

**SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM
STRATEGIC PLAN FY 2007—FY 2011**

March 2007

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Introduction

In 2001 the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM) proposed an ambitious five-year strategic plan. It is gratifying to observe that the major goals of that plan have been accomplished and excellent progress has been made in all goal areas.

The Donald W. Reynolds Center, the historic landmark building which we share with the National Portrait Gallery (NPG), reopened on July 1, 2006 to fanfare and applause, exceeding expectations as a “dazzling showcase for America’s art.” SAAM and NPG are two great museums with outstanding collections, sharing the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture. Together, the museums have raised more than \$100 million for capital improvements, and drawn impressive numbers of visitors in the first several months after reopening.

Visitor feedback indicates that SAAM’s gallery installations and accompanying interpretation are highly successful. Visitors appreciate the fact that they have an opportunity to experience significant examples of American art created by our country’s best artists over the entire history of the nation. They also appreciate being able to learn about American art and artists through interpretive elements that employ the stories of our nation’s development and our diverse peoples’ shared experiences. Visitors are enjoying art works by David Hockney, Nam June Paik, Nancy Graves, Edward and Nancy Kienholz, Lee Friedlander, Everett Shinn, and David Beck, which were added to the collection for reopening. The Luce Foundation Center is a popular destination within the Museum and a model for visible storage in other museums, while the Lunder Conservation Center is being cited by the professional conservation community for exemplary public outreach. An expanded docent corps is fully deployed, and the National Education Program is in the early stages of implementation. SAAM has raised over \$20 million in new endowment funds and \$9 million in multi-year funding to support its programs.

The Museum is poised to build on these successes by continuing to improve core programs, build new audiences, and deepen commitment to scholarship and education. In the coming five years we will enhance our contemporary art program, strengthen our curatorial efforts, offer a full range of new public programs, and strategically promote our offerings. Life-long learners will be a new target audience for educational programs. We will participate in the American Association of Museums re-accreditation program, which will give us an opportunity to improve our professional standards, practices, and internal procedures. Fundraising will continue to be paramount as we seek to realize current and future goals. The Renwick Gallery is a strong part of our program and it is imperative that it benefit from all the efforts and opportunities that unfold within the strategic plan.

Over the past five years we have learned the value of our Museum friends. Many of these friends have invested in our capital and programmatic needs by making generous gifts. Their gifts have been recognized by naming facilities, galleries, programs, endowments, and senior positions in their honor. But the value these friends bring to the Smithsonian American Art Museum goes much deeper. They bring fresh perspectives to our work through their questions and sage advice. They champion our mission, inspire us to reach new heights in excellence, and open doors to important new contacts. Our future success depends upon continued partnerships with our Museum friends.

Our Mission

America's Museum

The Smithsonian American Art Museum is the nation's art collection, dedicated to the understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of American art.

The Museum celebrates the extraordinary creativity of our country's artists, whose works reflect the history of America and connect us to the experiences of its people.

Our Vision

When we imagine the future, the Smithsonian American Art Museum will

- have a strong, clear identity as *the* American Art Museum, the nation's museum dedicated to its art and artists;
- own significant works of art from all periods and media that exemplify the excellence of artistic traditions across the United States;
- be a destination for visitors to Washington, DC and online, known for compelling, insightful, and relevant exhibitions and programs;
- be a leader in education serving people of all ages and backgrounds, including school children, scholars, and life-long learners;
- be known for research excellence and scholarly programs that strengthen the study and understanding of American art;
- be financially secure with a well-developed fundraising capacity.

PUBLIC IMPACT

Welcoming visitors back to our renovated building has been exhilarating. The galleries have been abuzz with activity. Watching visitors delight in discovering old friends and new among the works of art in our collections has made the six and half years of preparation worthwhile. Sooner or later, however, another museum will open and replace us as *the* exciting new place to visit. Visitor statistics at the National Museum of the American Indian and the National Air and Space Museum's Udvar-Hazy Center plummeted after the first few months of intense publicity and interest. SAAM's fate may be different since temporary exhibitions frequently drive attendance in an art museum, but it would be a mistake to be complacent about visitor retention. A deeper understanding of our visitors – how they learned of us, what motivated them to visit, what they liked and didn't like – will help us shape our programs, exhibitions, events, and marketing strategies. We intend to leverage such new understanding into a dedicated base of local and national patrons who view SAAM as a destination.

The neighborhood surrounding the Donald W. Reynolds Center changed dramatically during the years that the Museum was closed, becoming a vibrant residential/commercial area with theaters, sports venues, movies, restaurants, and stores that bring people to our doorstep. The Museum is conducting a pilot program of new public hours, opening at 11:30 a.m. and staying open until 7:00 p.m. to take advantage of this now active neighborhood; we're ready to serve visitors after work as well as the pre-theater/pre-event crowd. SAAM needs to make sure that there are programs throughout the day and in the evenings so that there is always something to do at the Museum. We will shift our program strategy away from one-time lectures that are time-consuming to produce and toward high-quality series at predictable times.

Ultimately, SAAM should be known for the quality and caliber of our exhibitions. Our exhibitions should have high public impact – they must be based on sound scholarship and at the same time be interesting and appealing. *Joseph Cornell: Navigating the Imagination* and *Grant Wood's Studio*, shown at the Renwick, are examples that presented new insights into the artists' careers and appealed to a large and broad public audience. More exhibitions like these will ensure that we serve our audience while we maintain our reputation among our curatorial peers for the excellence of our exhibitions. SAAM will shed its conservative image by expanding our contemporary art program. Funding to support a contemporary curator and to explore a media arts program is already in place. A contemporary emphasis will be woven through our exhibitions, acquisitions, and programs.

We will also place emphasis on our technology initiatives. The standards of the internet and the expectations of the public are shifting to favor active involvement by the public in dialogue and content creation. Forward-thinking organizations realize that today's audiences, especially younger audiences, make few distinctions between the bricks and mortar institution and its online presence: both must be excellent and complementary. These trends are harmonious with SAAM's overall emphasis on being a vital and relevant museum that engages with its audiences in significant ways.

GOAL 1

Establish SAAM as a "must-see" destination for local, national, international, and virtual visitors, promoting it as a first-stop for discovery experiences in American art and history and increasing its public impact.

Objective 1 Maintain and build audiences by presenting a wide range of stimulating exhibitions and public programs at the same time we re-affirm research excellence within SAAM's curatorial department.

Action – Ensure that each SAAM curator is generating new exhibitions that are supported by original research and that attract a broad public. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Strengthen the exhibition review and solicitation process to ensure that significant exhibitions are offered to and presented at SAAM. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Implement a long-range exhibition schedule through which SAAM successfully places exhibitions on tour. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Develop individual programs that have a noted presenter and/or a topic that is timely, has mass appeal, and attracts large and diverse audiences. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Offer a series of programs, such as concerts, films, and lectures to attract audiences that might not otherwise visit the museum. *2007 and ongoing*

Action -- Develop an evaluation process for exhibitions and programs that will improve our offerings to the public. *2007 and ongoing*

Objective 2 Develop a robust contemporary art program that will attract new audiences.

Action – Hire an experienced contemporary art curator. *2007*

Action – Explore the potential of a media arts program. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Develop public programs that complement an expanded contemporary art collection and exhibition schedule. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Introduce significant contemporary art exhibitions into the exhibition schedule. *2007 and ongoing*

Objective 3 Maintain and build audiences through a marketing campaign.

Action – Conduct research to help determine what audience groups we are attracting, what audiences groups we are not, and why. *2007*

Action – Identify new audiences we plan to attract to the Museum. *2007*

Action – Hire a professional marketing firm to help us mount a marketing campaign that meets visitor goals which we will determine early in 2007. *2007*

Objective 4 Use technology to engage the public and enhance online and onsite visitor experiences.

Action - Produce and sustain an internet presence that attracts new audiences and involves the public in innovative ways. *2007 and ongoing*

Action - Implement technology in the Museum and increase visitor awareness of the complementary nature of online and on-site offerings. *2007 and ongoing*

Action - Develop a *data strategy* and *rich-media strategy* for image, audio, and video production to enable more effective use and enjoyment of information resources. *2007 and ongoing*

PUBLIC IMPACT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Attract 900,000 visitors to the Donald W. Reynolds Center in the first year of reopening and maintain visitorship of 700,000 a year for each of the following four years.
- Attract 140,000 visitors to our Renwick Gallery in FY 2007 and maintain that visitorship for each of the following four years.
- Place touring exhibitions in 4 venues per year over the next five years.
- Maintain or increase by as much as 10% a year over the next five years the 5,484,044 visits we had to our website in FY 2006.
- Maintain over the next five years a visitor rating of good to excellent from a majority of the public who come to the Donald W. Reynolds Center and who will be surveyed biennially, at a minimum.

RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

In 2005, the Terra Foundation for American Art gave a \$645,000 grant to the museum to support international fellowships and a scholarly symposium on “American Art in a Global Context.” That external validation for SAAM’s commitment to scholarship, and its long-standing Fellows Program elevated its stature to a new level in the field. Building on that success, SAAM will deepen its commitment to its research program by strengthening research resources, developing symposia, and instituting a conservation fellowship. At the same time, we reaffirm the goal of research excellence across our curatorial programs.

The Museum’s comprehensive research resources are also the foundation for the “Ask Joan of Art” online reference service, which won the prestigious American Library Association’s 2005 Thomson Gale Award for Excellence in Reference and Adult Library Services. The program is clearly a favorite with patrons of all educational levels who have asked questions about American art and benefited from detailed answers from our professional reference librarians. Building the capacity of this popular service, which serves patrons in all fifty states and around the world, and stabilizing it financially are necessary steps to integrate this service more fully into the Museum, on site and online.

A growing body of research supports the claim that when the arts are interdisciplinary partners with other subjects, they generate conditions that are ideal for learning. Studies also show that connecting the arts to learning across the curriculum energizes and challenges teachers and closes the achievement gap for students. The goal of the Museum’s National Education Program is to reach beyond our walls to support visual arts-based teaching and learning in the nation’s classrooms. This fledgling program takes advantage of SAAM’s rich collections. The Museum is already successful in working directly with teachers and schools, but the present model of one-on-one interaction is not sustainable with a small staff. The success of the National Education Program depends on developing strategic partnerships that will permit measurable penetration into the educational community in grades five through twelve.

With the retirement of the baby-boom generation, more Americans are seeking substantive educational opportunities. The life-long learning community – usually thought to represent those aged fifty-five and over – presents an opportunity for the museum. SAAM is well situated to serve this audience in Washington, D.C.; with its highly educated, well-traveled diplomatic and government retirees, the city has a large community of curious and motivated individuals. On a cautionary note, Washington already has a number of existing programs serving life-long learners, including some, like the Smithsonian Resident Associates, within the Institution. It is important for SAAM to understand this environment and to select a sustainable model on which to build a compelling life-long learning program.

GOAL 2

Strengthen the commitment to scholarship and education for SAAM constituents at all levels of learning.

Objective 1 Deepen SAAM’s commitment to high-level scholarship and increase the visibility of our scholarly endeavors.

Action – Reaffirm our commitment to curatorial excellence by generating important exhibitions and publishing high-level research in American art. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Inform both the scholarly community and the general public about the information resources, databases, and media assets SAAM has to offer. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Develop a stronger public face for our resources such as “Ask Joan of Art” in the Reynolds Center, the Renwick Gallery, and on our website. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Build on the success of this year’s symposium “American Art in a Global Context” by planning and executing future programs. *2008 and ongoing*

Action – Develop a graduate-level fellowship program in the Lunder Conservation Center and tie it into SAAM’s existing fellowship program for art history. *2008 and ongoing*

Objective 2 Develop continuing education opportunities (for example, a Life-long Learners Institute) to attract and serve our over fifty-five audience.

Action – Conduct research to understand this audience, their interests, and other similar programs operating in the metropolitan area. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Plan and implement an academically focused continuing education program as a pilot. *2008*

Action – Evaluate the pilot program and implement a long-term program that is self supporting. *2008 and ongoing*

Objective 3 Expand the services and products we offer that integrate the visual arts into the curriculum in grades five through twelve and introduce them to teachers and classrooms nationwide.

Action – Develop strategic partnerships to create content and distribute our collection images for textbooks and/or web-based resources for teachers and students in grades 5-12. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Develop and fund annual national leadership institutes for interdisciplinary groups of teachers and administrators on SAAM’s National Education Program products and services. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Develop a suite of products and services for teachers and students grades five through twelve, available in print, online, and in video format, which can be linked to national curriculum standards. *2008 and beyond*

RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Train 150 teachers at SAAM and tour 7,400 students through SAAM's galleries each year over the next five years.
- Train 75 teachers at the Renwick and tour 300 students through the Renwick each year over the next five years.
- Serve 2,000 students each year over the next five utilizing videoconferencing.
- Qualitative evaluation of classroom results.
- Serve 5,000 people a year over the next five years through our online research resources such as Joan of Art, the inventories of American Paintings and Sculpture, etc.

MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE

The collaboration between SAAM and the National Portrait Gallery resulted in a transformation of our shared historic building that has amazed and delighted the public. Both museums have benefited from a new spirit of cooperation that has been felt at all levels of the organizational chart. Continuing to nurture the shared initiatives that were launched as part of the reopening is in our mutual interest. For example, our joint membership initiative is slowly, but steadily, attracting new members; our shared visitor services and auditorium coordinators are off to a good start in representing both museums' interests in the building; our special events staffs are working together to coordinate the increased number of corporate events that are co-hosted in the Great Hall and the Luce Foundation Center, as well as the Renwick's Grand Salon; and conservators from both museums are getting accustomed to sharing their work with the public who visit the Lunder Conservation Center.

SAAM will accomplish more with a range of partners within and outside of the Institution, and there has never been a dearth of organizations wanting to partner with the Smithsonian. The trick for the Museum is to choose partners strategically, extending what is possible without overextending our staff. Already relationships have been formed between the Museum and members of the extended conservation community who have participated generously in the conception of the Lunder Conservation Center. As we continue to move forward, they will be essential partners in helping shape professional and public educational programs for the Center. Our National Education Program depends on partners to gain the broad distribution that will mark its success of this program. Now that the Museum has reopened, we will pursue a closer collaboration with the Smithsonian arts community.

Every ten years museums go through a process of accreditation by the American Association of Museums. The process involves a period of self-assessment and preparation, followed by a peer review. Museums who successfully complete the accreditation receive approval from their peers that validates their standards, ethics, and procedures. Although this is a laborious process, accreditation forces a museum to renew its commitment to professional standards and to correct deficiencies, if necessary. Having been closed for so many years, this is an excellent opportunity for SAAM to review its practices, making sure that we meet the highest professional standards in all areas.

GOAL 3

Improve the Museum's management by implementing the highest professional standards, streamlining efforts, and developing a diverse staff.

Objective 1 Successfully complete the American Association of Museums (AAM) accreditation process and use this occasion to improve museum standards, practices, and processes.

Action – Review museum standards and procedures to decide where we need to reaffirm, where we should revise or strengthen processes, and where we could streamline. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Coordinate with NPG to prepare plans and documents for re-accreditation, and to ensure that our responses to AAM are complementary. *2007 and ongoing*

Objective 2 Develop a collecting plan for the museum, in accordance with Smithsonian requirements.

Action – Analyze existing collections and collecting patterns to identify strengths and weaknesses. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Establish priorities for acquisition and deaccessioning, if appropriate. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Develop a contemporary art collecting plan as part of the overall plan. *2008 and ongoing*

Action – Develop and implement a strategy that assigns responsibility for making progress on the plan. *2008 and ongoing*

Objective 3 Continue to develop synergies between SAAM and the National Portrait Gallery and look for opportunities to strategically partner with other Smithsonian and external organizations.

Action – Nurture areas of shared effort with the NPG, such as the joint membership program, events planning, the Lunder Conservation Center, visitor services, and public programs. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Look for new opportunities to share effort. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Nurture relationships that were forged during development of the Lunder Conservation Center with conservation professionals within Smithsonian and outside. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Leverage the SI-CCSSO collaboration to support SAAM's national education program. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Seek opportunities to strategically partner with other Smithsonian art units, cultural arts organizations, and other appropriate partners across the nation. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Align the SAAM strategic plan with SI Arts strategic plan. *2007 and ongoing*

MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Complete a collecting plan that is approved within Smithsonian in FY2007.
- Achieve AAM re-accreditation in FY 2008.
- Achieve alignment between SAAM's strategic plan and the five year plan Smithsonian Arts will present late in FY 2007.

FINANCIAL STRENGTH

The courtyard enclosure - the undulating structure designed by renowned British architect Sir Norman Foster now taking shape - will crown the Donald W. Reynolds Center and provide a year-round event space in the center of our historic building. In a later phase of construction, the historic steps on the south side of the building will be recreated. These two features of the renovation are not yet completed, and not completely funded. A focused campaign, in cooperation with the National Portrait Gallery and the central administration, will be required to finish the fundraising for these last remaining features of our landmark building.

In the earlier strategic plan, SAAM vowed to decrease dependency on federal dollars and increase private funds available for Museum programs. And, indeed, the Museum has been successful in creating new endowments and raising multi-year funds that support and enhance programs. At the same time, costs and salaries have risen, the federal budget has decreased each year through across-the-board reductions, and the Museum's aspirations continue to grow. Therefore, SAAM must continue to emphasize fundraising through a balanced program of major programmatic and endowment gifts, annual contributions, patrons' programs, and planned giving.

SAAM is working to cultivate the next generation of museum donors, while continuing to steward our longtime patrons. The Museum's annual benefit ARTrageous has shown potential for attracting a younger professional group from a wide array of career groups, and the Smithsonian Council for American Art has attracted business and community leaders from all fifty states who are forming an important new group of Museum friends. We intend to build on the success of these programs in order to expand our support base and cultivate new demographic groups and prospects.

As the goals for the capital campaign are met, the development office will shift its efforts from the capital campaign to programs. In making this adjustment, staff roles will change and some additional skills may be needed. The Museum needs to commit a sufficient percentage of funds raised to support the salaries and operations of the development office, as needed. With development operations fully staffed and funded, SAAM fundraising efforts will continue to be successful.

GOAL 4

Secure financial means to support the Museum's present goals and future directions

Objective 1 Complete fundraising for remaining capital improvements.

Action – With the National Portrait Gallery and central Smithsonian administration, raise funds to complete the courtyard enclosure. *2007 through 2008*

Action – With the National Portrait Gallery and central Smithsonian administration, secure funds to design and build the exterior steps on the south side of the Reynolds Center. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Ensure sufficient funds to complete, maintain, and improve SAAM's galleries, furniture, lighting, and signage. *2007 and ongoing*

Objective 2 Increase funding for Museum programs.

Action – Develop a five-year financial projection which will reveal gaps in funding. *2007 through 2008*

Action – Prepare and implement a strategy to endow the Museum's core programs and staff positions by generating fundraising materials that clearly describe each program or staff position, its case for support, and recognition opportunities. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Raise money annually to support exhibitions, programs, and other museum initiatives that are critical to our mission. *2007 and ongoing*

Action - Identify and cultivate new donors in order to broaden the base of support for SAAM and its Renwick Gallery. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Expand the SAAM/NPG membership program base, while also expanding SAAM's higher-level membership programs. *2007 and ongoing*

Action – Institute a planned giving program specific to SAAM in conjunction with the Smithsonian's central planned giving office. *2007 through 2008*

Action – Ensure capacity to support events in the Luce Center, Great Hall, Grand Salon, and the Courtyard that increase donations. *2007 and ongoing*

Objective 3 Ensure that the Development Office is staffed to support sustained fundraising initiatives and implement a plan to fund salaries of the development team.

Action – Create a development plan to support endowment, programmatic, and annual fundraising. *2007*

Action – Recruit staff according to the new development plan and budget. *2007 through 2008*

Action -- Determine a percentage of funds raised through programs, events, and membership that can be used to fund the development staff. *2007*

FINANCIAL SECURITY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Secure by FY 2009 commitments and pledges to complete fundraising for capital improvements that include the Arlene and Robert Kogod Courtyard covering and historic steps replacement on the south façade of the Donald W. Reynolds Center.
- Increase our present endowments and funding for annual programs each year over the following five years.
- Reach the full complement of 100 members in the Smithsonian Council for American Art and start having personal consultations with as many as 20 per year over the next five years
- Maintain the present number of 630 joint museum memberships over the next five years.
- Staff the development office according to the new staffing plan by FY 2009.
- Over the next five years secure 5 new donors committed to planned giving.