External review of Art Fund’s New Collecting Awards

Background

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. It provides millions of pounds every year to help museums to acquire and share works of art across the UK, further the professional development of their curators, and inspire more people to visit and enjoy their public programmes. In response to Covid-19, in 2020 Art Fund made £3.6 million in urgent funding available to support museums through reopening and beyond, including Respond and Reimagine grants to help meet immediate need and reimagine future ways of working. A further £2 million was made available in 2021 for Reimagine projects. Art Fund is independently funded, supported by the 131,000 members who buy the National Art Pass, who enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places, 50% off major exhibitions, and receive Art Quarterly magazine. Art Fund also supports museums through its annual prize, Art Fund Museum of the Year. The winner of Art Fund Museum of the Year 2021 was Firstsite in Colchester. Find out more about Art Fund and the National Art Pass at artfund.org.

Programme overview

The New Collecting Awards provided funding for curators to pursue new avenues of collecting for their organisations and build critical professional skills. The programme responded to the need for ongoing collections development in museums, underpinned by curatorial expertise, vision and ambition.

The aims of the programme were to:

- Promote the value of research-led collecting
- Cultivate curatorial expertise at both the individual and institutional levels
- Encourage ambitious approaches to collecting
- Facilitate mentorship opportunities to established curators in the UK

Since the programme’s inception in 2015, we have supported 38 curators across the UK and offered almost £2 million in funding for acquisitions, research and professional development. Projects have supported the development of collections including fine art, photography, moving image, numismatics, ceramics and contemporary craft. For further information please see https://www.artfund.org/supporting-museums/programmes/new-collecting-awards.

Brief

We would like to commission an external review of the New Collecting Awards to help us understand the impact of the programme on awardees and their museums and contribute to planning future strategic collecting programmes.

This will include:

Curatorial development

- How the grant has helped awardees increase their knowledge, skills and practical experience e.g. navigating the art market, working with artists, gaining familiarity with internal acquisition processes etc.
- How awardees’ career trajectory and profile has been impacted by the programme
- How awardees have benefitted from working with a mentor
- Whether awardees’ experience of being part of the New Collecting Awards ‘network’ has been beneficial

Collections development

- How acquisitions made through the programme have been utilised, e.g. inclusion in exhibitions, permanent displays, engagement programmes etc.
- How the strategic collecting has influenced future collecting policies and procedures at awardees’ institutions
- Whether the programme has positively impacted on diversifying representation in UK collections
- Whether the programme has helped individuals/institutions unlock further funding or encouraged gifts and donations
- A topline overview of current comparable strategic collecting funding programmes in the UK
- How effectively the programme has met a sector need in:
  o furthering skills and expertise in building collections
  o advocating for the importance of collecting
  o influencing future curatorial development initiatives

Methodology

The methodology for this review could include:

- Review of received interim and final reports from awardees
- Review of Art Fund data on acquisitions supported by the programme
- Survey of previous and current awardees
- Interviews with awardees
- Interviews with a selection of mentors

Deliverables

An analysis of the programme with key findings from ongoing and completed projects; recommendations for future strategic collecting programmes.

Suggested timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 March 2022</td>
<td>Deadline for response to tender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w/c 4 April 2022</td>
<td>Interviews with researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w/c 11 April 2022</td>
<td>Research begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w/c 16 May 2022</td>
<td>Interim findings shared with Art Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 June 2022</td>
<td>Final report and presentation of findings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Budget

There is a total budget of £12,500 available.

Contact details

Please express your interest with a suggested methodology and your suitability for the work by Monday 25 March. Please ask any questions and send your responses to Ying Tan, Senior Programmes Manager, Collections, ytan@artfund.org