



Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Sample Application IGSM-249678-OMS-21
Project Category: Collections Stewardship and Access

Triton Museum of Art

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$38,047
Amount of cost share:	\$14,790

The project description can be viewed in the IMLS Awarded Grants Search:
<https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded/igsm-249678-oms-21>

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 and project category (if applicable) to which you are applying.

Project Justification

With support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Triton Museum of Art will catalogue and digitally document works from the Austin D. Warburton Collection of Native American Art and Artifacts to improve the management, preservation, and accessibility of one of the most consequential facets of the museum collection. These important cultural items reflect early cultural and artistic development among Native Americans prior to colonization as well as post-colonial and modern cultural practices. As an avid collector of Native American artifacts, Austin D. Warburton (1917-1995) bequeathed to the City of Santa Clara in 1996 1,930 objects from his collection with the condition that the Triton Museum of Art preserve and maintain them in perpetuity. Mr. Warburton was a prominent collector and scholar of Native American history, and he was the author of *Indian Lore of the North California Coast* (1966). He was also one of the founding Board members of the Triton Museum of Art.

This body of work includes objects circa 900 to 1990 primarily from the Southwest, California, and the Pacific Northwest. Tools, toys, basketry, decorative crafts, musical instruments, clothing, ceramicware, objects used for hunting and food preparation, as well as items created to captivate the imagination of tourists, are included in the collection. The collection consists of masterfully made objects that exhibit great beauty and represent the unique beliefs, customs, and heritage of the makers of these works.

Currently, less than 5% of these objects have been digitally documented. The plan to catalogue and to digitize 350 cultural items in the Austin D. Warburton Collection of Native American Art and Artifacts was identified as a priority in our strategic plan and will resolve the following pressing needs:

- Preserve works from obsolescence, deterioration, theft or destruction through documentation of the current condition of each cultural item, flagging any objects in need of future conservation treatment
- Provide updated information about cultural items to share with Native American lineal descendants and tribal representatives to facilitate the return of objects that meet the conditions of NAGPRA
- Foster research and expand curatorial capacity to increase the number of public exhibitions of the collection to promote public awareness, appreciation, and understanding of Native American history and cultural heritages
- Increase exhibitions and provide exhibition tours for students attending Title I schools in Santa Clara Unified School District who are learning about Native American history during their field trip to the museum. For more information about school tours, please read the letter of support on behalf of Santa Clara Unified School District (Supportingdoc2).

At the Triton Museum of Art, we support self-determination of Native Americans, preservation of their cultural heritage, and repatriation of sacred artifacts because we believe all people should have access to and an influence over the stewardship of the cultural property that composes their unique cultural heritage. It is our hope that Native Americans are given the resources to be stewards of their heritage and that our museum can be a partner and supporter of this. As a result, part of the project would enable the Triton Museum of Art to provide updated and amended information to Native American lineal descendants and tribal representatives to facilitate the return of objects that meet the conditions of NAGPRA.

In 2000, the Triton Museum of Art conducted a full assessment of the Austen D. Warburton Collection of Native American Art & Artifacts as part of the required repatriation of objects as mandated by NAGPRA. Many works were repatriated to their appropriate tribes both for the reasons that some items may have had

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human remains (hair, bone, etc.) and some items were deemed to be of unique cultural and spiritual significance. The proposed activities to catalogue the collection will provide updated and amended information which would be of interest to, and shared with lineal descendants and tribal representatives through the National NAGPRA Program. It is important to mention that if, in our research, we find that any cultural item fits the criteria of NAGPRA, it will not be digitized unless requested by NAGPRA for their purposes.

Interestingly, the Triton Museum of Art is also currently participating as a partner with the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, in connection with NAGPRA, to identify and reassess items that originated with the Pomo tribes of Central California. It is a wonderful and educational process that is adding depth to our understanding of the purpose and meaning of these works.

In the museum's 2019- 2024 Strategic Plan, the Board of Trustees and senior staff approved of several collection priorities. One of them is to achieve AAM accreditation through improved processes of collections management. Triton Museum of Art made strides to improve its collections care in 2002 when it received a grant award from the National Endowment for the Humanities to purchase storage supplies, preservation materials, and equipment to repack and rehouse objects in the Austin D. Warburton Collection of Native American Art and Artifacts. Through an award received from the National Endowment for the Arts in 2007, Triton Museum of Art purchased acid-free boxes and tissue, as well as ethafoam, to store baskets in the collection.

Another priority in the museum's strategic plan is to digitally document the entire collection over the next four years to ensure that these culturally valued pieces are stewarded with best methods of care and management and that new digital tools are fully utilized. With the generous support of IMLS this year, Triton Museum of Art received funding through the *IMLS Inspire!* grants program to digitally document portions of the works on paper collection, which are not part of the Austin D. Warburton Collection of Native American Art and Artifacts. Cataloguing and digitally documenting the Austin D. Warburton Collection of Native American Art and Artifacts would be the next step in our four year goal to have our entire permanent collection digitally photographed.

As a result, the proposed project would make the necessary improvements in collections management as the museum moves towards achieving accreditation by having proper documentation of this facet of the collection, which will reduce the need for them to be frequently pulled from the collections storage area, and thus minimize risks associated with handling. The proposed project will address this need by cataloging these works which will include updated, amended, and detailed information including dimensions, conservation, and curatorial values.

This concern for cultural preservation through better collections management is coupled with the need for the public to have improved access to these objects. Having professional photographs will aid curatorial staff in conducting the necessary research to design permanent collection exhibitions and to loan these cultural items. As a result, the proposed project aligns with the goals of *Inspire! Grants for Small Museums* by building capacity for the museum to better serve the public by engaging in best practices for collections care and by increasing the accessibility of the collection and its associated resources with the public.

Project Work Plan

Below is a broad overview of the different phases of the proposed project to inventory, assess, digitize, and archive 350 objects from the Austin D. Warburton Collection of Native American Art and Artifacts:

- 1.) Condition Evaluation: The chief curator, with the support of the assistant registrar and collections intern, will initially search electronic records of previously selected works, flagging any fragile works or works that require special handling. Objects will then be pulled by the chief curator, assistant registrar and collections intern to be thoroughly evaluated. Complete condition report examinations will be conducted for each piece and all records will be updated. Works deemed too fragile for the digitization process will be excluded from this project. Those works will have special notations in the electronic records and all printouts will reflect updated information. Any special handling instructions will be highlighted for visibility.
- 2.) Cataloging: The chief curator and assistant registrar will check records for any missing information, i.e. dimensions, descriptions, signatures, ect. as well as update all electronic records.
- 3.) Metadata Creation: A master list will be created of works that are ready to be photographed, in the order that they should be digitized, with special handling needs noted. Each object will be given a filename based on its existing unique accession number. Please see the attached digital product form with more information about metadata creation for this proposed project.
- 4.) Digitization Prep: The filename will be printed and tagged with the work in storage. The museum preparator, with the assistance of the chief curator, will locate works from storage and set them up to be photographed on-site, with attention to those that are in need of special handling. Dust will be carefully removed from objects with a lint-free, soft-bristle brush and textiles will be surface cleaned with a low suction vacuum. To ensure the safe handling and transport of all objects during this process, a body of safety equipment will be on hand. Large items will always be moved with their storage supports. Sturdy/ rigid archival boards, padded rolling carts, and acid-free trays will be available at all times. A variety of glove types and other tools will be used to secure the safe handling of all works. Ceramics will always be placed on a padded surface (cloth, pillows, or sheets of polyethylene foam) and baskets will always be transported in a box for extra support, with the sides of baskets reinforced with coils or rings made from extruded polyethylene or cloth tubing.
- 5.) Digitization: Under the direction of the chief curator, an experienced fine art photographer will set up the appropriate work area at the museum to photograph each object, with special attention given to creating the appropriate lighting. He will use a high-resolution Sony A7R IV 60 MB capture digital camera to create archival master digital images. He will conduct quality review throughout each day to confirm that digital images appropriately match the original works in terms of the quality of their tone and color. He will work with the aid of a reference target.
- 6.) Post Processing: The fine art photographer will edit raw image files to ensure that they are an accurate reflection of the original object in their tone, color reproduction, sharpness, and other image quality standards. He will create file names for each image. Under the direction of the chief curator, the digital imaging assistant will create and edit derivative and production master files.
- 7.) Quality Review: The chief curator and assistant registrar will review all digital images to verify that they are named properly and contain appropriate metadata.
- 8.) Archiving: The digital imaging assistant will archive image files in the museum's database and backup copies will be saved on the museum's external hard drive system and on a LTO tape drive.

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The project work plan has been carefully designed to eliminate risks through the completion of a thorough condition assessment and quality review process. For example, staff will ensure proper handling and systematic ordering of all cultural items, and, as described in the work plan, objects requiring special attention will be set aside for future care and/or conservation treatment. The fine art photographer will use calibration techniques, a reference target, and other methods, such as high spatial resolution and appropriate tonal resolution, to make sure digitized images are clear and accurate reproductions of original cultural items.

Preston Metcalf, Executive Director and Chief Curator, will plan, implement, and manage all aspects of the proposed project (please see attached biography and resume). The proposed project team consists of Nicole Lomeli, Preparator and Assistant Registrar, James Dewrance, Fine Art Photographer, a Digital Imaging Assistant, and a Collections Intern (please view the attached job descriptions).

The proposed project will take place over twenty-one months from September 2021 to May 2023 and it will take place in the following sequence:

- Condition Evaluation (September 2021- February 2022)
- Cataloging (September 2021- February 2022)
- Metadata Creation (March 2022)
- Digitization Prep (April 2022)
- Digitization (May 2022- August 2022)
- Post Processing (September 2022- April 2023)
- Quality Review (December 2022- May 2023)
- Archiving (May 2023)

Expenses for the proposed project are limited to grant funds for the temporary part-time employment of a digital imaging assistant and collections intern, as well as for the services of a contracted fine art photographer. The proposed budget also accounts for the expected temporary increase in hours of permanent employees who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project.

Museum staff will achieve intended results by tracking progress on an ongoing basis. During the period of digitizing works, key staff will meet with the photographer daily to respond to his needs and to evaluate how to resolve any challenges that may arise. Monthly meetings will take place with the chief curator, assistant registrar, preparator, digital imaging assistant and collections intern to evaluate progress. Additional performance and financial reporting will be made to IMLS as required.

The results of this project will be shared internally in the form of a report with staff and with the Board of Trustees, in grant final reporting, and publicly with museum constituents. The completion of the project will be announced on the Triton Museum of Art website, as well as through direct e-communication, and through posts on the museum's Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter sites. In addition, Triton Museum of Art staff will share with interested sister institutions the availability of this part of the collection to facilitate the loaning of cultural items.

Project Results

Triton Museum of Art is committed to the proper care, condition, and management of its collection and having updated condition reports as well as digitized images of these cultural items will improve internal processes of collections care and management, making it possible to increase research for permanent collection exhibitions, to facilitate the loaning of objects, and to share information about the collection with lineal descendants and

tribal representatives through the National NAGPRA Program. For those objects that do not meet the conditions of NAGPRA, outreach with lineal descendants will make it possible for us to hear their wishes for storing, caring for, and displaying cultural items so that exhibitions are presented with sensitivity to the cultural traditions associated with these works which are so powerfully rich with meaning.

Due to their composite nature and use of natural materials, these cultural items have a high risk of deterioration over time without proper care, attention, and ongoing evaluation. This project will allow for us to flag any works in need of future conservation treatment. The creation of high-quality digital archival master files will not only enhance internal processes to appropriately safeguard the collection but it will also expand public access. The capacity of the Triton Museum of Art to function as an educational center will significantly advance as staff embrace new digital tools to foster learning and access through presenting exhibitions and through facilitating field trips focusing on Native American history for students attending Title I schools.

The proposed work plan has been designed to improve the care and condition of objects in the collection by dedicating time for inspection of each cultural item that will be digitized prior to being photographed. This inspection will include the performance of an updated condition report, recording of missing object information in the museum's database, and labeling works as needed.

For purposes of long-term preservation of the collection, curatorial staff will collect and report on a wide array of information to ensure this project is successful. This will include the following collection of descriptive and technical metadata:

- Condition reporting
- Contextual information about cultural items, which may include amended information about when and where the object was made, as well as its cultural affiliation and its meaning
- Data on what time and how the digital image was made

This information will be recorded in the museum's PastPerfect database and some of it will be in the image filename.

The main tangible product that will result from the proposed project will be the completion of condition reports, and this information will also be stored in the museum's database and on its server. The archival master image files will also be saved in the museum's database and backup copies will be saved on the museum's external hard drive system and on LTO tape drive.

Because technology improves over time, Triton Museum of Art will follow the Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative (FADGI) sustainability recommendations for long-term preservation of digital images. The collection of descriptive and technical metadata will be saved in the museum's database and embedded in the image filename to safeguard against loss of data, and backup copies will be saved in the case of loss or destruction of data. Once catalogue records have been updated in the museum's database, the frequent review of descriptive metadata will sustain intended results. This will be completed by permanent employees on an ongoing basis.

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Schedule of Completion Second Year (2022- 2023)

ACTIVITY	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
Key staff meet for a monthly check-in to evaluate priorities, assess workflow, adjust budgets, goals, and schedules									
The chief curator will submit any changes and updates to the Triton Museum of Art’s existing NAGPRA summary of unassociated funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony to NAGPRA, based on the most recent evaluation of objects in the collection.									
Triton Museum of Art staff will begin their job search for a digital imaging assistant									
The fine art photographer will edit raw image files to ensure that they are an accurate reflection of the original object in their tone, color reproduction, sharpness, and other image quality standards. He will create file names for each image.									
Under the supervision of the chief curator, the part-time digital imaging assistant will be hired, trained, and will verify filenames. He or she will use Photoshop to create and edit derivative and production master files.									
The chief curator and assistant registrar will review all digital images to verify that they are named properly and contain appropriate metadata.									
The digital imaging assistant will archive image files in the museum’s database and backup copies will be saved on the museum’s external hard drive system and on LTO tape drive.									