

ISABELLA  
SEWART GARDNER  
MUSEUM

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## The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum Unveils Five-Year Strategic Plan Focused on Expanding Exhibitions, Programs, and Community Engagement

*Aimed at reaching younger, more diverse audiences, the plan builds on Isabella Stewart Gardner's vision of the Museum as an intimate platform for creative expression—emphasizing a wide range of exhibitions, musical genres, artistic collaborations, and public programs*



**BOSTON, MA (October 3, 2019)** – The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum today announced an ambitious Strategic Plan that outlines the goals and initiatives the Museum, its curators, and leadership will prioritize over the next five years.

One of the Museum's primary goals is to be a leading cultural home in Boston for intimate and immersive art experiences for a broad range of audiences, building on exhibitions and programming to further engage a younger, more diverse visitorship.

“Our Museum is distinguished by its personal, intimate setting, and ability to offer visitors meaningful experiences with art—both present and past—in a unique, multisensory environment,” said Peggy Fogelman, *Norma Jean Calderwood Director of the Gardner Museum*. “Isabella intended this as a place for the education and enjoyment of the public forever—activated by a range of creative disciplines and perspectives from artists, thought leaders, and community members. The plan renews Isabella's promise, updating it to make the Museum more reflective of the voices that comprise the vibrant communities we serve.”

Priority initiatives outlined in the Strategic Plan include:

- Making the Gardner a destination for younger and more diverse audiences every Thursday, by expanding the Museum's successful [Thursday evening programming](#)
- Increasing the number of annual [exhibitions](#) connecting historic and contemporary art, and developing dynamic and innovative exhibition-related programming
- Ensuring diverse representation of women, people of color, and non-Western artists in historic and contemporary exhibitions, new artistic commissions, and performance programs

- Broadening the range of voices, scholarly partners, [artists](#), [community collaborators](#), and co-curators for richer and more varied perspectives in programs and exhibitions

Deepening the Museum's commitment to its popular Thursday evening programming, a new *Thursdays Live* music series kicks off this fall. Curated by Catherine T. Morris, Manager of Public Programs, *Thursdays Live* emphasizes a mix of soul, R&B, hip-hop, spoken word, and DJing from local and nationally renowned artists. Upcoming *Thursdays Live* concerts include Jamila Woods, performing at the Gardner Museum on October 24. New programs like *The Larger Conversation* series will also take place on select Thursday evenings, exploring the intersection of creativity, lived experience, and social justice. And beginning in November, the Museum's Café G will transform from a sit-down restaurant to a bar on Thursday evenings, offering beer, wine, and small bites.

Connecting historic and contemporary art, this October, [In the Company of Artists: 25 Years of Artists-in-Residence](#), will showcase the work of seven contemporary artists who have lived and worked in a dedicated living space at the Museum. Many of the exhibition's works were created during their residencies and directly inspired by the Museum's Collection.

Placing continued emphasis on working with more artists and organizations to develop new projects, commissioned works, and community engagement initiatives, newly produced audio guides are also being rolled out for visitors. The new audio guides feature interpretation from artists including Steve Locke, Elisa Hamilton, and Gregory Maguire, and will provide richer context and diversity of perspective to the artworks in the Museum's historic galleries, which famously do not include descriptive wall labels typically found at other museums. The Museum will also host a first-of-its-kind film festival in November, featuring independent films by Artists-in-Residence as well as those by local and international filmmakers.

And in February, the Museum will open [Boston's Apollo: Thomas McKeller and John Singer Sargent](#), which explores the life of McKeller, an African-American elevator attendant who posed for most of the figures in Sargent's murals in the Museum of Fine Arts. Shown together for the first time, the drawings help form a picture of McKeller's life and importance in Sargent's major artistic commissions, while raising critical questions of race, sexuality, and class. An inclusive interpretation strategy was employed in developing the exhibition, involving roundtable discussions to incorporate perspectives from artists, scholars, thought leaders, community members, and McKeller's own descendants.

"At the core of the Strategic Plan is a commitment to increasing our diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and competencies," said Michelle Grohe, *Esther Stiles Eastman Curator of Education*. "We're in an important and pivotal moment for arts and cultural institutions. As stewards in preserving and advancing arts in the city of Boston, it's our responsibility to champion all types of artistic expression and cultural experience, and be a welcoming, accessible place for all."

As part of the plan, the Museum will also increase the diversity of its staff, volunteers, and governing boards, as well as invest in training and educational offerings to ensure cultural competency at all levels of the organization.

A summary of the Strategic Plan's goals and initiatives can be found at [gardnermuseum.org/promise](http://gardnermuseum.org/promise).

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*The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum—a magical creation of one woman's daring vision—invites you to awaken your senses and be transported. Modeled after a Venetian palazzo, unforgettable galleries surround a luminous courtyard and are home to masters such as Rembrandt, Raphael, Titian, Michelangelo, Whistler, and Sargent. The Renzo Piano wing provides a platform for contemporary artists, musicians, and scholars, and serves as an innovative venue where creativity is celebrated in all of its forms.*

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*Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum • 25 Evans Way Boston MA 02215 • Hours: Open Daily from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Thursdays until 9 p.m. Closed Tuesdays. • Admission: Adults \$15; Seniors \$12; Students \$10; Free for members, children under 18, and all named "Isabella" • \$2 off admission with a same-day Museum of Fine Arts, Boston ticket • For information 617 566 1401 • Box Office 617 278 5156 • [www.gardnermuseum.org](http://www.gardnermuseum.org)*

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