



blaffergallery

2009/2010 SFAC Request

1. Executive Summary

Mission and means of accomplishing goals; justification of Blaffer Gallery's student fees allocation in terms of student benefits.

As the Art Museum of the University of Houston, Blaffer Gallery's mission is to serve as a resource for the exploration of visual art and contemporary culture for the students, faculty, and staff of the University of Houston and the community at large; to extend the University's educational and scholarly programs to the people of Houston; to develop future artists, arts professionals, and arts audiences; to sponsor a spirit of investigation, collaboration, and dialogue that broadens art interest in the University and the region; and to provide daring exhibitions and unique educational programs that nurture creativity, inspire independent thought, and change lives. The museum accomplishes this mission through many activities that involve UH students, including:

- The presentation and origination of exhibitions and publications of the highest aesthetic caliber, coordinated with participation from a corps of student employees;
- Lectures, tours, and performances by visiting artists and scholars, free and open to students;
- Educational outreach programs for predominantly high-school aged children and up, guided by highly trained, paid UH students of Art/Art History and Education;
- Formal internship program where students can receive credit hours for their work;
- **School of Art Annual Student Exhibition and Masters of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition.**

Blaffer Gallery reaches the larger population of university students through student outreach volunteers; paid and unpaid internships to learn museum practices; curricular connections guided by their professors within the museum in such areas as Architecture, Education, and English; hands-on teaching experience for educators-in-training; and through the opportunity to explore ideas through visual art.

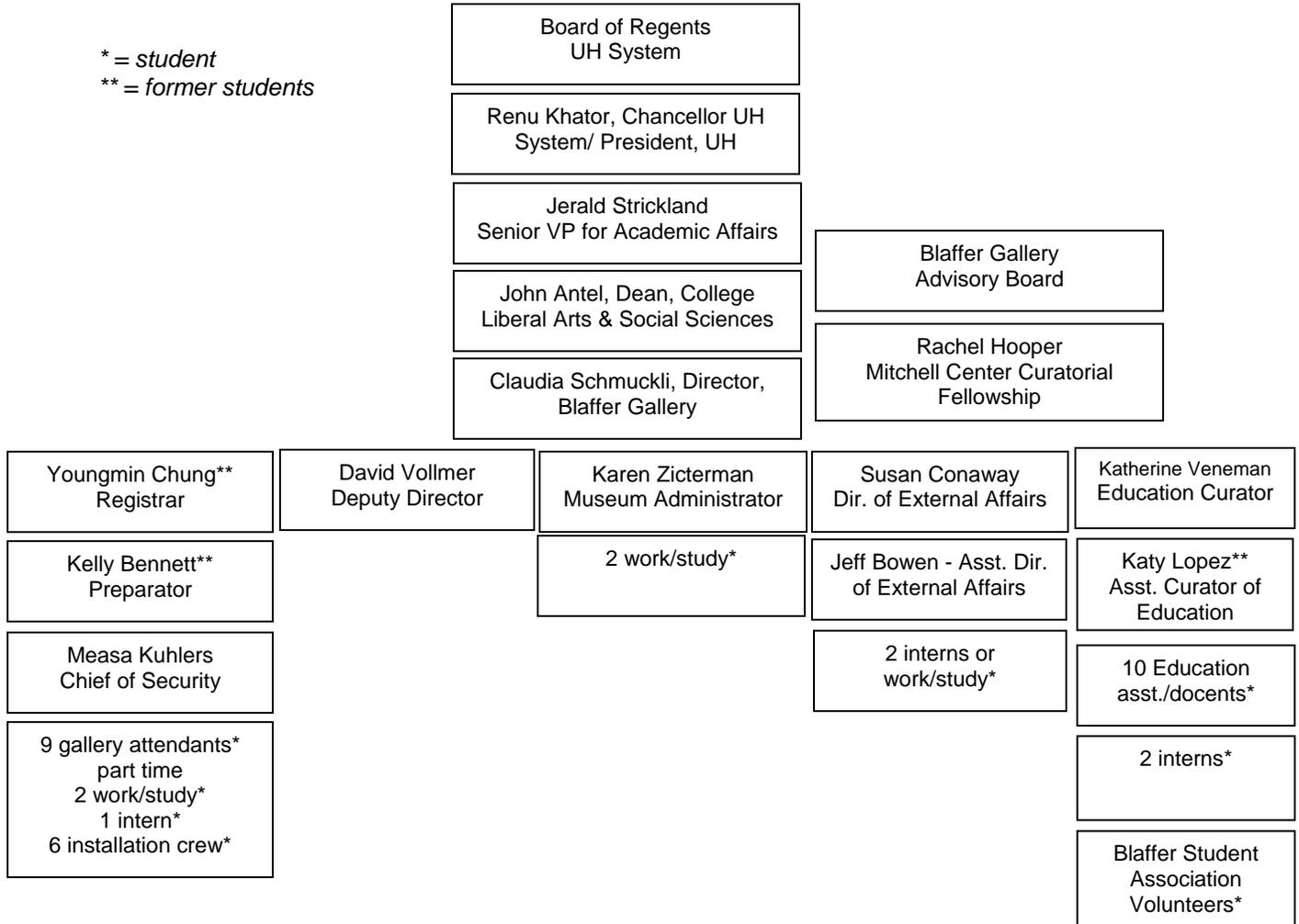
One significant aspect of the museum's service to University students is the **School of Art Annual Student Exhibition and Masters of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition**. These exciting annual events at the Blaffer Gallery bring in friends, family, and audiences especially interested in seeing the next generation of rising stars from the UH program. The reputation of UH Fine Arts graduates is local, national, and international in scope, and therefore these debut exhibitions have great popular appeal to both the UH community of students, faculty, and staff, and to the greater Houston community. Students in the School of Art benefit from Blaffer Gallery's professional museum staff in that they work as a team to realize their projects.

Blaffer Gallery respectfully requests \$15,000, with a base augmentation of \$5,000, to support the student exhibitions in FY 09/10, as well as support the efforts of the *Blaffer Student Association (BSA)*. Exhibition dates are December 5–December 19, 2009 for the **2009 School of Art Annual Student Exhibition and April 10–April 24, 2010 for the **2010 Masters of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition**.**

2. Organization Chart

Blaffer Gallery currently employs around 30 students as docents; installation crew; curatorial, marketing, development, and education work-study assistants/interns; as well as gallery attendants. The student employees provide invaluable assistance and gain employment experience and/or professional development at Blaffer Gallery.

* = student
 ** = former students



3. Objectives provided with SFAC 2007/08 request: success, changes in objectives, new objectives, and rationale.



Installation view of the works of 2008 MFA candidate Louisa F. Hernandez.

For FY 07/08, Blaffer Gallery set objectives to present and promote the Student and Masters of Fine Arts Thesis exhibitions to help provide a professional, high caliber experience for UH emerging artists and art students. In addition to an attractive, professional presentation, SFAC funds supported promotion on campus via production of invitations, flyers and advertisements; signage on campus; *Brown Bag Gallery Tour* lunchtime presentations, which are free and open to the public; and a quality brochure on the artists and works featured in the MFA Exhibition, which was provided to the

graduates as they begin their professional careers, as well as distributed to the general public. The School of Art's "Open Studios" events coincide with the Student and MFA show openings, as well.

For the second year, Blaffer Gallery staff collaborated with the junior graphic design spring semester class, with the assistance of Origin Design (Graphics Alumni Partnership contributor) and Professor Cheryl Beckett, to produce exhibition promotional materials and a 4-color brochure for the MFA exhibition, resulting in an attractive graphic package that included invitations, posters, banners, advertisements, and much more. Each student was asked to create a promotional package as part of a competition. Blaffer staff and Professor Beckett then selected the "winning" student to complete the project, although all students received credit for their work. Blaffer plans to continue this collaboration as a regular part of the MFA program each year, with the hope of incorporating the annual student exhibition materials as part of each fall semester as well.

During the run of the exhibition, the MFA candidates also spoke about their work at the *Brown Bag Gallery Tours* to share information with an audience comprised of both members of the campus population and the community at large, providing graduates with the opportunity to practice their public speaking and presentation skills.

In FY 07/08 KUHF 88.7 FM was secured for media sponsorship, reaching 250,000+ listeners per week. Advertisements were also placed in the *Daily Cougar*, *Houston Press*, and *Gallery Guide*. We are pleased to note that the most recent MFA and Student Exhibitions drew nearly 3,720 visitors, an increase from nearly 3,600 visitors last season, and we believe that through our student outreach committee, the *Blaffer Student Association*, will help to increase that number to nearly 4,000 in the season ahead.

The *Blaffer Student Association (BSA)* was formed in late 2005 to create awareness about Blaffer Gallery exhibitions, events, and educational outreach programs while creating and implementing new endeavors in collaboration with its members and Blaffer staff. *BSA* strives to unite students by building a community that supports the arts and inspires creative enterprise, and *BSA* welcomes and encourages involvement from students in all disciplines.

The *BSA* began with a team of leaders who together created a logo, outlined its mission, and put into practice a plan to create awareness of Blaffer Gallery on campus. Each officer of the *BSA* is responsible for specific duties and collaboratively maintaining the group's goals. Through the *BSA*, students promote Blaffer Gallery through participating in campus events; distributing announcements and invitations to students; and brainstorming on ideas to attract and reach the campus population with evolving programs, workshops, and events. *BSA* regularly promotes Blaffer programs by designing and distributing flyers, as well as attending and participating in campus events including Leadership Luncheons; Frontier Fiesta, Cougar Preview, and the *BSA's* own *Red Block Bash*, a twice-annual welcome back event held in the courtyard of the Fine Arts Building.

The *Red Block Bash* is the largest, most significant event on the *BSA's* calendar, a day-long celebration that welcomes students to campus during each semester. The Bash is held in the Fine Arts courtyard adjacent to the museum where visitors are invited to view the current exhibition and to take part in a series of activities both inside and outside of the museum. At the Fall 2008 bash nearly 325 students participated in activities including a collaborative student dance performance, a puppet show, t-shirt silk screening, a live student band, and gallery tours. The bash was held in conjunction with the current Blaffer exhibition, **Damaged Romanticism: A Mirror of Modern Emotion**, and was a collaboration between UH students from various disciplines in regards to event promotion, flier posting, prize collection, courtyard décor, and event organization. The next *Red Block Bash* event is scheduled for April 16th during the run of the **2009 School of Art Masters Thesis Exhibition**, just before the close of the spring semester. Our goal is to increase attendance by 20%.



BLAFFER STUDENT ASSOCIATION

4. Discuss means for evaluating success in reaching aforementioned objectives and their importance as compared to other objectives you might pursue. Where data exists, discuss the number of persons served by programs and their satisfaction.



Students waiting in line to screen print t-shirts at the Fall 2008 Red Block Bash.

Exhibition/event attendance is the most quantifiable measure of Blaffer Gallery's success in presenting the Student and MFA exhibitions, as well as the other exhibitions and events it mounts each year. Attendance is tallied manually by the gallery attendant stationed at the entrance to the museum. The 2008 MFA Exhibition drew 1,838 visitors and the Student Exhibition attracted 1,882. The museum sees an average of 15,000 visitors/year. For 09/10 presentations, Blaffer Gallery will continue to promote the exhibition via print media and signage, and will collaborate further with the Art Department for

the opening receptions on both events. Simultaneous and much-anticipated "Open Studio" events in the Fine Arts building continue to create a festive atmosphere for visitors and provide students with a vehicle to show works in progress.

Satisfaction levels are factors that continue to shape these two exhibitions. Each Fall art students, faculty, and museum staff discuss the overall presentations and work to establish tactics that accommodate both student and museum goals. Again in 2008, the **School of Art Annual Student Exhibition** was held close to the December break, which encourages potential sales of student work during the holiday shopping season. Blaffer Gallery connects interested buyers to students through the Art Department. And the **Masters of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition** was held in April, just after spring break, to give the graduating students plenty of time to prepare their work before May graduation.

5. Please discuss any budget changes from your last SFAC request, their impact on your programs, and your reason for implementing them.

There are no formal budget changes for the exhibitions and programs with which we are again requesting funds, yet there will be a slight increase in costs due to the weak economy which has increased the cost of supplies and materials needed to present exhibitions of this nature. We will also show an increase in the salary line item for the exhibition installation crew due to a minimum wage increase put into effect last fiscal year. Blaffer Gallery would like to once more request \$15,000 for the coming fiscal year toward the promotion and presentation of the 2009/10 Student and MFA Exhibitions, and toward the efforts of the *Blaffer Student Association*, plus a base augmentation of \$5,000 to cover additional expenses.

Blaffer Gallery spent \$13,547.53 in supplies, materials, and promotion on the Student and MFA Exhibitions in FY 07/08; plus \$4,867.33 in installation manpower, and an estimated \$4,000 in staff time. Blaffer Gallery anticipates spending over \$20,000 in FY 09/10 on student exhibition supplies, materials, promotion, and manpower. In FY 07/08 the *BSA* spent \$2,448.58 in supplies, materials, and promotion of both *Red Block Bash* events and other educational outreach programs; plus \$500 in salary support for the *BSA* Manager for a third of the year. (Our *BSA* President for the remainder of the year was getting class credit for her internship, and thus could not take advantage of the stipend.) Blaffer Gallery anticipates spending nearly \$4,500 for *BSA*-related programming in FY 09/10.

The need for increased advertising and promotional spending is evidenced by the attendance figures we see for other Blaffer Gallery exhibitions, for which the museum is able to raise and expend promotional dollars from public agencies and foundations with specific funding interests. With our keen focus on student participation strategies and outreach volunteerism, the potential for growth via these student exhibition audiences is an exciting opportunity for the gallery, the students, and the University. Student exhibitions are eagerly anticipated by the campus population and the community, and provide students a professional venue for their work.

Adjunct training programs such as thru docenting and participation on the exhibition installation crew also provide professional experience for many students in art-related fields of study. During this past cycle, particular major highlights for student workers at Blaffer Gallery were opportunities to work side-by-side with renowned artist/collaborators Ryan Taber/Cheyenne Weaver, local artists William Betts and Sasha Dela, as well as internationally-recognized filmmaker and video artist Chantal Akerman. Another important end result is the fact that Master of Fine Arts graduates begin their careers as artists with a professional exhibition on record and beautiful presentation materials for their portfolio.

The museum's overall expenditures and income continue to grow each year at a healthy and sustainable pace, due in large part to increasingly high profile Blaffer-originated

exhibitions and publications. The museum is gaining increased recognition on a national and international level for primary research in contemporary art, such as with recent exhibitions **Damaged Romanticism: A Mirror of Modern Emotion** and **Chantal Akerman: Moving Through Time and Space**.

6. Please list your 2009/10 objectives in priority order.

As the Art Museum of the University of Houston, Blaffer Gallery serves both campus and community audiences with exhibitions and programs that are relevant to the concerns of our time. The **School of Art Annual Student Exhibition** and the **Masters of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition** are often the first professional presentation of UH art students' work. They are important first steps in a professional artist's career. Ultimately, the exhibitions serve to introduce the community to the caliber of work being created in the School of Art.

In 2009/10, Blaffer Gallery's objectives are to present and promote the Student and MFA exhibitions on campus and in the community, as well as all *BSA*-related programming, through:

- Excellent, professional museum exhibitions;
- professional production of color exhibition announcements, distributed widely throughout campus and the community, to alert students and constituents about the events;
- an outstanding quality exhibition brochure produced by UH Graphic Design student(s) that promotes the MFA candidates and works on view, available to the general public;
- development of exhibition promotional materials for the winter student exhibition via the UH Graphic Design department;
- grassroots outreach tactics as designed and implemented by the *Blaffer Student Association (BSA)*, including, but not limited to the twice-annual *Red Block Bash*;
- direct communications and correspondence with student organizations and the Student Program Board;
- an appropriate advertising schedule, to include the *Daily Cougar*, KUHF radio spots, and other print mechanisms as funding permits;
- *Brown Bag Gallery Tours* and activities led by knowledgeable and engaging speakers, which are free and open to the community, giving museum-goers greater insights into the works on view and giving students a forum in which they may share their creativity with an audience;
- and generate and promote more collaborative programming via the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts, such as with our upcoming educational symposium *Systems of Sustainability: Art, Innovation, Action (S.O.S.)*, March 27-29, 2009.

Ultimately, SFAC funds allow for increased visibility and marketing of Blaffer Gallery student exhibitions. SFAC funds also allow the museum to give appropriate recognition to the scholarship of UH Art students, as well as promote and educate the community through Blaffer Gallery's many exhibitions and educational outreach programs with the assistance of the *Blaffer Student Association*.

7. What are other possible sources of funding available to your unit and what efforts are being made to access them?

Blaffer Gallery raises 100% of funds required to cover exhibitions, publications, education, and programming costs, with University support limited to indirect facility and partial salary support. Grants from public agencies, corporations, foundations, and individuals are solicited and received for specific programs and exhibitions on an as-needed basis. These

funding sources are often earmarked as restricted use funds, unavailable for student exhibitions. SFAC funding is the only resource available to fund programs and activities devoted specifically to the UH student population. The School of Art has no direct fundraising staff and is unable to contribute any financial support for its student-related projects. Blaffer Gallery recognizes the importance of the student exhibitions and dedicates significant time and effort to achieve an excellent presentation, and the museum is greatly appreciative of support from the Student Fees Advisory Committee, which is so vital in ensuring the success of these two exhibitions, as well as to the success of the *Blaffer Student Association*.

8. List any overlap between the Blaffer Gallery and other units providing services to students.

Blaffer Gallery is the sole professional art museum on the main campus of the University of Houston and the only public university museum in the region. Blaffer Gallery presents programs and exhibitions that are relevant and intellectually stimulating to the university community. Blaffer Gallery works diligently to provide cultural programs of the highest quality for all the student body, and our exhibitions and programs are not merely attended by students, but they are often integrated into their curriculum. These year-round offerings are unique to Blaffer in that no other unit has the professional staff, tour availability, fundraising ability, or secured facility to present professional art exhibitions of this sort on campus.

The museum regularly collaborates with other campus departments to create stimulating programs for the campus and the community. In the past twelve months Blaffer Gallery has collaborated with the School of Theatre and Dance; School of Art; the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts; Women's Studies; the College of Education; the Graduate College of Social Work; guided tours for ESL students; among many other departments.

Blaffer Gallery reaches the neighboring community through its award-winning *Young Artist Apprenticeship Program (YAAP)*. Each year YAAP reaches at-risk high school juniors and seniors by matching 8-12 teens with two Artist Mentors, who are accomplished professional artists and teachers, and in some cases former UH students. Led by these mentors, YAAP students work together to make art informed by a current Blaffer exhibition. In addition, YAAP students collaborate with university students, visit with Blaffer staff and advisory board members, and take field trips to other museums—a shining example of the most essential component of the museum's educational program—*mentorship*.

The museum reaches the university community thru the *Committee on Visual Culture (CoVC)*; a volunteer group of university faculty and staff from various departments who work together to promote the museum and educate students thru collaborative programs and curriculum enhancement. The CoVC meets once/semester to talk about upcoming exhibitions and discuss opportunities to encourage further university involvement using the museum as an "educational resource".

Blaffer Gallery is proud of its success in fulfilling its mission of serving as an educational resource for all UH students, and particularly art students, and is excited about the continued growth of campus interest in the visual arts.