

Call for Proposals

Museums Challenge!

A Symposium for Transformative Practice

University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida

February 17-18 2020

UF Museum Studies 20th Anniversary Symposium

In 2000, the University of Florida (UF) established a graduate program in Museum Studies. In the last twenty years, museums and museum professions have undergone critical transformations. To mark the twentieth anniversary of the program and the radical changes in Museum Studies and museums, UF is convening a symposium to examine the history and future of museums and museum professionals challenging ideas and practices in order to shape transformational knowledge and experiences.

The UF Museum Studies program states: “We believe museums can change the world.” Thus, the program centers the transformational power of museums. At this interdisciplinary symposium, we will focus on museums and Museum Studies programs:

- For the history of museums: how have they engaged with and made visible the social and political challenges of their times? Particular interest will be given to how institutions, individuals, and communities manifest transformations that challenge accepted ideas and/or practices.
- How have Museum Studies programs and other forms of professional training evolved to respond to changes to bring about transformations?
- For the future, how can museums and Museum Studies best work in concert to lead change through transformational practice?

Twenty-years ago Stephen Weil posited that American museums were in a moment of great transformation, shifting from “Being about Something to Being for Somebody.” No longer able to be ‘salvage and warehouse business[s]’, he argued that it was imperative for museums to become more entrepreneurial and to demonstrate their impact and advocate for their value. In the decades prior to Weil’s essay, New Museology or New Museum Theory established a critical discourse for museum practice around how museums construct knowledge, engage with communities, and operate in society. Pierre Mayrand argued that this critical discourse “mobilize[d] the supporters of the radical transformation of the aims of museology, and advocates profound changes in the thinking and attitudes of the museologist.”

Today, museums continue to strive to assert their public value and critically engage with the systems and structures upon which they have been built. Many museums have shed guises of neutrality. Museum professionals are positioning their work and institutions as inherently engaged with justice, representation, and addressing historic traumas. Some museums have taken more overt stances to address critical contemporary social issues such hate crime, genocide, migration, mass incarceration, racism, and climate change through their collections and programs.

This symposium celebrates the work of museums, Museum Studies, and our communities over the past twenty years. In doing so, this program looks to the future as we work together for a more just and equitable world.

We seek proposals for participation in the symposium in various formats:

- Presentations (20 minutes inclusive of discussion)
- Panels (3 presentations, 75 minutes inclusive of discussion)
- Roundtables (multiple presenters in conversation, 1 hour)
- Lightning round presentations (5 minutes)

A publication in the form of an edited volume is planned. Selected participants will be asked to contribute to this publication with texts due in Feb 2020.

Proposals Due: Monday, August 26th

Acceptance Notifications: by Friday, September 20th

Proposal for each formats should include:

- **Presentations:** 250 word abstract and short bio (100 words),
- **Panels:** 500 word abstract of the panel including a summary of the goals of the panel and topic the individual papers and short bios for each presenter (100 words)
- **Roundtables:** 250 word abstract of the theme of the roundtable including the guiding questions for the conversation and short bios for each roundtable participant (100 words)
- **Lightening round presentations:** 250 word abstract and short bio (100 words),

Submit proposals via the symposium website call for papers:

museumschallenge.arts.ufl.edu

If you have inquiries about the symposium or the proposal process you may send them to:

museumschallenge@arts.ufl.edu