

Deborah Cullen-Morales Appointed New Program Officer at The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

April 28, 2020, Laura Washington



Deborah Cullen-Morales, photo courtesy of Columbia University School of the Arts

New York, NY, April 28, 2020 - The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation announced the appointment of Deborah Cullen-Morales as the Foundation's new program officer for Arts and Cultural Heritage. Cullen-Morales will join the Foundation on May 1.

As a program officer, Cullen-Morales will help shape and direct work in the visual arts across a range of grants and research initiatives supporting art museums, cultural heritage preservation, and conservation.

"Having led multiple arts institutions, including museums, university galleries, and artist-run spaces, Deborah brings to the position field-wide perspective, deep appreciation of the central role of artists in shaping arts organizations, and a vast network of relationships with artists, curators, scholars, and cultural leaders," said Elizabeth Alexander, president of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. "We are thrilled to welcome Deborah and look forward to working with her."

"As a renowned curator and widely published scholar of Latinx, Caribbean, and African American contemporary art, Deborah has deep and relevant experience that will help grow and support the Foundation's programmatic initiatives, particularly as we partner with arts organizations and artists that are increasingly pursuing work centered around questions of equity, representation, and social conscience," added Emil Kang, program director for Arts and Cultural Heritage at The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Most recently, Cullen-Morales was a research scholar at the Chicano Studies Research Center at UCLA. Previously, she served as Executive Director of The Bronx Museum of the Arts, where she helped secure the final \$3.9 million in capital funding needed for an upcoming renovation project; oversaw the most successful benefit gala in the museum's history, raising more than \$1 million in support of its free programming; and supervised the opening of a new Tribeca incubator expanding the museum's professional training program for artists.

<https://mellon.org/news-blog/articles/deborah-cullen-morales-appointed-new-program-officer-andrew-w-mellon-foundation/>

Prior to her appointment at The Bronx Museum of the Arts, she served as director and chief curator of the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery at Columbia University where she oversaw the venue's expansion into the Lenfest Center of the Arts on Columbia's new campus in West Harlem; founded *Uptown*, a new triennial of contemporary art launched in 2017 in collaboration with 12 other upper Manhattan institutions that spearheaded efforts to increase engagement with the surrounding community; and, over four years, created the capacity for the Wallach to organize Denise Murrell's groundbreaking exhibition *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today* (2018).

Earlier in her career, Cullen-Morales served as director of curatorial programs at El Museo del Barrio, where her projects included leadership on the long-term project *Caribbean: Crossroads of the World* (2012), an exhibition and major publication in collaboration with the Queens Museum and the Studio Museum in Harlem, as well as curating *Nexus New York: Latin/American Artists in the Modern Metropolis* (2009) and *Arte ≠ Vida: Actions by Artists of the Americas, 1960–2000* (2008). She also co-founded and co-curated the first four editions of El Museo's contemporary art biennial, *The S-Files* (1999, 2000, 2002, 2004). Cullen-Morales studied fine art and worked closely over her career with the late master printmaker Robert Blackburn as student, scholar, curator, and advisor. She is widely published and has authored and contributed texts for retrospective exhibition catalogs on Blackburn and others including Laura Aguilar, Marisol, and Asco. She has received an Emily Hall Tremain Exhibition Award, a J. Paul Getty Curatorial Research Fellowship, and a Faith Ringgold "Anyone Can Fly" Foundation Professional Scholars Grant. She received her doctorate in art history from The Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

"Early in my career, I learned from Bob Blackburn that the best way to be both equitable and visionary was to create space for everyone around the table; that by imagining together, nothing was impossible," said Cullen-Morales. "I am extremely excited in this most challenging of times to have the opportunity to support those communities I have long collaborated with, at the broadest range of visual arts partners possible. I am humbled to join

the inspirational artists and leaders, Elizabeth Alexander and Emil Kang, and the entire exemplary team at Mellon.”

###

About The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Founded in 1969, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation seeks to strengthen, promote, and defend the centrality of the humanities and the arts to human flourishing and to the well-being of diverse, fair, and democratic societies. To this end, our core programs support exemplary and inspiring institutions of higher education and culture. Additional information is available at mellon.org.