

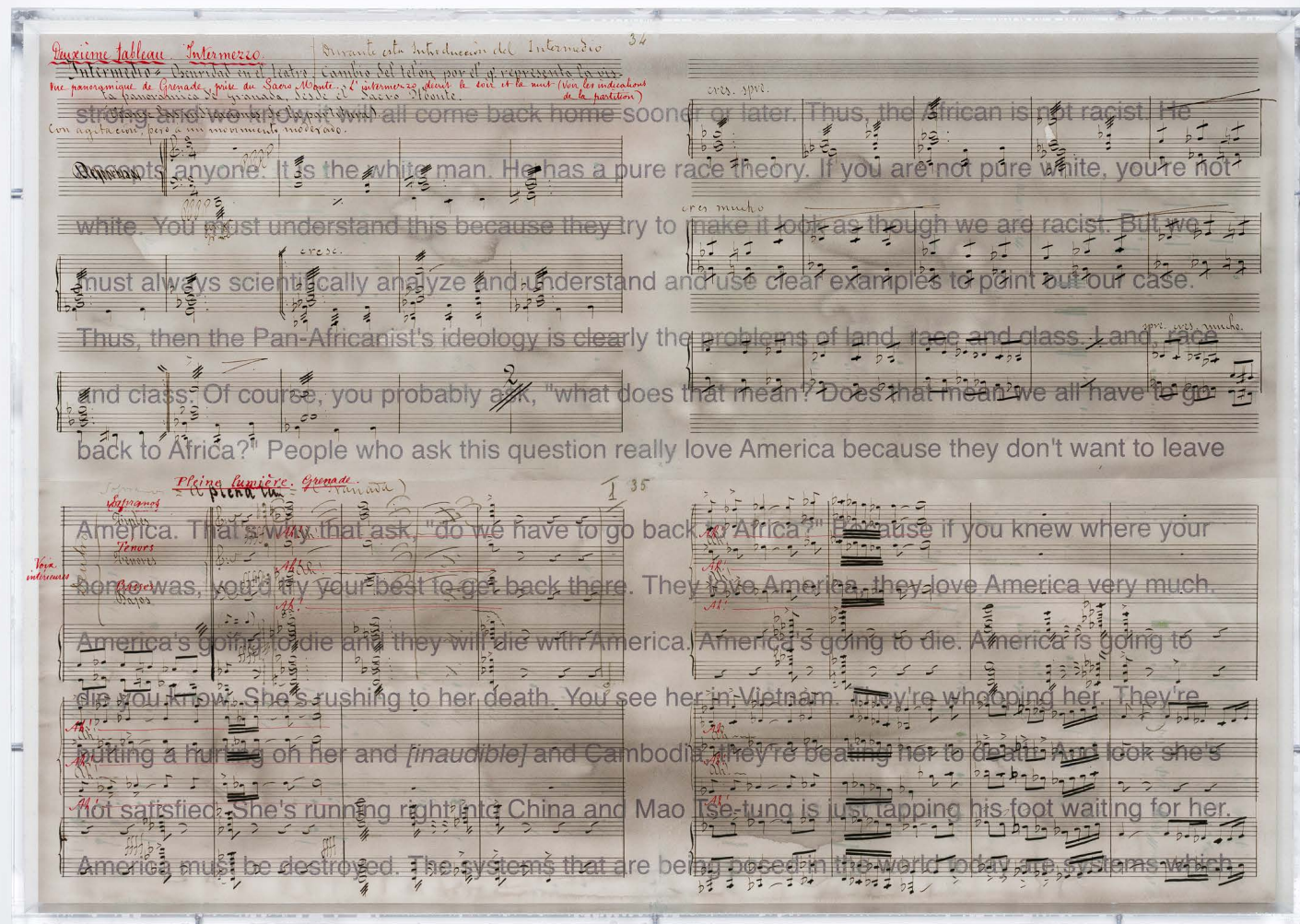
Toward A New Academy



A Vision Plan for the National Academy of Design

# Toward A New Academy

## A Vision Plan for the National Academy of Design



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## Toward a New Academy

As the National Academy of Design approaches its 200th anniversary in 2025, it begins a new chapter.

After nearly eight decades on Manhattan's Upper East Side, the National Academy made a bold decision in 2016. Following years of ballooning deficits and chronic financial instability, the Board of Governors and National Academician membership voted to radically restructure the Academy's operations, setting in motion a transformation that would ultimately include the closing of its school and museum and the sale of its buildings. Using the proceeds of that sale to create a permanent endowment to ensure the institution's long-term stability, the National Academy then launched a year-long visioning process—involving more than a hundred stakeholders—to chart its next steps and future course.

This plan is the outcome of that year—and a reassertion of the Academy's abiding commitment to supporting artists and architects and exploring new work and ideas in American art and culture.

At 195 years old, this is certainly not the first time the Academy has used a change in location as an opportunity for reinvention. During the nineteenth century—considered a heyday of its influence and impact—the Academy relocated eleven times, expanding and contracting as space and finances dictated. While this particular moment may stand out for the magnitude of change—and for the seemingly limitless possibilities it offers for how the Academy might remake itself for the 21st century—it is also in many respects a renewal of the Academy's founding principles for a new century: to foster a community of artists and architects, to educate aspiring practitioners, to celebrate innovation and excellence, and to serve as a public forum for the advancement of art and architecture in America.

When this transition began, we could not have anticipated that it would coincide with the events of the past year: the COVID-19 pandemic and nationwide protests for equity and social justice following the killing of George Floyd. Arts and cultural institutions around the world are in the midst of a critical reassessment. The questions that the Academy began asking itself in 2019—How can artists and architects help shape public conversations about our shared future? What is the role of art and culture in civic life? How do arts institutions make themselves more open and accessible?—are among those now being asked by artists, arts and design professionals, and the

broader public as part of a long overdue call for greater equity and inclusion in all of our institutions. We embrace this moment of activism and engagement and commit to pursuing new practices and ways of working that will push our own transformation even further.

We expect that this will go beyond just shaping the kinds of programs we present and the individuals who participate in them as presenters and audiences, as critical as those are. The artists and architects who founded the National Academy in 1825 did so very expressly to advance the practice and appreciation of American art and architecture. But what they did not do—nor have succeeding generations since—is to critically explore *the idea of America*. This country's founding promises and potential remain unfulfilled aspirations, but powerful ones nonetheless. The questions of *what is America and who is it for* are profoundly important to determining our shared future as a country, and they will also underpin all that we do going forward as an institution.

A new National Academy of Design is taking shape: a dynamic center of art and architecture, of ideas and debate, of research and education. Driven by the vision and leadership of the National Academicians—and with your help—we look forward to building this new Academy together.



# Mission and Vision

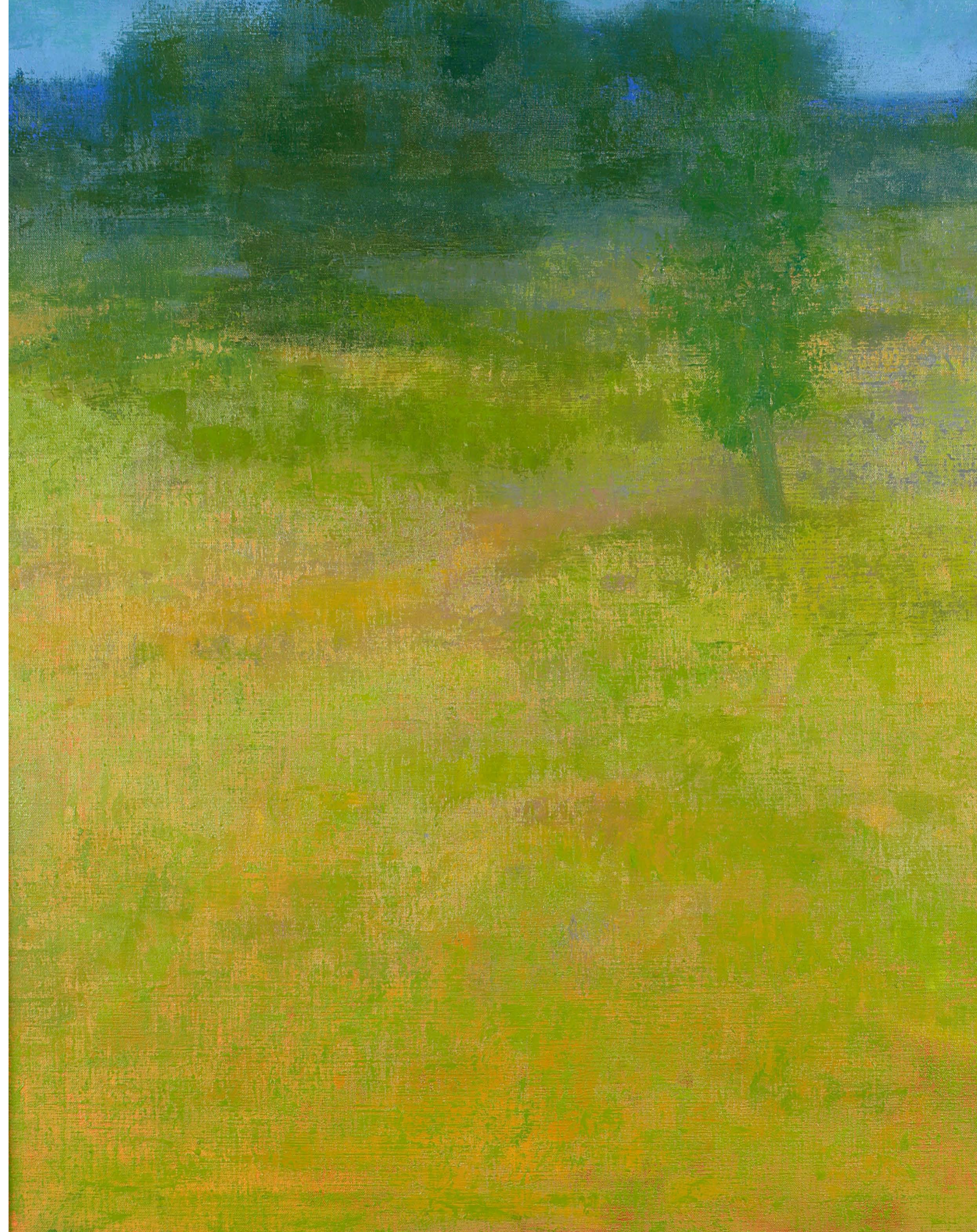
The National Academy of Design promotes art and architecture in America through exhibition, education, and research.

Founded in 1825, the Academy is the leading honorary society for visual artists and architects in the United States. We advocate for the arts as a tool for education, celebrate the role of artists and architects in public life, and serve as a catalyst for cultural conversations that propel society forward.

At the core of our mission are the National Academicians, a vibrant community of 450 artists and architects elected by their peers in recognition of their extraordinary contributions to art and architecture in America. Representing a wide cross-section of practice, the Academicians

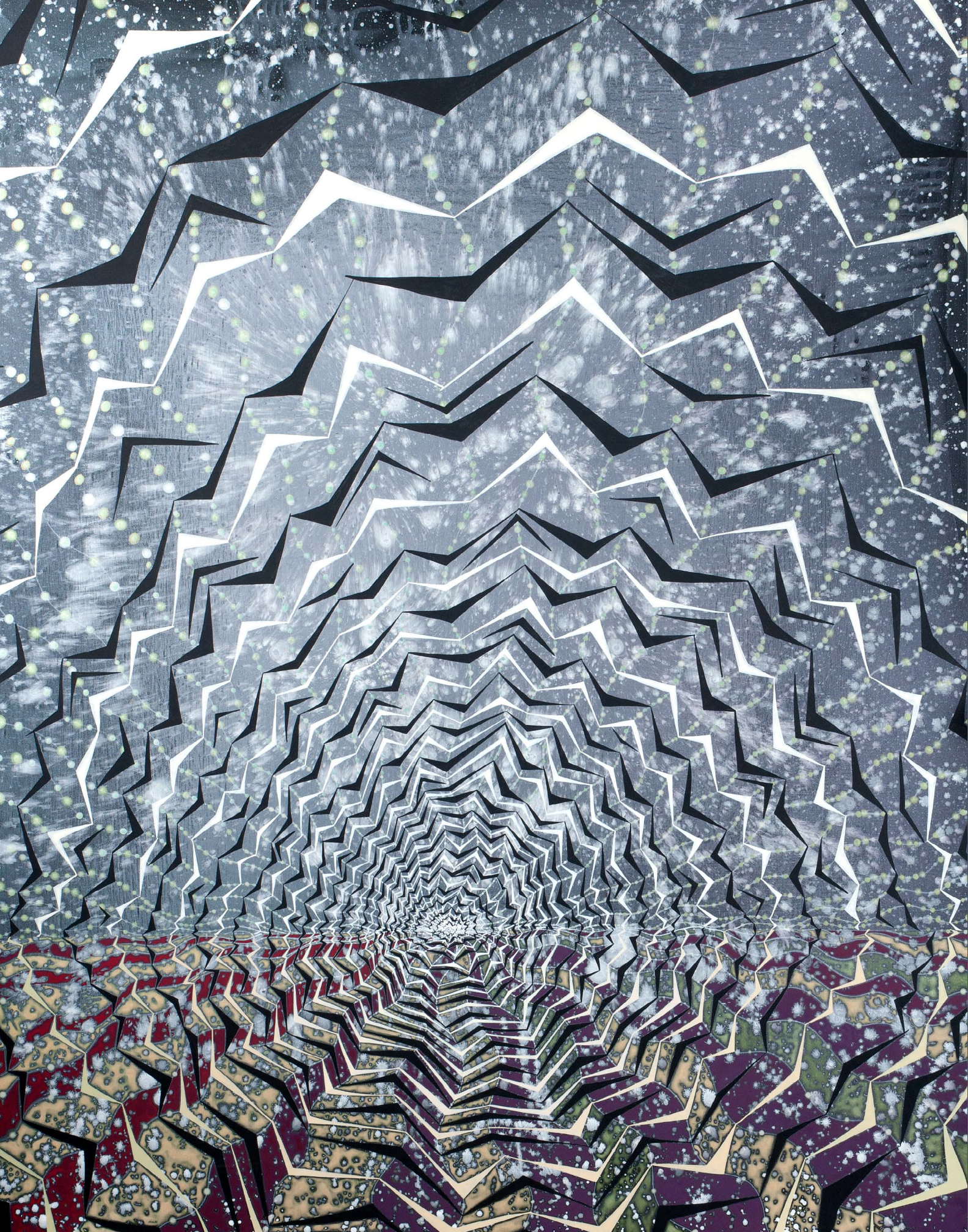
embody our shared belief in the power of art and architecture to change society and enrich lives. Through their individual work and collective initiatives, the Academicians support their communities, peers, and the next generation of creative thinkers.

As we look to our 200th anniversary, we will shape and implement new forms of service to artists and architects and dissolve long-standing barriers to culture to foster a community that transcends backgrounds, disciplines, and beliefs. Our work will advance a national conversation about visual art and design and reimagine cultural advocacy for the 21st century.



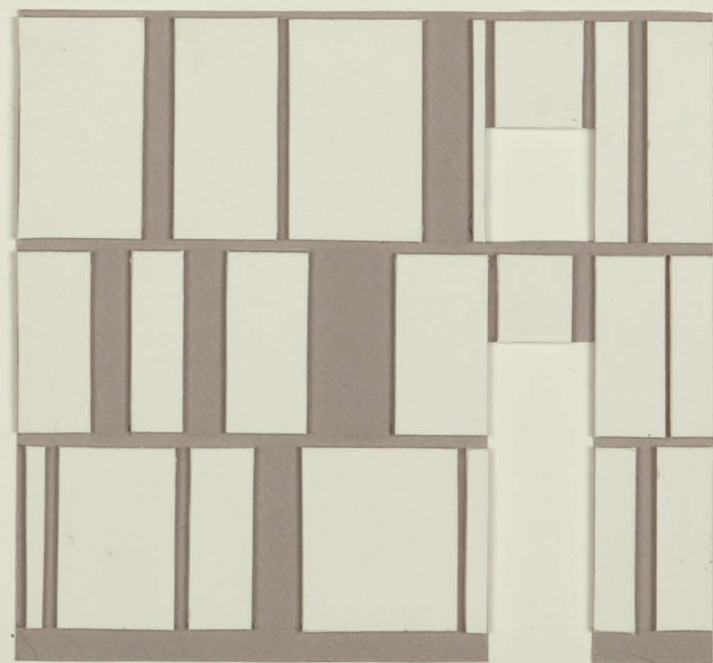
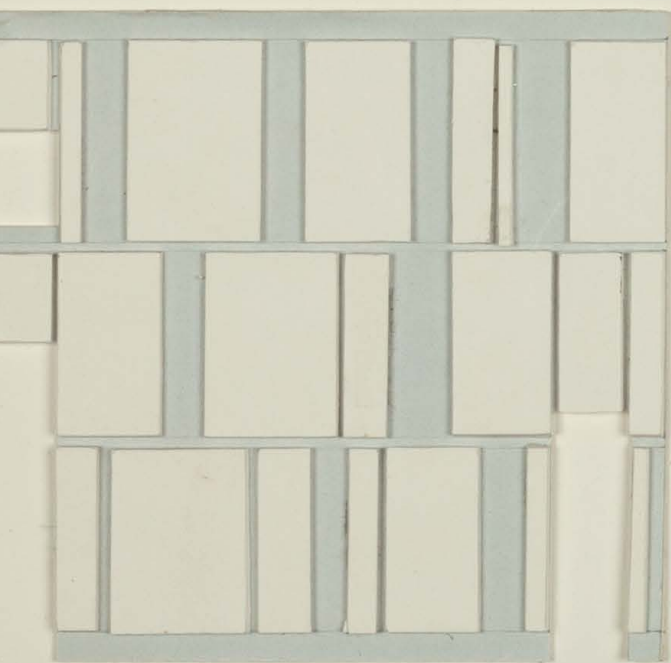
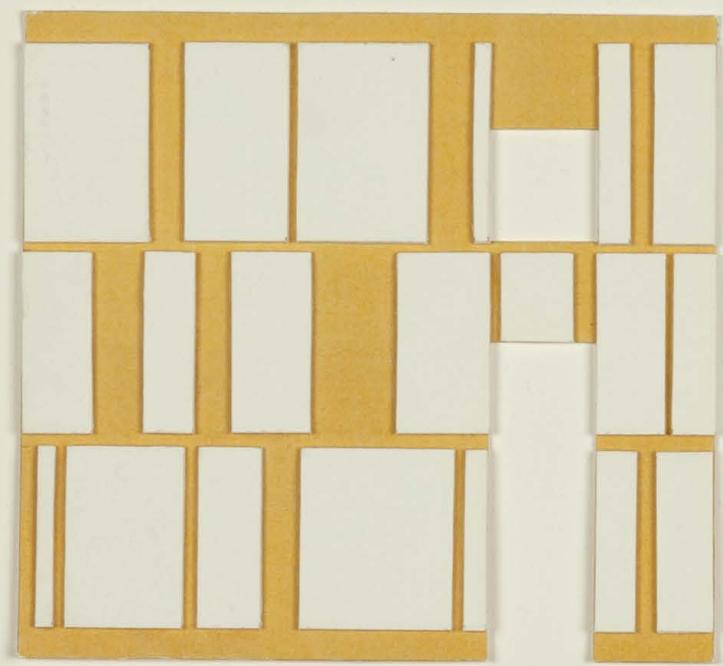
A transformational moment to reinvent America's oldest artist-led organization.





An unparalleled opportunity  
to create a new center  
for art and architecture  
for the 21st century.

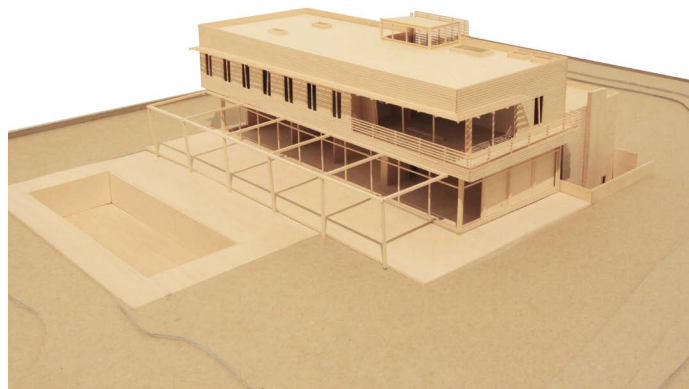




## The Process

Charting the course for the next chapter of the National Academy of Design has been a reflective multi-year journey. After the Academy's Upper East Side properties went on the market in 2017, an Advisory Committee of National Academicians was formed to lead the process of planning for the Academy's future, envisioning the multitude of possibilities for an artist-centered organization in the 21st century.

Starting in the fall of 2019, the Academy engaged the consultants DVDL to guide us through a series of conversations and workshops with internal stakeholders and expert advisors that assessed arts and cultural institutions across the country and collected input from more than a hundred stakeholders. The process considered ways the Academy can build on its competitive advantages, reflect on its legacy, and continue to serve artists and architects nationally. In these conversations, several clear themes emerged.



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## What We Heard

Artists and architects are central to the National Academy's mission and audience.

The National Academy can create opportunities for cross-disciplinary programs and exhibitions that celebrate diversity in perspectives, modes of practice, and thematic content.

The National Academy should embrace its mandate as a national institution.

The National Academy can foster mentorship and connections between Academicians and young and emerging artists and architects, who continue to need access to resources and opportunities.

The National Academy should take clear and measurable steps towards deepening its commitment to equity and inclusion in the composition and operations of its staff, board, National Academician membership, and audience.

The Academy has a unique opportunity to actively interpret and contextualize its history and collections and weave them into conversations around important contemporary topics.

The National Academy needs a new permanent home that has space for exhibitions and programming, offices, and more.







## Historic Assets

Shaped by what we heard during the visioning process, the future of the National Academy of Design will be built on an extraordinary foundation of historic assets that includes:

### A Community of Artists and Architects

From early in their careers to election as National Academicians, artists and architects are at the center of the National Academy and its mission to foster a community of support and exchange.

### A Commitment to Arts Education

Arts education in its broadest definition – from teaching studio skills to young artists and architects, to convening public discussions about new work and ideas in contemporary culture – has been a focus of the National Academy's mission since its founding.

### An Annual Exhibition of New Work and Ideas

The Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design, a yearly survey of art and architecture first held in 1826, continues to serve as an important showcase of work and ideas by contemporary artists and architects.

### A Living Collection of American Art and Architecture

The National Academy's permanent collection of works donated by more than 2,300 National Academicians since 1825 is a living archive of art and architecture in America and will continue to evolve as new Academicians are elected.

### A Source of Support

The National Academy supports working artists and architects through grants and awards, enabling them to produce new work and push the boundaries of their practice.

### A History to Inform Our Present

At 195 years old, the National Academy of Design, the oldest artist-run institution in the United States, is committed to owning its history, both the highs and lows, and using it to shape our understanding of the present and as a guide to our future.

## Our Goals

Building on what we heard and working with our core assets, our goals for the next four years in anticipation of our 200th anniversary in 2025 are:

**Embrace our mandate as a national forum and establish the Academy as a preeminent center for new work and ideas in art and architecture.**

**Organize cross-disciplinary, thoughtful, and timely exhibitions and programs that advance new ideas in art and architecture.**

**Provide support to artists and architects around the country through grants and awards.**

**Build a collaborative network of institutions and organizations across the country.**

**Support artists and architects at all stages of their careers.**

# **Empower our community of National Academicians to meaningfully shape art and architecture in America.**

**Expand programs and services to deepen National Academicians' engagement and participation.**

**Organize exhibitions and programs with and about living National Academicians.**

**Amplify the collective voice of National Academicians to contribute to public conversations about important issues in contemporary art and architecture.**

**Increase education and mentorship opportunities that connect National Academicians with young artists and architects.**

**Mine our history and collections to advance new ways for thinking about our future.**

**Expand the collection's visibility and accessibility as a public resource.**

**Continue to grow the collection and prioritize its care and conservation.**

**Promote scholarly research into the Academy's archives and collection with a special focus on untold or misrepresented histories, and reinterpretations of work for the present and future.**

**Develop a financially robust and resilient organization that both supports current needs and ensures an enduring future.**

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**Build a broad-based community of stakeholders who are committed to investing in our future.**

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**Diversify revenue streams to establish stable, consistent funding that include both contributed and earned income.**

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**Ensure programs and operations are aligned with institutional capacity.**

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**Strengthen fiscal transparency.**

# Aspire to new paradigms for how twenty-first century arts institutions operate and for whom.

Design and implement a comprehensive Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion Plan that promotes a progressive and fair environment among board, staff, membership, and audiences.

Experiment with new modes of operation to promote the delivery of and access to art.

Question how arts institutions occupy architectural space by creating a new home for the Academy where everyone feels welcome.

Ensure that Academy assets, such as its Board Restricted Endowment and Donor Endowed Funds, are managed to the greatest extent possible in accordance with Environmental, Social, and Governance strategies.

Build a culture of transparency and accountability in all of our work.





## A New Home for the National Academy of Design

Since space will be critical to defining the Academy's future, a Space Committee of board members and National Academicians is already taking shape to lead the search process. They will begin by articulating the program, a list of functional needs that will include galleries for both temporary exhibitions and permanent collection shows, offices, and storage and production space, as well as seminar rooms and studios, a research library (to house the Academy's historic collection of books by and about National Academicians), social spaces, and more. A place that is alive with ideas and energy and a hub for artists, architects, and the general public.

While the search for a new home is underway, the Academy will use the interim to its greatest advantage, experimenting as much as it can through installations, exhibitions and other events, with different types of spaces, locations, and collaborations, as a way of pushing its program into new modes of operation.



**Toward A New Academy.**

**The Future Starts Now.**



The National Academy of Design gratefully acknowledges the following for their help in developing this Vision Plan.

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Mark J. Smith, Arts & Cultural Engagement Specialist, New Museum  
Kelsa Trom, Head of Programs, NEW INC  
Dennis Witkins, Director, Kimberly-Klark Gallery

Special thanks to DVDL and David van der Leer for their work conducting the interviews, focus groups, and research that shaped this plan.

Design: WSDIA | WeShouldDoltAll

Note: All titles and affiliations as of fall 2019.

# About the Images

The National Academy of Design is the custodian and steward of one of the most significant collections of American art and architecture in the world. What distinguishes the Academy's collection is that it has been assembled almost entirely through donations of works by the artists and architects themselves. Upon election, National Academicians are asked to donate a representative sample of their work – called the Diploma Work – to the Academy's collection. Over 195 years and more than 2,300 National Academicians, the Academy now has a collection of more than 8,000 work of painting, sculpture, works on paper, architectural renderings and models, and more. It is an incomparable document of art and architecture in America.

Except where otherwise noted, the images used throughout this plan are Diploma Works donated to the collection by National Academicians.

A Esteban Vicente, *Untitled*, 1985, Oil on canvas, 42 x 50 in, Diploma Work 1985

B Charles Gaines, *Librettos: Manuel De Falla/Stokely Carmichael*, 2016, Printed ink, stained paper and UV print on acrylic, 48 x 34 x 3 in, Diploma Work 2021

C Yasu Eguchi, *Unopened Doors*, 1971, Watercolor on paper, 24 13/16 x 29 1/2 in, Donated by the artist 2007

D Lisa Hoke, *Coming Attractions*, 2015, Cardboard, packaging, glue and hardware, 109 x 196 x 12 in, Diploma Work 2019

E Marlon Blackwell, *Keenan Towerhouse Photograph: Skydeck with Framed Views to the East and West*, 2000, Digital file, Photo: Timothy Hursley, Diploma Work 2019

F Richard Mayhew, *Essence* (detail), n.d., Oil on canvas, 32 x 38 in, Diploma Work 1972

G Elizabeth King, *What Happened*, 1991, remastered for hi-def video 2008, Single-channel video, no audio, 2 minute loop, Diploma Work 2018

H Barbara Takenaga, *Lift*, 2011, Acrylic on linen, 54 x 25 in, Diploma Work 2013

I Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, *Snake Dance*, 2011, Oil, collage, mixed media on canvas, 72 x 48 in, Diploma Work 2012

J Billie Tsien, *Façade Study Model*, 2008, Museum board composed of 8 separate elements, 16 1/4 x 32 1/4 in, Diploma Work 2011

K Annabelle Selldorf, *Private Residence in Sagaponack 2013*, Balsa wood, 6 x 33 x 20 in, Diploma Work 2013

L Emma Amos, *Giza and Faith* (detail), 1991, Acrylic with kanga cloth and African fabric, 78 x 84 in, Diploma Work 2008

M David Diao, *Bruce and Me*, 2000, Acrylic and silkscreen on canvas, 24 x 42 in, Diploma Work 2013

N Elizabeth Catlett, *Fluted Head*, 1991, Patinated bronze, 10 1/2 x 9 x 9 in (sculpture), Diploma Work 2003

O Kay WalkingStick, *Volute/Volupté*, 2009, Oil on panel, 36 x 72 in, Diploma Work 2019

P Jacob Lawrence, *Self-Portrait*, 1977, Gouache and tempera on off-white wove paper, 22 1/8 x 30 in, Diploma Work 1977

Q Enrique Chagoya, *Detention at the Border of Language*, 2019, Color lithograph on handmade amate paper, 22 x 30 in, Diploma Work 2021

R William Pedersen, *World Financial Center, Shanghai*, 1991, Prismacolor colored pencil on paper, 21 7/8 x 11 in, Diploma Work 2021

