



## Museums for America

Sample Application MA-256203-OMS-24  
Project Category: Lifelong Learning

### J.B. Speed Art Museum

|                         |           |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| Amount awarded by IMLS: | \$249,700 |
| Amount of cost share:   | \$552,820 |

The Speed Art Museum will implement the final phase of “Louisville’s Black Avant-Garde”, a series of exhibitions that address inequality in the appreciation of Black artists and their works. The project team will continue developing relationships with the artists and their family members to develop exhibitions that highlight the underappreciated histories of Gallery Enterprises and the Louisville Art Workshop in Kentucky. Project activities will include planning and finalizing two single-artist exhibitions and a major group exhibition including convening a project committee comprised of museum staff, artists and family members; conducting research, archival documentation, and completing conservation assessments. Each exhibition will be accompanied by a publication and public programming. The resulting exhibitions and educational resources will better preserve and present the legacies of artists who have been overlooked and increase recognition of Black artists and the central role that Louisville played in fostering artistic movements.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the most recent Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program to which you are applying.

## PROPOSAL NARRATIVE – IMLS MUSEUMS FOR AMERICA – SPEED ART MUSEUM

### LOUISVILLE’S BLACK AVANT-GARDE

#### Section 1: Project Justification

- *Which program goal/project category and associated objectives of Museums for America will your project address?*

The “Louisville’s Black Avant-Garde” project will address **Goal 1: Lifelong Learning: Empower people of all ages and backgrounds through experiential and cross-disciplinary learning and discovery.** Within this Goal, we will address the following objectives:

- Objective 1.1: Support public programs, adult programs, family programs, and early childhood programs.
- Objective 1.2: Support exhibitions, interpretation, and digital media.

- *How will your project advance your museum’s strategic plan?*

The “Louisville Black Avant-Garde” project falls under the “Art for All” Pillar of the Speed’s strategic plan. There are three statements of Strategic Intent related to Art for All:

- We believe the joy and power of art and the creative process belong to all people. Our warm hospitality, inspiring spaces, and collective engagement diminish barriers – physical, financial, and social.
- We prioritize equity, inclusion, and access, and embrace these core values as central to our mission.
- We activate our collections, exhibitions, programs, and spaces to tell compelling stories that reflect our communities, foster belonging, and spark thoughtful dialogue.

Within the “Art for All” Pillar, “Louisville’s Black Avant-Garde” project furthers the “Art & Learning” goal statement to: **Implement inclusive curatorial and interpretive practices that yield a new suite of exhibitions, programs, and collections with an interpretation framework that celebrates our commitment to accessibility and diversity.**

The project is directly related to 3 out of the 5 initiatives under this goal:

- Articulate a curatorial vision and implement curatorial measures that accurately support Speed’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in its exhibitions and programs.
- Align curatorial practice and vision by updating processes that yield an exhibition calendar and permanent collection galleries that celebrate cultural diversity, offer new historical insights and perspectives, and emphasize the accomplishments of emerging and underrecognized artists.
- Position the Speed as a strong partner for Kentucky artists and creatives by amplifying the artistic accomplishments of our region and revising past omissions/exclusions through exhibitions, installations, publications, and film programs.

- *What need, problem, or challenge will your project address, and how was it identified? Describe how you have used demographic information, economic circumstances, condition assessments, and other relevant data from reliable sources to define the need, problem, or challenge and develop the scope for the project.*

From the 1950s through the 1980s, in Louisville, Kentucky, two artist collectives, Gallery Enterprises (1957-1961) and the Louisville Art Workshop (1966-1978), were crucial for the development of a Black modern arts movement, allowing Black and other marginalized artists to forge supportive networks, hone their talents, and create arenas where they could showcase their works. The collectives prepared artists who would go on to achieve national and international acclaim, including but not limited to Sam Gilliam, Bob Thompson, and Kenneth Young, and supported the growth of arts ecosystems throughout the Southeast. The artists of Gallery Enterprises and the Louisville Art Workshop established networks, documented their histories, created archives, and left behind a rich legacy without any significant institutional or commercial support. Major, white-led museums and arts organizations in the Southeast overlooked the work of the collectives throughout the second half of the twentieth century. As a result, the histories of the collectives have been hidden from the larger public and excluded from American art history.

The “Louisville’s Black Avant-Garde” (LBAG) project addresses inequality in the appreciation of Black artists and their works, by developing and presenting a series of exhibitions that bring to light the underappreciated histories of Gallery Enterprises and the Louisville Workshop and which contribute to the development of a more inclusive American art history. The project is of vital importance right now because the Speed’s curatorial team, along with Sarah Battle, Coordinator of Academic Programs and Publications at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts in the National Gallery of Art, have been building trust with artists, their families, and other community members associated with the artist collectives. We have an opportunity to form an advisory committee involving artists and community members who will help in shaping the vision and content of the exhibitions and associated programming before the generation of artists who were directly involved in the collectives passes away. One of our goals is to broaden the reach and appeal of the Speed’s exhibitions, without pandering and tokenism, but instead by building a multi-year series of exhibitions that celebrates the unique role of our city and region in a transformative arts movement and relies on the guidance of community members at the heart of the movement.

The LBAG project spans a total of 5 years from 2023 - 2027, including 4 single-artist exhibitions, a significant culminating group exhibition in 2027 which the Speed plans to tour, and, in a separate project outside of the scope of this proposal, an online digital resource launching in 2028. The Speed Art Museum is requesting support from the IMLS Museums Across America project to support two single-artist exhibitions in 2025 - 2026, and a major group exhibition in 2027, along with associated research & development, archival documentation, conservation assessments, and associated public programming. We anticipate the launch of an online digital resource in early 2028, therefore those costs are not included in this proposal. The project is being led by co-curators, Dr. fari nzinga, the Speed’s Curator of African American and Native American Collections, and Sarah Battle, Coordinator of Academic Programs and Publications at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts in the National Gallery of Art, hereinafter referred to as the “Co-Curators”.

- *Who is the target group for your project and how have they been involved in the planning?*

The target group for this project includes artists connected to the Louisville Art Workshop, as well as friends, contemporaries, and relatives who are interested in carrying on their legacies. In addition to working closely with living artists, Co-Curators have made connections with relatives of Fred and Anna Bond, Robert L. Douglas, Kenneth Victor Young, Sam Gilliam, Bob Thompson, Ted Joans, Earl Hooks, Robert C. Carter, Eugenia V. Dunn, and others. Together, the Co-Curators are working to establish a family council of approximately two dozen individuals to guide their efforts. The artists and their family members have given oral history interviews, and have been instrumental in identifying significant works of art and important private collections.

Guests of the Speed are the second target group - one which we hope to grow and diversify by creating meaningful opportunities for community connection through exhibitions and projects such as LBAG. Annually, the Speed serves 90,000 guests of all ages, from every county in Kentucky, every state, and many foreign countries. Among these guests are thousands of K-12 students and educators who participate in tours and educational programming, as well as students, staff and faculty from local and regional universities.

- *Who are the ultimate beneficiaries for this project?*

There are a number of individuals and groups who will benefit in the long-term from the LBAG project. Of course, the artists will benefit because they will be given the serious attention that they deserve; the artists' work will be placed in historical, social, and political-economic contexts; and the members of the artists' families and communities will benefit because the recognition and interpretation generated by the exhibitions will increase the value of their collections. Museum visitors of all ages will benefit from seeing the art and learning the stories behind it; and from being introduced to artists they may not have been familiar with before.

Research and development activities, including photography, creation of audio files, and video, will be utilized in the future creation of an online digital resource (design and launch are not included in the scope of this request). Students from kindergarten through higher education, in Kentucky and beyond will benefit from hearing the voices of their elders narrating history and their own lives. Educators will have a rich repository of information and resources to build lesson plans and curricula. Additionally, researchers will benefit from having access to primary sources like archival photography, artists' papers, and high-quality images of the artworks. Curators and art historians will benefit from being able to look at the checklists of the Speed's exhibitions, as well as the historic exhibitions organized by members of the Gallery Enterprises and the Louisville Art Workshop.

## **Section 2: Project Work Plan**

- *What specific activities will you carry out and in what sequence?*

1) From 2024 to 2027, Co-Curators will conduct additional research, record interviews with artists involved in the collectives and their family members, record footage of studio visits, and continue to develop partnerships with other museums, universities, and historical organizations.

2) From 2025 to 2026, Dr. fari nzinga will curate two exhibitions, each dedicated to an artist associated with the artist collectives. The exhibitions will be on view in the Speed's Chellgren Gallery. A publication will accompany each exhibition. The LBAG project includes four total single-artist exhibitions. The first exhibition, *Louisville's Black Avant-Garde: Robert L. Douglas* was on view from June 30 - October 1, 2023. A donor impact report, including web links and exhibition images is included in Supporting Documents as "Supportingdoc3". A second single-artist exhibition featuring William M. Duffy will launch prior to the start of the IMLS performance period, on June 28, 2024. The artists to be featured in subsequent exhibitions are:

- Gloucester Caliman Coxe (6/27/25 - 9/28/25) - For four decades, G. (Gloucester) Caliman Coxe was considered the dean of African-American artists in Louisville, Kentucky, an art scene in the 1950s and '60s that included Sam Gilliam, Bob Thompson, and Kenneth Victor Young. Born in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Coxe moved to Louisville in 1924 where his parents were accomplished watercolorists. He worked as an illustrator and display artist for the Lyric and Grand Theaters and an illustrator at the Fort Knox Training Aid Center, from which he retired after 20 years. He then entered the University of Louisville to study visual art in his forties. He was the first African American to receive a Hite Art Scholarship and the first African-American fine arts graduate. He exhibited throughout the Southern United States.
- Eugenia V. Dunn (6/26/26- 9/27/26) - Born in 1918 in Henderson, KY, Dunn studied at the University of Louisville, Atlanta University and the University of Michigan. Her works have been exhibited at Atlanta University, the Tuskegee Institute, the Veterans Administration Hospital in Tuskegee, the Beaux-Arts Guild in Tuskegee, Howard University in Washington, D. C., Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, the Cronon Gallery in Louisville, Bellarmine College in Louisville, Kentucky, Atlanta's Piedmont Park, Louisville's Central Park, the Downtown Bank in Little Rock, Spelman College, Adair's Downtown Gallery in Atlanta, Georgia, West Virginia State College, Philander Smith College, Morgan State College, Texas Southern University, Arkansas Art Center in Little Rock and more.

3) From 2024 to 2026, the curatorial team will brainstorm and coordinate artist family convenings to honor, and maintain the trust, of the family advisory group contributing their legacy work and art objects to the solo shows and culminating group exhibition. Convenings will be held in Nashville, Atlanta, and Louisville.

4) Between 2024 and 2026, Sarah Battle and fari nzinga will coordinate, in tandem with the artist families, in-person convenings for artists and their families to revisit important spaces in Louisville, Nashville, and Atlanta affiliated with this legacy work

5) In 2027, the LBAG project will present the final culminating group exhibition, featuring artworks by as many as two dozen Black artists who were involved in, connected with, and influenced by Gallery Enterprises and the Louisville Workshop. Artists will include, for example, Sam Gilliam, Bob Thompson, Kenneth Young, Bob Carter, Eugenia Dunn, Ted Joans, Ed Hamilton, Fred Bond, David Driskell, and Earl Hooks. The Speed will offer a series of educational and public programs in conjunction with the exhibition, as an invitation for ongoing reconciliation in a fractured community. After 2027, the exhibition will travel to other venues in the Southeast. The Speed's curatorial team has begun discussions with curators at other venues about hosting the show.

- *What are the risks to the project and how will you mitigate them?*

There are several risks and challenges associated with the LBAG project. The artists who have been chosen to be highlighted in the single-artist exhibition series are elders, and there is a risk that the artist, and/or family members and contemporaries, could pass on before the completion of research and development, and before the exhibition itself. The Speed experienced this circumstance in 2023 with the first exhibition in the LBAG series featuring Professor Robert L. Douglas, who had been battling with illness and sadly passed on shortly before the opening of the exhibition in June 2023. The exhibition became a memorial and celebration of life, with family members participating in events and talks surrounding the exhibition in his stead.

The nature of the LBAG work is altogether unique in that the artists' collections are spread out all over the United States, in the homes of relatives, in galleries, universities, and other non-profit institutions. In many cases, the works are not in climate-controlled conditions under the care of technicians and experts. Locating works and not having the needed resources to conserve them, or for conservation to take place in a timely manner, is another risk. Curators are seeing and developing object checklists as they are being presented to them by owners of the artworks. The Speed is able to mitigate this risk through ongoing relationships with skilled conservators, and generous support from donors and other grant funding, establishing a pool of money available for conservation work. Funds are requested in this proposal to support conservation assessments only, and as needed.

- *Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?*

Co-curators Sarah Battle and Dr. fari nzinga will plan, implement, and manage the project (resumes attached).

Dr. fari nzinga, Project Director for LBAG, serves as Curator of African and Native American Collections at the Speed Art Museum. She was most recently a visiting professor and scholar in residence at the Bell Hooks Center at Berea College. She brings experience as a curator, educator, and cofounder of the Color BLOC, an information-sharing network for emerging artists and arts professionals/workers of color. In her role at the Speed, nzinga strengthens the Museum's scholarly role in the community by creating partnerships, programs, and events that connect academic faculty and students with the Museum's permanent collection and temporary loan exhibitions. At the same time, nzinga has been tasked with reinterpreting the displays of the Native American and African art collections, bringing them in line with DEAI initiatives and expanding connections to the Museum's collections, exhibitions, and programs. She has previously held positions at the New Orleans Museum of Art, the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, and Kalamazoo College, and received her Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from Duke University.

Sarah Battle is the Coordinator of Academic Programs and Publications at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts in the National Gallery of Art and is currently engaged in an annual, renewable contract as co-curator for the LBAG project. Battle is also an independent scholar on artist Kenneth Victor Young. Her current research focuses Young's formative years as a painter in Louisville, Ky. Her oral history project, *Painting a Legacy*, documents the two major Louisville-based art collectives between the 1950s and 1970s. Interviews are currently being transcribed and will be made available through the University of Louisville's Oral History Center. *Painting a Legacy* is the scholarly foundation of an upcoming exhibition at the Speed Museum.

Pam Bischoff, Associate Director of Grants and Foundations, will manage and track grant funding, track performance measurement outcomes, oversee all IMLS reporting requirements, and serve as the Speed Art Museum's primary grant management contact for IMLS. Bischoff has over 20 years of grants management experience, including numerous federal awards such as NEH, NEA, SBA, HUD, and DE (resume attached).

LBAG will be further supported by the Speed's Programming and Learning, Engagement and Belonging teams, who will work with the Co-Curators to develop and present public programming to complement each exhibition.

- *What time, financial, personnel, and other resources will you need to carry out the activities?*

The Speed proposes to carry out the LBAG project activities over a 3-year period, from September 1, 2024 - August 31, 2027. All personnel necessary for the planning and execution of project activities are currently on staff or under contract. Planning and development of LBAG exhibitions has and will continue to require extensive travel to convene with artists and family members, and locate artworks for the single-artist exhibitions. The Speed Art Museum is requesting support from IMLS Museums for America in the amount of \$249,702, with a cost share commitment from the Speed Art Museum of \$576,820. The attached Budget Justification provides additional details on needed resources.

- *How will you track your progress toward achieving your intended results?*

The Speed will maintain consistent and transparent communication on progress with internal and external stakeholders, including: Making note of the names/dates/locations of other scholars and curators who express interest in the project and keeping them updated; sharing planning documents and calendars; keeping a list of works in need of conservation; automating work flow with calendar invites and reminders; and keeping a detailed and very granular project checklist with due dates and clear divisions of labor. The Co-Curators meet monthly to review progress and confirm next steps. Artist families will be hosted in Louisville for each solo exhibition during opening week, and one artist family convening will be held each year, allowing the Co-Curators to plan and execute the project in tandem with the families who have entrusted their art, history, and legacy.

### **Section 3: Project Results**

- *What are your project's intended results and how will they address the need, problem, or challenge you have identified?*

1) Uplifting the legacies of historically significant artists who have been overlooked. Increasing recognition of Black artists and the central role that Louisville played in fostering artistic movements; generating new scholarship, transforming the way local art history is presented.

2) Artists and family members involved in the project, either as members of the Family Council or in another way, express satisfaction with the project and are pleased with how the legacy of Gallery Enterprises and the Louisville Workshop are preserved and presented.

4) The curatorial team and others involved in the project have multiple opportunities throughout the grant period to share what they have learned and increase awareness of the project at conferences, art fairs, and other venues—ideally, this would include giving a presentation on the project as part of the James A. Porter lecture series at Howard University.

- 5) Other scholars and curators express interest in the project and use it as a basis for pursuing new research and developing new projects.
- 6) A combined total of more than 200,000 people view the exhibitions supported by the IMLS grant and attend related programs between 2024 and 2027.
- 8) The curatorial team finalizes plans for the exhibition to travel and be presented in the Washington DC and Atlanta areas beyond 2027.
- 9) To offer an approach to community partnerships that can be a model for other museums.
- *How will the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes of the target group change as a result of your project?*

Members of the target group have expressed feeling excluded and discriminated against by the museum historically. As a result of this project, we will have built trust and goodwill; moreover, they will feel valued and validated in ways they never have. The target group will gain new skills and behaviors pertaining to the care and maintenance of artworks and archival materials through our planning and interactions.

- *What products will result from your project?*

Through this proposal, the Speed will create a series of recorded oral history interviews; two smaller, solo exhibitions and one large, group exhibition; two smaller solo exhibition catalogs and one large, comprehensive, group exhibition catalog. Beyond the scope of this proposal, the Speed will travel the group exhibition, create an online resource; and will explore production of a documentary film.

- *How will you sustain the benefit(s) of your project beyond the conclusion of the period of performance?*

Even as the IMLS Museums for America period of performance comes to an end, the long-term benefits resulting from LBAG will only be beginning. Immediately upon the conclusion of the culminating group exhibition, the Speed will begin the process of making all archival materials publicly accessible via the launch of an online resource, available in perpetuity and to which others outside the Speed would be encouraged to contribute information and resources on an ongoing basis. Work is ongoing to build partnerships to travel the large group exhibition to other cities, as well as foundational work to produce a documentary film to be premiered in the future.



Louisville's Black Avant-Garde - Schedule of Completion - YEAR 1

| Activities                                       | 2024     |     |          |          | 2025 |     |     |     |          |          |          |     |
|--|----------|-----|----------|----------|------|-----|-----|-----|----------|----------|----------|-----|
|  | Sept     | Oct | Nov      | Dec      | Jan  | Feb | Mar | Apr | May      | Jun      | Jul      | Aug |
| Exhibition Research & Development                | [Active] |     |          |          |      |     |     |     |          |          |          |     |
| Exhibition: William Duffy                        | [Active] |     |          |          |      |     |     |     |          |          |          |     |
| Duffy De-Installation                            |          |     | [Active] |          |      |     |     |     |          |          |          |     |
| Conservation Assessment - Coxe                   | [Active] |     |          |          |      |     |     |     |          |          |          |     |
| Marketing & Promotion - Coxe                     |          |     |          |          |      |     |     |     | [Active] |          |          |     |
| Coxe Installation                                |          |     |          |          |      |     |     |     | [Active] |          |          |     |
| Exhibition: Gloucester Caliman Coxe              |          |     |          |          |      |     |     |     |          | [Active] |          |     |
| Exhibition Opening & Complementary Programs      |          |     |          |          |      |     |     |     |          | [Active] |          |     |
| Public Programming                               | [Active] |     |          |          |      |     |     |     |          | [Active] |          |     |
| Family Convening - Nashville, TN                 |          |     |          | [Active] |      |     |     |     |          |          |          |     |
| LBAG Colloquium - Speed Museum                   |          |     |          |          |      |     |     |     |          |          | [Active] |     |
| Exhibition Evaluation - Surveys, Attendance, etc | [Active] |     |          |          |      |     |     |     |          | [Active] |          |     |

Louisville's Black Avant-Garde - Schedule of Completion - YEAR 2

| Activities                                       | 2025     |          |     |          | 2026 |     |     |     |          |          |          |          |
|--|----------|----------|-----|----------|------|-----|-----|-----|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|  | Sept     | Oct      | Nov | Dec      | Jan  | Feb | Mar | Apr | May      | Jun      | Jul      | Aug      |
| Exhibition Research & Development                | [Active] |          |     |          |      |     |     |     |          |          |          |          |
| Exhibition: Coxe                                 | [Active] |          |     |          |      |     |     |     |          |          |          |          |
| Coxe De-Installation                             |          | [Active] |     |          |      |     |     |     |          |          |          |          |
| Conservation Assessment - Dunn                   | [Active] |          |     |          |      |     |     |     |          |          |          |          |
| Marketing & Promotion - Dunn                     |          |          |     |          |      |     |     |     |          | [Active] |          |          |
| Dunn Installation                                |          |          |     |          |      |     |     |     |          | [Active] |          |          |
| Exhibition: Eugenia V. Dunn                      |          |          |     |          |      |     |     |     |          |          | [Active] |          |
| Exhibition Opening & Complementary Programs      |          |          |     |          |      |     |     |     |          |          | [Active] |          |
| Public Programming                               | [Active] |          |     |          |      |     |     |     |          |          |          | [Active] |
| Family Convening - Atlanta, GA                   |          |          |     | [Active] |      |     |     |     |          |          |          |          |
| Exhibition Evaluation - Surveys, Attendance, etc | [Active] |          |     |          |      |     |     |     | [Active] |          |          |          |

