

**Leslie-Lohman Gay Art Foundation, Inc.  
Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay  
and Lesbian Art, Inc.**

**Three-Year Strategic Plan**

**May 1, 2015 to April 30, 2018**

*Adopted by the Board of Directors on April 17, 2015*

## Executive Summary

Now in its 28<sup>th</sup> year, the Leslie-Lohman Gay Art Foundation is at a critical point in its development. Begun at a time when artwork was being destroyed because of its content, the foundation's mission has been consistent for nearly three decades: to preserve and exhibit works of art that reflect the gay and lesbian community.

Through this plan, we seek to manage our growth and realize our collectively desired potential. Board and staff alike desire to build an exceptional museum –a place to visit and learn, but also a repository for ideas and research in the queer visual arts. More than anything, we desire to engage the public. Through our success and leadership, we can impact how the gay world is seen, not only on our walls, but at museums around the world.

We envision the Leslie-Lohman Museum in a new space and as one of the cherished destination museums in New York, shaping the conversation about how gay people are portrayed. To do that, we need to focus our attention on five key goals:

- Offer quality, education-based programming as an accredited museum
- Operate in a facility consistent with recognized museum practices
- Increase our visibility so potential visitors are aware of our exhibitions and programs
- Expand our base of supporters, visitors, members and donors so we have the resources to achieve our goals
- Incorporate human diversity in every aspect of the organization

This plan is our collective effort to delineate those objectives and set a course for achieving them. Once the work identified here is completed, we will have a new home within five to seven years and tens of thousands of visitors annually.

We recognize that the many opportunities before us are anchored in our resources: an authentic history, a vast collection of objects, a substantial endowment, a dedicated and growing staff and board of directors, and loyal members and visitors. There is great good will directed toward us, and we are confident in the knowledge that our supporters are interested in seeing us succeed. While not daunted by the challenges we face, we recognize the obstacles in creating the museum we desire and know that the works of art we seek to collect and exhibit may not be accepted by everyone.

We hope to achieve our goals through the thoughtful implementation of this plan. Adopted by the Board of Directors in April 2015, it sets out a path of operations from May 1, 2015 to April 30, 2018. It is our intention to update this plan annually, always looking three years out. During the first few years, we intend to allocate necessary resources in a measured and organized fashion to allow the Museum to double in size, increase visibility and attendance.

In order to achieve these goals, we need the commitment of the Board and staff to ensure that we stay focused on our collective success and make sure that this plan remains an active agenda item in front of us. Key projects with measurable outcomes have been assigned to appropriate Board Committees and staff members.

Many thanks go to the members of the Strategic Planning Committee, chaired by Meryl Allison and including Deborah Bright, Steve Goldstein, Jeff Goodman, Kris Grey, Jonathan Katz, Hunter O'Hanian, Ray Warman, and Jeff Weinstein for their hard work in synthesizing the ideas generated and crafting the actual language used. We are also grateful to the entire Board of Directors and staff who met with our consultants and participated in the day-long retreat in December 2014. Finally, we would like to extend our thanks to consultants Ken Goody and Buff Kavelman of the Kavelman Group who oversaw the process, provided us with professional guidance and created a meaningful outline that led to this finished plan.

## **Mission**

To exhibit and preserve art that speaks directly to the many aspects of the LGBTQ experience and foster the artists who create it. We embrace the rich creative history of this community by educating, informing, inspiring, entertaining and challenging all who enter our doors.

## **History and background**

In 1969, co-founders Charles Leslie and Fritz Lohman began showing and collecting art in their SoHo loft to provide an outlet for gay artists. When more than 200 visitors attended that first weekend exhibition, the collectors quickly realized that there was a need for such a venue in the community.

During the 1980s, with so many artists and collectors lost to AIDS, Charles and Fritz realized that many important artworks were being destroyed by families who didn't know what to do with this type of art and/or didn't want to acknowledge the sexuality of their loved ones. Amazing collections of art were being thrown in the dumpster, and Charles and Fritz knew that these works had to be preserved.

So in 1987, they created the Leslie/Lohman Gay Art Foundation, Inc., a safe haven for art that is often excluded or frowned upon. Since then, the non-profit organization has grown from a small "underground" gallery on Prince Street to its present location at 26 Wooster Street. In May 2011, in recognition of the Foundation's work in collecting and exhibiting LGBTQ art, the New York State Board of Regents awarded it a provisional charter of official museum status, making the Foundation the world's first and only gay art museum.

## **Core values**

*Queerness:* Providing a forum for LGBTQ, nonheteronormative visual culture. We are dedicated to intersectional social justice by bringing together race, gender, class, ability, sexuality, age and including all aspects and elements of the queer community.

*Countercultural advocacy:* Bringing a queer alternative voice to mainstream museum and institutional culture, maintaining our edge as a countercultural response to the conventional art world while earning respect for the quality and vibrancy of our exhibitions and cultural programming.

*Creativity:* Dedicating ourselves to the visual arts and offering a place for open dialogue that allows the realization of new ideas. We are committed to provide and raise funds for research and curatorial projects that will illuminate the kinds of works we preserve and exhibit.

*Excellence:* Maintaining high aesthetic values and the highest standards in education and conservation.

*Confidence:* Taking pride in our work and asserting the importance of preserving, studying and exhibiting queer art.

*Stewardship:* Fulfilling our responsibility to preserve and share our precious assets and resources for use by current and future audiences.

*Advocacy:* Continuing to find ways to carry our mission forward, keeping in mind that despite civil rights gains for LGBTQ communities, those who challenge norms surrounding sexuality, reproduction and/or marriage are regularly shamed, persecuted, tortured or murdered.

*Education:* Being a premium resource of educational materials about queer visual art and its history for all learners (i.e., K-12, college, adult learners, etc.), press, museum professionals and the general public.

*Collaboration:* Partnering with progressive non-profits to showcase works by the queer community.

## **Vision**

The Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art is recognized internationally as a leading institution for encounters with, and as a nurturing place for the creators of, visual and other art that addresses queer, nonheteronormative sexualities.

- The Museum maintains the world's foremost collection of art concerning queer sexualities and is respected for the quality and vibrancy of its exhibitions and cultural programming. Beyond its physical space, the Museum impacts the world of art through its significant digital presence and exerts influence through the many scholars and curators it has helped to inform and train. The Museum is known for thought-provoking contributions to contemporary discourse on the role of sexuality, gender, sexual identity and sexual expression in the visual arts.
- The Museum is a regular destination for artists and those interested in the visual and other arts, for cultural leaders, and for those concerned with queer heritage, whether they live in the New York area or elsewhere. The Museum's numerous grants, corporate sponsorships and collaborations with other leading art and queer institutions attest to its leadership status.

**Mission-related programs and activities**

- Preserve and expand our Permanent and Study collections of LGBTQ visual art
- Offer 8-14 exhibitions annually at 26-28 Wooster Street
- Host talks, lectures and events
- Publish quarterly newsletter/journal *The Archive*
- Maintain and grow individual files of gay artists
- Travel exhibitions to other cities
- Offer activities at Prince Street Project Space
- Maintain an art-focused queer study center

## Goals & Strategies

1. **Strengthen position as an accredited museum and recognized leader that offers exhibitions and programs of excellence focused on the field of LGBTQ visual arts.**
  - A. Continue programmatic schedule of exhibitions and events of high quality.
    - i. Ensure that Exhibitions Committee and staff offer exhibitions and events of quality, including programming in the expanded Museum.
    - ii. Ensure that the programming addresses the diversity within the LGBTQ community.
    - iii. Continue to create exhibitions that travel to other locations.
  - B. Continue to grow the collection to meet the mission of the organization.
    - i. Refine implementation of Collection Management Plan.
    - ii. Continue to catalog items in Museum's possession and recommend objects for accession into Permanent Collection.
    - iii. Complete Collection Plan aimed at diversifying Museum's collection to include more work by lesbian and transgender artists.
  - C. Secure absolute accreditation by NY State Board of Regents and the American Alliance of Museums.
    - i. Implement operational plan memo dated February 15, 2015 for NY State Board of Regents to gain absolute charter by May 2016.
    - ii. Develop a multi-year plan to achieve AAM accreditation.

- D. Create an education program consistent with best practices in museum education aimed at youth, adults and visitors.
  - i. Organize Education Committee.
  - ii. Retain consultant to devise framework for initial education program.
  - iii. Expand and strengthen docent program.
  - iv. Commission and publish monographs and catalogues relating to the Museum's exhibitions and collections.
  - v. Create international LGBTQ visual-arts archive and study center.
  - vi. Formalize intern and fellowship programs.

**2. Secure a facility appropriate to both the Museum's programming and recognized museum standards.**

- A. Complete design and construction of expanded facility at 26-28 Wooster Street by the end of 2015.
- B. Begin process to secure a longer-term facility by mid-2019.
  - i. Retain outside museum consultant to help design new facility (i.e., focus on back-of-house, staff office, workspaces, collection storage, conservation, library, technology, educational space, reception/visitor services, café, gift/book shop, etc.).
  - ii. Continue to build relationships with municipal leaders and other potential strategic partners (i.e., gay-community organizations, archival institutions, elected officials, etc.).
  - iii. Create business plan to address all operational, financial, security and programmatic needs for new facility.



**3. Increase the Museum's visibility.**

- A. Continue efforts to strengthen, broaden and expand all audiences (i.e. visitors, members, donors, press, etc.).
  - i. Create ongoing program to assess impact of existing and planned programming.
  - ii. Assess who our current visitors are.
  - iii. Understand depth of interest in our programming by museum-going and LGBTQ communities.
- B. Expand and enlarge Membership Program.
  - i. Implement operational plan to increase membership to 1,000 by end of 2015.
- C. Develop and implement an imaginative and effective marketing and communications plan.
  - i. Explore modification of existing brand and related elements (e.g.. colors, logo, etc.)
  - ii. Reassess tactics regarding press relations.
  - iii. Reassess manner in which Museum is presented online.
- D. Develop and implement plan to increase awareness of Museum by curators and other art professionals.
  - i. Assess current awareness of Museum profile.
  - ii. Define benchmarks and individuals who are recognized opinion leaders in established art fields.
  - iii. Devise plan for reaching and impacting those individuals.
- E. Develop and implement plan to attract LGBTQ support nationwide.

- 4. Match financial and human resources to meet the Museum’s current level of programming and plans for the future.**
  - A. Develop and implement Fundraising/Development Plan.
    - i. Retain consultant to evaluate and recommend changes to meet realistic financial targets (i.e., individual/board giving, events, grants, donor cultivation/stewardship, corporate/institutional support, earned revenue, capital campaign, etc.).
  - B. Fill near-term staffing gaps to meet present expectations (i.e., development, marketing, etc.).
  - C. Expand the board to include new members with professional skills and relationships that could enhance the Museum’s ability to reach its goals.
- 5. Diversify Museum’s board, staff and audience.**
  - A. Development and implement a diversity plan aimed at matching all sectors of the museum (board, staff, audience, etc.) with established diversity goals.
    - i. Assess current diversity against stated goals.
    - ii. Devise and implant plan to effect desired changes.