Collection**, which was gifted to UCLA in 1964 by the Wellcome Trust in London.

The grant will fund a full-time Mellon Curatorial Fellow and a full-time Mellon Conservation Fellow who will join Fowler staff as well as graduate and undergraduate interns, UCLA and UCSB faculty, community stakeholders, and experts in the field to investigate and then disseminate research findings about the histories, material compositions, meanings, and purposes of objects in the Fowler’s most important historical African art collection. This will be accomplished via a new collaborative research methodology combining curatorial, conservation, and archival lines of inquiry. By reconstructing detailed narratives for hundreds of objects in the Wellcome Collection, the Fowler can engage with questions museums around the world increasingly face about the histories of their collections, the lives of the objects within them, and their responsibilities to communities of origin.

“We are excited to embark on this ambitious initiative of collaborative research that will intensify and deepen knowledge about our collection in ways that exceed what has been possible over the course of the Museum’s history,” said **Marla C. Berns**, Shirley & Ralph Shapiro Director of the Fowler Museum. “We are honored by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation’s commitment to

enhancing the Fowler’s capacity to further scholarship on its African Art collections and to do so transparently and with the participation of a range of stakeholders, on- and off-campus, and around the world.”

The Fowler is recognized as one of the top university museums in the country with a focus on non-Western arts and a leader in the presentation and preservation of art from Africa. The Mellon grant will help the museum set a standard for collections research combining curatorial inquiry with conservation analysis, and offer training and mentorship for students, targeting recruitments to underrepresented groups to encourage future museum careers. Additionally, the Fowler plans to assemble an advisory council of diverse campus and community stakeholders to discuss project activities and findings and to invite participation in moderated discussions of issues, challenges, and opportunities.

“This meaningful opportunity will allow the Fowler to engage post-doctoral, graduate and undergraduate students in an intensive investigation of a world-class historical African art collection that could result in critical discoveries that would profoundly impact the field,” said **Brett Steele**, dean of the UCLA School of the Arts and Architecture.

About the Fowler Museum

Established in 1963, the Fowler Museum at UCLA explores global arts and cultures with an emphasis on works from Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and the indigenous Americas—past and present. Its permanent collections total over 120,000 objects, housed primarily in its campus facility. The Fowler enhances understanding of world arts through dynamic exhibitions, publications, and public programs, informed by interdisciplinary approaches and the perspectives of the cultures represented. The work of international contemporary artists is presented within complex frameworks of politics, culture, and social action.

About the Wellcome Collection at the Fowler Museum

The Wellcome Ethnological Collection was built by pharmaceutical entrepreneur Sir Henry Wellcome and his representatives in the early decades of the twentieth century. They field collected, acquired private collections, and purchased at auction more than a million objects. Wellcome was still avidly collecting when he died in London in 1936 at the age of eighty-three. The Trust overseeing the collection decided to give away the entirety of its ethnographic holdings in a series of dispersals starting in the 1940s, including the donation of approximately 30,000 objects to UCLA in 1965–67. The congruence between the new UCLA museum’s mission and Sir Henry Wellcome’s own stated objectives for a museum to house his collections encouraged the donation. Wellcome had hoped to establish an institution that would provide a training ground for students, promote scientific research, and “attract and stimulate the public as well as the community of scholars.”

Project Participants

Fowler staff include: **Marla C. Berns**, Shirley & Ralph Shapiro Director; **Matthew H. Robb**, Chief Curator; **Rachel L. J. Raynor**, Director of Collections Management and Registration;

Christian de Brer, Head of Conservation; **Erica P. Jones**, Associate Curator of African Arts; and **Gassia Armenian**, Curatorial and Research Associate. Faculty partners include: **Andrew Apter**, UCLA Professor of History and Anthropology and Director of UCLA's African Studies Center; **Ellen Pearlstein**, Professor, UCLA Information Studies and the UCLA/Getty Program in the Conservation of Ethnographic and Archaeological Materials; and **Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie**, UCSB Professor of Art History and Visual Culture of Global Africa.

Fowler Museum at UCLA

308 Charles E Young Dr N | Los Angeles, CA 90024 | fowler.ucla.edu

Admission to the Fowler is free

Hours: Wed 12–8pm and Thu–Sun 12–5pm

Parking available in UCLA Lot 4: 398 Westwood Plaza at Sunset Blvd. (\$12/day)

Rideshare drop-off: 305 Royce Drive

CAPTIONS

Left to right:

Artist Unknown (Mbole peoples, Democratic Republic of the Congo)

Male figure, 19th century

Wood, paint

H: 61 cm

Fowler Museum at UCLA X65.7486; Gift of the Wellcome Trust

Artist Unknown

(Ndzebi or Sango peoples, bend of the Ogowe River, Gabon)

Bwiti Association mask, 19th to early 20th century

Wood, plant fiber, cotton string, metal, glass beads, paint

H: 53 cm

Fowler Museum at UCLA X65.5270; Gift of the Wellcome Trust

Attributed to Adugbologe (d. circa 1940, Yoruba peoples, Abeokuta, Nigeria)

Headdress (*ere Egungun olode*), made prior to 1922

Wood, pigment

H: 45 cm

Fowler Museum at UCLA X65.9051; Gift of the Wellcome Trust