



2021-2026 Strategic Plan

People, Place, and Program

Approved December 2020

The year 1961 was a progressive, exciting time for the arts in New York City, fueled by a spirit of energy, optimism, and a sense of possibilities. In this context, the American Folk Art Museum (AFAM) was founded to foster, promote, and increase the knowledge and appreciation of folk art among enthusiasts, scholars, and the general public.

Today, the American Folk Art Museum is at the vanguard of the arts in America, poised to strengthen its position as the leading forum for self-taught art, from the historic to the contemporary, recognized locally, nationally, and internationally, and a free resource for all. Over the course of its history, the Museum has carefully assembled a collection of some 8,000 works of art that is diverse in its media, spans four centuries, and represents the self-taught genius of nearly every continent.

As AFAM prepares to celebrate its 60th anniversary in 2021, the Museum's Trustees have undertaken an intensive strategic planning process, informed by the ideas and contributions of both Board and Staff leadership. This plan will guide the Museum's ambitious vision and be achieved through a series of dynamic actions, reflecting a deepened commitment to its audience, the direct experience with authentic works of art, the increased dissemination of its collections and scholarship, and strengthened partnerships in the city and beyond.

Three conceptual pillars — *People, Place, and Program* — are embedded and woven throughout the strategic commitments and priority objectives outlined in this plan.

- **People:** Over the next five years, the Museum will integrate the principles of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion into all aspects of its culture, including the diversification of its audience, Board, and the composition of its Staff. It will increase and broaden its physical and virtual audience and continuously improve its guests' experience. Recognizing the value of its professional team, AFAM will also reinforce its commitment to attracting, supporting, and retaining a Staff of employees of the highest caliber.
- **Place:** Acknowledging its historic roots in New York City, the Museum will enhance its profile internationally, nationally, and locally, while strengthening its partnerships and relationships in its nearby Lincoln Square and Long Island City neighborhoods. It will also continue to solidify its integral place in the city's cultural community and the museum community at-large by securing the resources necessary to operate to its capacity within its means, enable its aspirations, and sustain the Museum into the future.
- **Program:** The Museum's collections and archives are the bedrock on which its exhibitions, programming, and scholarship are built. During the period outlined in this plan, AFAM will refine its exhibition and collecting strategies, broaden and enhance opportunities for its collections to be experienced in-person and virtually, and deepen the educational experiences it offers to a broad, diverse range of participants.

American Folk Art Museum Mission Statement

The American Folk Art Museum engages people of all backgrounds through its collections, exhibitions, publications, and programs as the leading forum shaping the understanding and appreciation of folk and self-taught art across time and place.

The essence of this strategic plan is found in the following commitments that the American Folk Art Museum will prioritize and undertake between 2021 and 2026.

Strategic Commitment: Profile

AFAM will strengthen its local, national, and international reputation and identity as the leading museum and forum devoted to the scholarship, interpretation, presentation, and promotion of art created by self-taught artists from the 18th century to the present, while continuing to foster its neighborhood relationships in Lincoln Square and Long Island City.

Strategic Commitment: Collections

AFAM will display and interpret its works of art and archives in support of an inclusive and relevant narrative, display its collections more broadly outside its galleries, and focus on the Museum's 60th anniversary to enhance its holdings through gifts and bequests from private collections.

Strategic Commitment: Exhibitions

AFAM will present compelling and field-defining exhibitions that showcase the continuum of self-taught art from past to present, including some drawn from the Museum's collections and others organized through strategic partnerships in New York and across the globe.

Strategic Commitment: Education

AFAM will engage its audience by creating responsive and participatory programming, resources, and experiences for learners of all ages and abilities through partnerships with diverse communities representing a multiplicity of perspectives.

Strategic Commitment: Audience

AFAM will continuously improve its outstanding guest experience, identify and better understand who is visiting the Museum both physically and virtually, and articulate and implement a plan to reach a specific number of audience segments the Museum wishes to attract or expand.

Strategic Commitment: Team

AFAM will invest in its team of talented employees and volunteers, attract and retain qualified Staff, and provide the human and financial resources to sustain and advance their careers.

Strategic Commitment: Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI)

AFAM will advance the institution through a lens of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion in all its work externally and internally to provide the broadest perspectives, including Staff and Board composition; educational initiatives; collection interpretation and advancement; exhibition organization and presentation; and audience development.

Strategic Commitment: Resources

AFAM will focus on the Museum's financial sustainability now and into the future, making an ongoing balanced operating budget its priority, while securing increased endowment, and seeking the resources necessary to fund the priorities identified in the strategic plan.

Strategic Planning in 2020

This plan was created between July and December 2020, during the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic and its wide-ranging effects on museums, which will also likely extend well into the plan period. In addition, significant events across the country over the course of the year brought heightened awareness to issues of social justice, race, and economic disparity, sparking national dialogue around these topics. These circumstances significantly shaped conversations and considerations regarding the Museum's values, strategic commitments, and priorities outlined in this plan.

2020 Strategic Planning Committee

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