



JEDAI PILLARS REPORT

2020-2023

JEDAI – Justice, Equity, Diversity, Accessibility and Inclusion

The Rockwell JEDAI Interdepartmental Team, formed in 2020, aims to guide The Rockwell Museum with courage and transparency to be a welcoming and inclusive place for all people by providing ongoing education, direction, implementation and evaluation relevant to justice, equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion.

This report documents our recent work and outlines goals for the future as the Museum approaches its 50th anniversary in 2026. Where possible, we have shared data that supports the results of our work. Going forward, we will seek to collect information in an effort to share the results and outcomes of our work across all pillars.

Each JEDAI Pillar outlined here is intended to organize the Museum's priorities, successes, experiments and goals. These guiding questions should be applied to our day-to-day work and big-picture strategic planning alike, holding ourselves and the organization accountable to JEDAI principles.



Pillar 1: Art & Programs

Guiding Questions

- Are we diversifying our collections and exhibitions to better represent the American Experience and showcase a multitude of identities and perspectives?
- Are the art and programs *relevant* --relatable, connected to current events and issues that impact people's lives?
- Are the art and programs broadening the Museum's reach to new audiences?
- What voices are missing in our programming and community partnerships? Can we add them?



Summary | 2020–2023

The Rockwell Museum is gradually and consistently acquiring new works to diversify its permanent collection. Traveling exhibitions, loans and programming are selected to immediately impact the diverse stories we tell at the Museum. Partnerships with individual artists and national organizations boost the Museum's efforts and expand our network to make waves.

Focus | *Collection Diversification*

Key Acquisition Demographics, *2016–2023

- 404 works acquired
- 159 artists
- 47 works by unrecorded artists

Grew collection by 18% overall, including acquisitions by artists identifying as:

- Women (117 artists; 192 works)

- Men (82 artists; 201 works)
- BIPOC (104 artists; 128 works)
- LGBTQIA2S+ (14 artists; 31 works)

The acquisition process at The Rockwell Museum was once defined by to the collecting philosophy of the Rockwell family. It was focused on Art of the American West, historic American Art and Native American material culture. In the early 2000s, curators began acquiring more contemporary Native American art with sculptures and works on paper and canvas. These pieces, by artists in our region and throughout the US, injected a much-needed response to the more traditional works of art on display. As we have grown over time, our focus has changed from an exploration of the Art of the American West to a celebration of the Art of the American Experience.

In 2015, Museum leadership and the Collections Committee began revising our acquisition strategy. This new strategy has been activated in recent years with a renewed focus on collecting historic and contemporary works by BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and women artists — all traditionally underrepresented in our collection and museum collections across the country. As a result, The Rockwell has significantly increased the diversity of its collection.

Our efforts are not complete. The Museum’s Collection Development Plan for new acquisitions is directly informed by gaps and strengths in existing holdings. Strategic focus is given to underrepresented categories including women artists, minority artists and works that engage themes of identity and its intersections. We have recently added significant holdings by 19th-century women artists and contemporary works by BIPOC creators. Additional areas of interest include works by BIPOC artists of the 19th- to mid-20th-century. This evolving plan anchors each acquisition, enabling the Museum to explore the collective American Experience.

Focus | Diverse Exhibitions

Key Traveling Exhibition Demographics

- 49 works on view
- 4 Artists
 - Women (1 artist; 2 works)
 - Men (3 artists; 47 works)
 - BIPOC (2 artists; 29 works)
 - LGBTQIA2S+ (1 artists; 2 works)

5 Traveling Exhibitions and Loans in 2023

- Devan Shimoyama: Untitled (For Tamir)
Supported by the Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger Lakes, Inc.
- Americans Who Tell the Truth: Portraits by Robert Shetterly
Curated and supported by The Rockwell Museum’s Board of Trustees
- Fighters for Freedom: William H. Johnson Picturing Justice
Organized by the Smithsonian American Art Museum with generous support from Art Bridges, Fay and Robert Davidson, and the Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation.
- Antigravity: Space Invaders | Shasti O’Leary Soudant
- Burden of Conquest: An Augmented Reality Experience | Shasti O’Leary Soudant

Made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with support from Governor Kathy Hochul, New York State Legislature.

Key In-House Exhibition Demographics

- 72 Works on view
- 63 Artists
- Women (18 artists; 19 works)
- Men (49 artists; 53 works)
- BIPOC (32 artists; 34 works)
- LGBTQIA2S+ (5 artists; 6 works)

4 In-House Exhibitions in 2023

- M(other)hood
- Annual Theme Exhibition: Heros
- The Living Legacy of Clara S. Peck: Rockwell Collection Hero
- Alley Art Project: Beyond the Walls
The Alley Art Project is a special collaboration between The Rockwell Museum, the High School Learning Center (HSLC) of the Corning-Painted Post Area School District and SUNY Corning Community College (CCC).

In keeping with our 2023 annual theme, “*Heroes*,” exhibitions and additions to our permanent galleries elevated America’s often-unsung heroes. Our ongoing relationships with key art galleries and our Smithsonian Affiliate and Art Bridges loan partnerships brought exceptional works of art to our region. The site-specific installation *Untitled (For Tamir)* by Devan Shimoyama situates the tragedy of police brutality against a Black child amid a whimsical, floral swing set. During the summer, we hosted a traveling exhibition from the Smithsonian American Art Museum, *Fighters For Freedom: William H. Johnson Picturing Justice*. Johnson, a Modernist painter who utilized a faux-folk style, depicted prominent figures in Black American history. We also featured a portraiture exhibit by Robert Shetterly, who painted a wide range of important Americans. In this exhibition, the labels were not written by curators, but by each Board of Trustees member who selected a “Hero” that spoke to their personal interests. Featured works included portraits of important social justice figures like Frederick Douglass, Upton Sinclair and Stacy Abrams.

Other important JEDAI-focused exhibitions from the last several years include; Frida Kahlo: Through the Lens of Nickolas Muray (2022); Please Touch! The Art of Michael Naranjo (2022); Objects in Motion: Wendy Red Star’s Accession Series (2022); Wendy Red Star Apsáalooke: Children of the Large-Beaked Bird (2022); Elaine K. Ng: Fingerprints of Place – Taiwan (2021); AIDS’ Dark Terrain: Woodblock Prints of Robin Tichane (2021); From The Shadows: Photography by Chris Walters (2021); Martine Gutierrez Takeover (2020); and Kara Walker: Harper’s Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated) (2020).

In 2024, we will host our first exhibition focused on the Japanese American experience and a dedicated gallery for contemporary Black artist Stephen Towns.

Focus | Programming

The Rockwell Museum's programming encourages engagement with local organizations and individuals for a stronger, more connected community. Our ongoing goals include making Museum visits more accessible for people in our region who have historically been excluded from Museum experiences and centering the participation of community members in co-creating experiences. To contextualize the exhibition *Devan Shimoyama: Untitled (For Tamir)* and to help scaffold difficult conversations about injustice, violence and loss, The Museum hosted gallery talks about memorial practices and monuments. This created a focused, supportive space where visitors, academics and Museum staff could openly process their reactions and connections to Shimoyama's work.

We took a multifaceted approach to program design to support the exhibition *Fighters for Freedom: William H. Johnson Picturing Justice*. We collaborated with community members to develop videos that brought local voices in conversation with Black history in this nationally touring exhibition. New teen tours welcomed youth groups who were not otherwise coming to the Museum, addressing barriers like transportation funding with support from Art Bridges. This project built new relationships while reigniting our connections with youth centers for recurring arts education programming in the future.

The exploration of Black history continued with the debut of a new portrait of local hero John W. Jones by Robert Shetterly at the Arnot Art Museum, coinciding with The Rockwell's exhibition of *Americans Who Tell the Truth: Portraits by Robert Shetterly*. Talima Aaron of the John W. Jones Museum gave the best-attended Rockwell lecture of 2023 highlighting Jones's life and heroic acts following his escape from slavery in the nineteenth century. The Rockwell will continue to champion and connect with these new and ongoing public history efforts.

Looking Forward

- While the 2025 program theme and calendar is still in the planning stages, possibilities include a traveling exhibition featuring a mid-20th century African American female abstract artist from the Smithsonian; and recognizing the Museum's 20 years of collecting contemporary Native American art.
- The Museum's annual lecture series brings diverse speakers, national topics and the stories of marginalized communities to our region.
- Community partnerships, once initiated, will be cultivated and deepened over time as more occasions to collaborate arise.





Pillar 2: Space & Place

Guiding Questions

- Is the Museum a space focused on justice, equity, diversity, accessibility and inclusivity?
- Are we actively creating a welcoming space for everyone?
- Do we make the Museum more accessible, inclusive, and welcoming for our visitors and staff?
- How is our commitment to creating a welcoming place communicated with visitors, community, stakeholders, members and students?



Summary | 2020–2023

The Museum is committed to continuous improvement of its spaces, accommodations, messages and hospitality offerings from a JEDAI lens. This extends beyond the walls through digital platforms and communications. We strive for consistent representation of the Museum's welcoming stance before, during and after an encounter, from marketing materials to planning and experiencing a visit.

Focus | Accessibility

The Rockwell Museum's building has evolved over time, inside and out. In our building, we strive to ensure the accessibility of spaces and galleries, signage and interactives. In 2023 we assessed our inclusive offerings and added complimentary amenities like strollers, diapers, sharps disposal containers, sensory-friendly items and more. The Museum's website, social media, signage and Social Story communicate the availability of these and other accommodations.

We partner with community members who have the expertise of lived experiences and disability to advise our efforts. For example, we hired a blind advisor to consult on implementing our audio tour and on exhibition design for *Please Touch! The Art of Michael Naranjo*.

Focus | Communications

The various modes through which The Rockwell communicates with its stakeholders are an equally important space for JEDAI initiatives.

Passersby notice our banners highlighting artworks and lighting that uplifts events, holidays and messages of importance to our community. The Rockwell Museum was nominated as a Safe Space Alliance site for LGBTQI+ communities, and this symbol is displayed on our building and online. Marketing uses imagery that reflects our visitors and the artists found in our exhibitions. We prioritize accessibility and legibility in our digital and physical communications (flyers, website, internal signage, etc.). We are responsive to updating communications as the needs of our visitors and staff evolve.

Rockwell staff partnered with local educators and community members to create a “Social Story,” a type of document first designed for the autism community. This digital resource narrates the experience of visiting the Museum and prepares youth and caregivers for their visit using clear text and photos.

Our annual theme allows the Museum to provide many diverse perspectives and context around a central theme. The theme is communicated through strong visuals that tie our programs and exhibitions together throughout the year.

We made a major investment to improve the Museum’s website. This effort increases accessibility (navigation, imagery, AltText) and brings blogs and artwork highlighting the Museum’s mission and vision to the forefront.

The Museum’s branding is designed to be warm, inviting, colorful, approachable, dynamic and informative. The Rockwell strives to be a community hub, relatable and responsive to our visitors and stakeholders.

Focus | Social Media

Through the Museum’s presence across digital platforms, we listen, learn, educate and engage. We aim to provoke curiosity, engagement, and reflection about art and the American experience through thoughtful and responsive content for a diverse audience. Our social media calendar highlights day-to-day programming and events, staff achievements and artworks connected to global conversation. The speed of social media is where The Rockwell can support global conversations, like intentionally sharing Asian American artists during the rise of the #StopAsianHate campaign. Shared messaging and missions also show up in social media partnerships around Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women’s Month, Juneteenth, and Pride Month.

Looking Forward

- We will conduct a full accessibility audit and establish action plans to reflect best practices in museums to best accommodate all people.
- A recent staff training highlighted many changes that can be made to signage, wayfinding, and accessibility considerations that will be implemented in 2024.
- Existing communications and resources, like our Social Story, will be continuously evaluated and updated as needed.





Pillar 3: Community Engagement

Guiding Questions

- Are we working with our community partners to reach out and make community connections?
- How is our work connected more broadly with our community and region?
- Are we cultivating partnerships with civic, cultural and educational institutions to build our audience?
- Have we cultivated partnerships with civic, cultural and educational institutions to develop programs addressing equity and inclusion in the arts?
- Are we prioritizing community engagement by investing in promoting and providing access?



Summary | 2020–2023

JEDAI principles sparked new and exciting collaborations, with accessibility and diversity at the forefront. We continued our collaboration with Corning-Painted Post district art teachers to offer tours culminating in student exhibitions. The development of an audio tour for *Please Touch! The Art of Michael Naranjo* exhibition and continuation of our *Artists As Activists* tour enhanced our offerings. These initiatives and more helped make the Museum's spaces and collection more accessible and inclusive to visitors.

Focus | *Community Collaboration and Responsive Education Initiatives*

The Rockwell Museum provides programming for students and young people in the galleries, through classroom outreach and at community celebrations. Developed with area educators, our interactive and hands-on programs encourage visitors of all ages to see beyond a singular perspective. Using our diverse collection, they are invited to explore artworks reflecting the multifaceted nature of America's history and evolution.

In 2022, we hosted the *Please Touch! The Art of Michel Naranjo* exhibition. Naranjo is a blind sculptor who works without tools, using one hand and his sense of touch to form his work. Naranjo offered a class for blind and low-vision students from area school districts where he shared his touch techniques through guided sculpting. Ongoing collaboration with Corning-Painted Post district art teachers offers hands-on tours for special education students, culminating in a student exhibition inspired by the art in the Museum.

The creation of the *Artists as Activists* audio tour invites visitors to consider what being an activist means in different periods of American history. Topics include the treatment of animals, humanitarian issues of representation, race and prejudice, feminism, intellectual property, LGBTQ+ activism, systems of religious oppression and more. The audio tour includes visual descriptions of artwork to enable greater access to the Museum's collection.

We continue engaging with school districts and community partners to adapt, create innovative approaches and reach new audiences. The Museum's work with students, youth, families, educators and community partners is one way we directly contribute to building a more just, diverse and inclusive community for the future.

Focus | Community Collaboration and Cultural Organizations

The Rockwell values collaborating with community partners to incorporate many voices and perspectives in our programming and exhibitions.

In collaboration with Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education and the ARTS Council of the Southern Finger Lakes, we provided a region-wide teacher workshop and artist residency with folklorists. This program is a national initiative to incorporate diverse cultural arts and knowledge into classrooms. The *Conversation on Cultural Stewardship* series featured sessions on African American foodways, the history of an Indian residential school, and Muslim identities in our region.

Annually, we participate in the June Pride community festival and provide LGBTQ+ arts resources to highlight queer artists in our collection. In 2023, we partnered with Southern Finger Lakes Pride to perform *The Laramie Project*, a play by Moises Kaufman and The Tectonic Theatre at The Rockwell. These partnerships continue to broaden the Museum's impact and relevance.

Focus | Community Collaboration and Artists

The Rockwell Museum hires and collaborates with diverse artists and presenters to share their stories. We partner with Latinx artists and folk artisans for our annual *Día de Los Muertos/Day of the Dead Family Day*, which is connected to our school tour program and serves thousands of students in third grade and middle school. The Rockwell prioritizes excellence in all exhibitions while creating space for young, emerging, and under-exposed artists through student exhibitions and the KIDS ROCKWELL Art Lab site-specific installations of family-friendly work.

In 2023, the Alley Art Project celebrated its 15th anniversary with *Emergence*, a “Heroes” themed mural celebrating youth in our community. This project was a collaboration with Teaching Mural Artist Sarah C. Rutherford. The mural depicts student Salem Estrada, who was nominated by his peers. A *Beyond the Walls* exhibition highlighted the many artist collaborators we have worked with over the years, sharing and amplifying their stories with the community through the power of public art.

Looking Forward

- The *Artists as Activists* audio tour will be updated with new and diverse voices.
- Expand and deepen our collaborations with Native American cultural and service organizations to develop programs relevant to dealing with grief, loss and history.
- There are opportunities to incorporate digital media that is accessible to the public and to highlight contemporary conceptual art, an area of growth in our collection.
- Programs, interpretive materials and Museum experiences will prioritize empathy and share diverse perspectives. This storytelling will broaden people's understanding of different topics connected to the art on view.
- Student programming will continue to evolve, working with local school districts and community voices, to foster a sense of place and connectedness for every student.
- Expanded collaboration with LGBTQ+ youth groups will incorporate their voices into programming with a focus on queer artists in the collection and special installations.





Pillar 4: Organizational Culture

Guiding Questions

- Are we recruiting, developing and retaining high-performing, talented employees, volunteers and Board of Trustees members with diverse backgrounds and perspectives?
- Are we valuing empathy and awareness — both self and situational — in the workplace?
- Are our justice, equity, diversity, accessibility and inclusion (JEDAI) pillars reflected in our workplace policies and institutional culture?
- Does the Museum’s strategic plan include strategies specific to JEDAI?



Summary | 2020–2023

In 2021, The Rockwell Museum added goals focusing on justice, equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion to the 2022-2024 Strategic Plan, approved by the Board of Trustees. JEDAI qualities and priorities are now listed in every job description and performance review document.

Focus | Hiring Practices

Beginning in 2021, we changed our hiring practices to remove unnecessary education barriers when posting new job openings. At this time, we also implemented salary ranges on all job postings. In alignment with contemporary best hiring practices, we no longer accept resumes or cover letters featuring a photo of the applicant. In an effort for postings to be visible to a diverse candidate pool, the Museum posts its job openings to a wide range of networks, including Corning Community College, local job boards, Museum Hue, AAM, Museum Young Professional Network and Museum Association of New York.

Focus | JEDAI Interdepartmental Team

In 2021, we established an interdepartmental team to focus on justice, equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion (JEDAI) at The Rockwell Museum. Group membership is comprised of one to two people from each department. The group meets monthly and covers diverse topics related to equity and inclusion. An initiative of this team is to lead regular reading groups and conversations with the Museum staff, covering topics related to justice, equity, diversity, accessibility and inclusion. The team also seeks relevant training for all staff.

Looking Forward

- We will collect staff demographic data in 2024 and continue to do so annually.
- A complete employee handbook review will ensure our JEDAI pillars are reflected in its policies.
- The Rockwell Museum recognizes that among its staff, Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) are underrepresented. In staff engagement surveys, staff expresses concern about under-representation. The Rockwell Museum is committed to cultivating a workplace culture that is inclusive, safe and desirable for members of the BIPOC community. Nurturing a culture and conditions to genuinely support a workplace environment of belonging and inclusion for BIPOC people is a major priority for The Rockwell Museum.
- Increasing participation in professional development opportunities will increase collaborative relationships relevant to our JEDAI work.





Pillar 5: Resources

Guiding Questions

- Who has access to decision-making and influences decisions regarding the deployment of resources?
- Are we allocating resources for ongoing JEDAI training for the entire staff?



Summary | 2020–2023

With its interdepartmental team structure and bottom-up budget processes, the Museum aims to flatten its hierarchy and promote leadership in decision-making at every level. Team members from all departments and levels weigh in on budget needs, program prioritization and collection interpretation.

Focus | JEDAI Training

In late 2021, we participated in our first training focused on JEDAI. Nearly half the Museum’s full-time staff were enrolled in the six-month training program from *Be the Change* consulting. In 2023, we collaborated with our local community college on a four-week Inclusivity and Belonging training course for staff. Volunteers receive training throughout the year focused on JEDAI.

Focus | Annual Budget

The Rockwell Museum budget process begins with input from staff at every level, focused on supporting and providing resources to promote community collaboration, engaging programs, and dynamic exhibitions. The process values shared decision-making as adjustments are needed before presentation and approval by the Board of Trustees.

Looking Forward

- Annually in February, the Museum will close to the public for a full-day, all-staff training that will focus on JEDAI. This closure allows public-facing staff to fully participate. We anticipate including JEDAI training as part of our annual budget each year.
- Consider aligning volunteer training with staff training to offer consistent resources.
- Share resources to support volunteers between trainings in the format best suited to their needs.

