

Fowler

MUSEUM AT UCLA

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THE FOWLER MUSEUM AT UCLA LAUNCHES *ENGAGING LIVED RELIGION IN THE 21st CENTURY MUSEUM* SUPPORTED BY A \$1.38M GRANT FROM LILLY ENDOWMENT INC.



Left: Hollywood Sikh Temple, Los Angeles, February 2020. *Right:* Saint Raphael Catholic Church, Los Angeles, January 2020. Photographs: Patrick A. Polk

Los Angeles—UCLA has received a \$1.38 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to support a ground-breaking religion project at the Fowler Museum. Part of Lilly Endowment’s Religion and Cultural Institutions Initiative, the grant will fund *Engaging Lived Religion in the 21st Century Museum*, a three-year endeavor that expands the Fowler’s ongoing study of religious and spiritual traditions in Los Angeles and beyond.

With a focus on exploring the multisensory experiences of religion, the project addresses the urgent need to increase community participation in exhibitions, digital learning, and public programs. The Lilly Endowment grant, the largest foundation grant in the museum’s history, will enable the Fowler to implement new digital learning activities and provide curatorial and educational outreach support, as well as offer stipends for community partners and visiting artists.

“We are thrilled with the potential of this Lilly Endowment grant to advance how we work and think at the Fowler,” said Marla C. Berns, Shirley & Ralph Shapiro Director of the Fowler Museum at UCLA. “We are deeply grateful for this very generous support, which is helping us to further our decades-long, multidisciplinary exploration of the complex intersections of art, religion, and communities.”

The Fowler is one of 18 organizations (and the only museum on the West Coast) to receive grants totaling more than \$43 million through the Lilly Endowment’s Religion and Cultural Institutions Initiative. The initiative will enable organizations to develop exhibitions and educational programs about the role of religion in the U.S. and around the world, in order to foster public understanding of religion and honor the contributions that people of all religious communities make to our civic well-being.

“This grant offers us a transformational opportunity to expand our engagement with religion and sacred arts by launching an exciting series of temporary exhibitions highlighting religious diversity in Southern California, featuring the visual cultures of Jainism, Sikhism, and Yoruba Orisha practices,” said project co-director and Senior Curator Patrick A. Polk. “It also allows us to reimagine elements of our permanent collection exhibition, *Intersections: World Arts, Local Lives*.”

The Lilly Endowment grant also supports a digital educational initiative, “Art Stories,” which explores religious objects in the Fowler’s global collection through a range of media—interviews, dance performances, photography, and music. Amplifying the voices of Black, Indigenous, and people of color whose heritages are represented by these objects, the project recognizes the indispensable knowledge of our city’s communities.

Public programs funded by Lilly Endowment will take Fowler audiences off campus and into Los Angeles neighborhoods to explore the city’s religious festivals, sacred sites, and ephemera. “These programs planned in full partnership with community members will prompt new conversations and provide a platform for building and fortifying campus-city relationships,” said project co-director and Director of Education and Interpretation Amy Landau. “They also ensure that the experiences of religion and spirituality be considered in experimental and innovative ways.”

“Museums and cultural institutions are trusted organizations and play an important role in teaching the American public about the world around them,” said Christopher Coble, Lilly Endowment’s vice president for religion. “These organizations will use the grants to help visitors understand and appreciate the significant impact religion has had and continues to have on society in the United States and around the globe. Our hope is that these efforts will promote greater knowledge about and respect for people of diverse religious traditions.”

About Lilly Endowment Inc.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly, Sr. and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. Although the gifts of stock remain a financial bedrock of the

Endowment, it is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with the founders' wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of community development, education and religion and maintains a special commitment to its founders' hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana. The Endowment also funds significant programs throughout the United States, especially in the field of religion. While the primary aim of its grantmaking in religion focuses on strengthening the leadership and vitality of Christian congregations in the United States, the Endowment also seeks to foster public understanding about religion and lift up in fair, accurate and balanced ways the contributions that people of all faiths and diverse religious communities make to our greater civic well-being.

About the Fowler Museum at UCLA

The Fowler Museum, part of the School of the Arts and Architecture at UCLA, explores global arts and cultures with an emphasis on Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and the Indigenous Americas—past and present. The Fowler enhances understanding and appreciation of the diverse peoples, cultures, and religions of the world through dynamic exhibitions, publications, and public programs, informed by interdisciplinary approaches and the perspectives of the cultures represented. Also featured is the work of international contemporary artists presented within the complex frameworks of politics, culture and social action. The Fowler provides exciting, informative and thought-provoking exhibitions and events for the UCLA community and the people of greater Los Angeles and beyond.

About the Project Co-Directors

Amy S. Landau, Director of Education and Interpretation at the Fowler Museum, previously served as Director of Curatorial Affairs and Curator of Islamic and South and Southeast Asian Art at the Walters Art Museum. She received a Ph.D. in Islamic Art and Archaeology and a Diploma in Hebrew and Jewish Studies from Oxford University. Landau also is co-founder and director of “Art, Religion, and Cities” at Morgan State University, which examines museum representations of religion and provides undergraduate students opportunities to explore museum careers.

Patrick A. Polk is Senior Curator of Latin American and Caribbean Popular Arts at the Fowler Museum and a lecturer for the Center for the Study of Religion at UCLA. He received his Ph.D. from the UCLA Folklore and Mythology Program and his primary research interests include material religion and visual piety, religion and healing, popular religion in North America and Latin America, and African diasporic sacred arts.

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