

## Tang honored for innovation in collection access by the Museum Association of New York



**SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY.-** [The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery](#) at Skidmore College has been honored with the 2020 Innovation in Collection Access Award by the Museum Association of New York for the project Accelerate: Access and Inclusion at The Tang Teaching Museum.

The award recognizes exemplary projects that broaden access and preserve and catalog museum collections. The Museum Association of New York's award announcement noted in particular the range of media the Tang created for the three-year Accelerate project, which concluded in 2019 and included exhibitions, public programs, new research, a glossy magazine, videos, photography, and an enhanced searchable collections website.

Tang's Dayton Director Ian Berry and Associate Curator Rebecca McNamara led the Accelerate project with the goal of innovating new ways of bringing the diversity of the Tang collection to the public. The project was supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

"We are thrilled to receive this award from MANY because access to our growing collection is vital to our mission," Berry said. "Our collection serves as a catalyst for faculty, students, and visitors to uncover untold meanings and creative possibilities and to expand our capacity for civic discourse. This is made possible by the Tang's dedicated staff and our many partners at Skidmore and beyond. I would like to thank MANY for recognizing our work."

In 2019, the project included the exhibition *Beauty and Bite*, which displayed at the Tang for the first time significant new acquisitions such as Kara Walker's 27-screenprint series *The Emancipation Approximation*, Glenn Ligon's *Runaways*, and William Kentridge's *Tango for Page Turning*. Another 2019 exhibition, *New Ms. Thang*, juxtaposed George Hurrell's glamour photographs of Hollywood actresses from the 1930s and 1940s with images of black women by the artists Endia Beal, Renee Cox, Deana Lawson, and Mickalene Thomas, whose works are in the Tang collection.

Research projects included an exploration of the power of vernacular photographs of black families in intimate gatherings to subvert mainstream and stereotypical imagery of black bodies. Another reviewed Native American objects under the guidelines of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), the first such study undertaken by the Tang.

A 128-page glossy magazine called *Accelerate: Access and Inclusion at The Tang Teaching Museum* was published in each year of the project. Edited by Berry and McNamara, the magazines were designed by New York City-based *Linked by Air*. The most recent issue showcased research on the Tang collection by Skidmore College faculty, staff, and students, and visiting artists and scholars; transcripts of interviews with artists with work in the collection, including Jess T. Dugan, Renee Cox, Josh Faught, Jane Irish, Geoffrey Chadsey, and Jim Self; and articles on unique events, such as *Off the Shelf*, a site-specific theater production centered on the collection that took place in the museum's collection storage areas, and the *Accelerator Series* of talks on the urgent issues of cultural appropriation, citizenship, forgiveness, and food justice.

Online, the new collections website offers visitors a searchable database of work in the Tang collection featuring stunning photography, extensive cataloging data, videos of artists speaking about their work, as well as essays that give new perspectives on specific objects. The collections website can be found at <http://tang.skidmore.edu/collection>.

In announcing the award, the Museum Association of New York said, "The Review Committee was impressed by the range of media generated by this project and how it combined remote digital access to the collection with engaging diverse audiences."

The Tang will be awarded the Innovation in Collection Access Award as part of the Museum Association of New York's 2020 conference "The Power of Partnership." The award ceremony will take place at 8 a.m. Monday, March 30, at the Hilton Albany.