



Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, & Inclusion Report

January – June 2025

ISABELLA
SEWART GARDNER
MUSEUM

DEAI COMMITMENTS

The Gardner is an inclusive Museum that welcomes everyone. We believe that including multiple perspectives as well as respect for differing views and lived experiences expands our thinking and strengthens our organization.

Isabella Stewart Gardner established the Museum “for the education and enjoyment of the public forever” as an act of civic leadership. She involved herself in many social causes, partnering with community organizers and supporting women’s education, for example. In carrying her legacy into the 21st century, we aspire to make our collections, exhibitions, and programs accessible and welcoming to the broadest possible audience, bringing people together for personal enjoyment and connection.

We value diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion as drivers of staff empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence. We embrace the complex stories embedded in our history and artworks as we work together to reflect and advance these core values.

We emphasize learning and continuous improvement, and commit ourselves to sharing our goals and reporting our progress to our community on a regular basis.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum resides on the homelands of the Massachusetts Tribe, who belong to this place and continue to regard these lands and waters as sacred.

INTRODUCTION

Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, & Inclusion (DEAI) is one of the four institutional values articulated in the Gardner's [Strategic Plan](#). In 2020, the Museum established both board and staff teams to focus on the ways we manifest this commitment throughout the institution. Trustees and staff are deeply engaged in this work; in the authentic, ongoing expression of inclusive values and expanded perspectives; in the embrace of community voices and marginalized stories; and in gratitude for our audience's participation and feedback. This report is intended to acknowledge progress while recognizing continued opportunities for improvement. It includes highlights from the second half of fiscal year 2025 (January through June 2025), and represents the ongoing integration of our values into the fabric of our organizational culture.

RESEARCH AND LEARNING

The Gardner remains committed to conducting ongoing research into our collection, including our living plant collection, our founder, and our material and historical legacy—and to sharing those findings with our visitors. We seek to explore complex histories and uncover their relevance to the equally complex present.

COLLECTIONS

In January, a reproduction of a [19th-century Chinese dragon banner](#), originally removed from public view in 1955, was reinstalled in the Courtyard with accompanying interpretive signage. This initiative advanced efforts to increase the visibility and accessibility of new narratives within the Historic Collection, and reintroduced an important object from our Asian Art holdings. Similarly, the installation of three Japanese sliding doors (*Sugito*) in a newly built, rotating display case in the Rear Hall allows for ongoing reinterpretation of Japanese works.

The department also began updating constituent records to include Chinese and Japanese names in their languages of origin, improving both the cultural integrity and accessibility of the Museum's digital collection.

In preparation for the [Allan Roban Crite: Urban Glory](#) exhibition, the team has been collaborating across departments to repair, catalog, and publish Crite's privately held works. Conserving these works reaffirms a broader commitment to inclusive stewardship, honors the legacy of a historically underrepresented Black artist whose impact extends beyond the Museum's walls, and extends the lifespan of the works.

HORTICULTURE

In an effort to increase accessibility in public education on ethnobotany, the Horticulture department continues to share research findings and stories that highlight the cultural and historical significance of plants in the Museum's Living Collection. Efforts include publishing ethnobotanical blog posts, leading intern program seminars, facilitating tours, and assessing the visitor experience through varied feedback mechanisms.

In alignment with environmental stewardship, the team is actively working to reduce the ecological footprint of horticultural practices, such as by expanding water-saving drip irrigation at the Museum's offsite greenhouses. The staff remain committed to better understanding and mitigating environmental impact, and plan to collaborate with community stakeholders to support this initiative.

EXPANDING ACCESS AND REACH

ACCESSIBILITY

Internally, accessibility initiatives have continued to grow across the Museum with the support of the interdepartmental Accessibility Working Group, and with the Education department organizing Touch Tours in collaboration with Conservation for visitors who are blind or have low vision, ASL interpretation for d/Deaf audiences, and various access-focused tours for future art educators.

DEVELOPMENT

Strategically positioning the Museum as a civic-minded organization committed to accessibility, equity, and belonging has garnered support from key foundations that align with those values.

The department worked with Education and the Accessibility Working Group to develop a multi-year roadmap as a valuable framework for expanding accessibility practices. One such example is growing the Access Studio program that increases opportunities for individuals with disabilities to engage with the Museum through actively facilitated programming. The Museum also retained its designation as a Universal Participation (UP) organization by the Mass Cultural Council, reflecting continued excellence in accessibility practices. Development staff helped lead, along with the Marketing department, design agency Oomph, and the disability inclusion organization Ablr, the accessibility-focused website refresh project.

EDUCATION

Public Programs hosted a suite of events that highlighted Black spirituality and the Haitian experience in conjunction with [*Waters of the Abyss: An Intersection of Spirit and Freedom*](#), engaging local artists, faith leaders, and scholars to foster meaningful dialogue with our audiences. These efforts mark a continued dedication to engaging with diverse communities, arts and culture leaders, and school groups throughout the city. Thereafter, in collaboration with Marketing, Community Relations, and the Collections team, the Education department hosted a community convening for Asian and Asian American art leaders to preview [*Ming Fay: Edge of the Garden*](#). The conversation was facilitated by Neighborhood Salon Luminary and Pao Arts Center exhibiting artist [Mel Taing](#) and centered on experiences of belonging, cultural identity, and the importance of community.

The [Gardner Ambassador program](#) also maintained its focus on providing students from historically underrepresented backgrounds with hands-on access to museum careers. The summer 2025 cohort consisted of seven students from UMass Boston who engaged in professional development and contributed to key Museum functions across Archives, Contemporary, Development, Education, Public Programs, and Exhibition Planning. This year, the program also introduced a weekly seminar series focused on professional development that further prepares students for the workforce.

MUSIC

Music continued to expand representation within its classical music programming by featuring works that broaden the traditional canon from the 17th through 20th centuries. The Winter/Spring 2025 season featured a concert celebrating Julia Perry's centennial. Perry was a 20th-century Black composer whose works have begun to receive renewed interest, including multiple modern recording projects.

Early music specialists ACRONYM also presented a program of 17th- and 18th-century works, with about half of the music composed by women. These pieces, by composers Isabella Leonarda and Barbara Strozzi, have all been given their modern premieres by ACRONYM, which is likely the first time that Boston audiences are discovering this unique category of music.

Audience feedback affirmed enthusiasm for innovative and lesser-known genres, and the department followed through by spotlighting artists of diverse identities to participate in the concert series. Overall, these efforts reinforce the value of a concert series that showcases both musical excellence and cultural inclusion.

EXHIBITIONS, PROGRAMS, & COLLABORATIONS

OPERATIONS/ EXHIBITION PLANNING

The Operations department remained committed to its efforts to broaden and diversify the types of exhibitions presented at the Museum. Over the past six months, the team has collaborated with Haitian visual artist [Fabiola Jean-Louis](#) and the studio of Chinese American artist [Ming Fay](#), as well as a Haitian American exhibition designer and an Asian American graphic designer. These collaborations resulted in rich and resonant exhibitions that reflected a range of cultural perspectives.

MUSEUM LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

The Board of Trustees and Board of Advisors embrace a vision of inclusion that supports all forms of experience and background and are committed to creating a culture driven by shared DEAI values. Museum leadership continues to establish and build relationships with candidates for its Board of Trustees and Board of Advisors, aiming to encompass a full range of expertise and community leadership over time. Currently, 37% of the Board of Trustees identifies as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

The Board of Trustees continues to participate in DEAI learning engagement sessions at Board meetings. The Board heard from Dr. Ted Landsmark, Director of the Kitty and Michael Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University; and Terry Carbone, former Program Director of American Art at the Henry Luce Foundation. Dr. Landsmark discussed his work on the upcoming [*Allan Roban Crite: Urban Glory*](#) exhibition and his civic leadership in Boston. Carbone provided a comprehensive overview of foundation-supported projects and exhibitions that exemplified ethical practice.

TOWARD AN INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE AND EQUITABLE WORKPLACE VALUES

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum is committed to inclusive and equitable hiring practices. As of the publication of this report, the demographics of the Gardner Museum staff, in all positions, are 25.8% BIPOC, down slightly from 26.6% at the end of the prior fiscal year.