

cincinnati art museum

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact • Jill E. Dunne • Director of Marketing and Communications
513-639-2954 • media@cincyart.org
953 Eden Park Drive | Cincinnati, Ohio | 45202
www.cincinnatiartmuseum.org

***Images Available Upon Request**

\$500K NEH grant will support Cincinnati Art Museum's re-envisioning of the art and architecture of the Near East

CINCINNATI — A \$500,000 Infrastructure and Capacity-Building Challenge Grant from the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#) (NEH) will help the Cincinnati Art Museum renovate and reinstall its world-renowned collection of art and archaeological material from the ancient Near East.

This grant will help fund a renovation and reinstallation project that includes a complete re-envisioning of the existing 2,800-square-foot gallery, known as the Hanna Wing. After additional fundraising is complete, the Cincinnati Art Museum project team led by Dr. Ainsley M. Cameron, Cincinnati Art Museum's Curator of South Asian Art, Islamic Art & Antiquities, in partnership with the University of Cincinnati, Hebrew Union College, and the Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati, will re-interpret and re-display this significant collection.

Planned architectural changes include the addition of LED lighting, new flooring, casework and flooding the gallery with natural light. Enhancing the aesthetic impact of this collection through its physical display while exploring the historical relevancy through the interpretation and presentation of the works will encourage visitors to rethink the way a twenty-first century museum interprets ancient Near Eastern art.

The ancient Near East is a vast geographic area that stretches from Turkey to the Indus Valley of present-day Pakistan, and from the Caucasus region to the Arabian Peninsula. The term "Near East" is applied to objects made between the Neolithic period (eighth millennium BCE) and the end of the Sasanian empire (mid-seventh century AD).

The museum's Near East collections contain more than 1,000 objects, with the monumental architectural fragments from Khirbet et-Tannur, a large Nabataean temple complex located 70 miles north of Petra in present-day Jordan, at its center. The Cincinnati Art Museum has in its holdings the largest collection of Nabataean sculpture outside of Jordan. Khirbet et-Tannur was excavated in 1937 by world-renowned archaeologist and Cincinnati native Dr. Nelson Glueck in conjunction with the Department of Antiquities of Transjordan, and all findings were equally divided.

Relief sculptures depicting deities, carved floral ornamentation, an arch from the temple's shrine, and votive terracotta works entered the museum's collection in 1939, while the remainder are in The Jordan Museum in Amman. Other highlights of the museum's Near East collection include lavish royal goods and architectural fragments from the Persian empire, intricate votive objects from the Sumerian and Assyrian civilizations, and funerary busts from the subterranean vaults of Palmyra in present-day Syria.

The majority of the collection has been in storage since 2004 due to lack of gallery space. Constituents from around the world are eager to have the collection return to view, particularly the faculty and students at the University of Cincinnati's Department of Classics, the Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology at Hebrew Union College, as well as visiting scholars researching Nabataean art. Due to our shared interest and holdings that represent the Nabataean civilization, the government of Jordan is also eager for our collection to be displayed, as Cincinnati has official "Sister City" status with Amman, Jordan.

cincinnati art museum

The gallery reinstallation will take an object-first approach, prioritizing the display to reflect the strength of our permanent collection and create a strong visual record of the region's approach to art and innovation. This approach will represent the complex political, religious, economic, and cultural connections between the network of empires and city-states of the ancient Near East. The objects and architectural material in our Near Eastern collection are indicative of centuries of military conquests and cultural exchange that occurred between these vast civilizations, and are formative in our understating of how the region developed.

"We are thrilled that the innovative new Near Eastern galleries at the Cincinnati Art Museum have won a major infrastructure grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The NEH represents the highest standards of scholarship and the leading edge of museum practice," said Cameron Kitchin, Cincinnati Art Museum's Louis and Louise Dieterle Nippert Director. "Through this grant, we will be able to bring our landmark Nabataean and Near Eastern collections to light for the public. We are grateful to the NEH and our entire Ohio Congressional delegation for their support, including Sherrod Brown, Steve Chabot, Rob Portman, Brad Wenstrup and Warren Davidson."

On Aug. 8, the NEH announced Cincinnati Art Museum's grant as part of \$43.1 million in awards for 218 humanities projects across the country. The grants include the first awards made under NEH's new Infrastructure and Capacity-Building Challenge Grant program, which will support infrastructure projects at 29 U.S. cultural institutions in 20 states and the District of Columbia.

This round of funding, NEH's third and last for fiscal year 2018, will support vital research, education, preservation, and public programs in the humanities. These peer-reviewed grants were awarded in addition to \$47 million in annual operating support provided to the national network of state and local humanities councils during fiscal year 2018.

"From nationally broadcast documentaries to summer workshops for high school teachers, the projects receiving funding today strengthen and sustain the cultural life of our nation and its citizens," said NEH Chairman Jon Parrish Peede.

About The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)

Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at: www.neh.gov.

About the Cincinnati Art Museum

The Cincinnati Art Museum is supported by the generosity of individuals and businesses that give annually to Artswave. The Ohio Arts Council helps fund the Cincinnati Art Museum with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The Cincinnati Art Museum gratefully acknowledges operating support from the City of Cincinnati, as well as our members.

Free general admission to the Cincinnati Art Museum is made possible by a gift from the Rosenthal Family Foundation. Special exhibition pricing may vary. Parking at the Cincinnati Art Museum is free. The museum is open Tuesday – Sunday, 11 a.m.–5 p.m. and Thursday, 11 a.m.–8 p.m.

cincinnatiartmuseum.org.