

# What Is a Curator?

**In 2016, Nasher Intern Benjamin Vega interviewed Nasher Associate Curator Leigh Arnold about the nature and purpose of curatorial work in a museum.**

Some of Leigh's duties as a curator include conducting research on objects in the permanent collection, writing for publications and managing with art installations—both laying out and de-installing (removing) works. Leigh works directly with artists and works closely with the registration and conservation departments to monitor the condition of artworks.

**BV: What do you recommend as a major or a minor in college if you want to pursue a career as a curator?**

LA: Majoring in Art History would help with the research aspect of the job. If you want to work in academia, a foreign language will help you study foreign art and artists. If you are interested in working in a for-profit organization, like an art gallery, I recommend minoring in business administration, so you'll have a better understanding of the art market.

**BV: What kinds of people do you work with as a curator?**

LA: Artists, registrars, conservators, art handlers, development (fundraising) staff, curators and registrars from other museums, and Nasher patrons and visitors.

**BV: Are there any protocols when installing a new exhibition?**

LA: We typically work with the artists on their installations, though it depends on the personality of the artist. Some artists rely on the museum's curatorial staff to install the work, while others prefer to be more hands-on approach. We aim for a harmonious result.

**BV: What kinds of common obstacles do you face in your job?**

LA: Obstacles vary with every artist, object, or installation. For example, an upcoming exhibition will feature multiple incredibly

heavy sculptures. We needed to take into account their weights as well as the weight of the machinery needed to move them in order to ensure the building was structurally capable of supporting the installation. Planning for that required a lot of practical problem solving in consultation with structural engineers.

**BV: How do you choose what to bring out from your permanent collection?**

LA: We tend to relate it to what's on view in the temporary exhibition gallery. If the temporary exhibition is work by a living artist and that artist is interested and willing, we like to invite him/her to make a selection of works from the permanent collection, which always results in exciting pairings and juxtapositions. Kathryn Andrews has selected many of the works that will be on view in the permanent collection gallery during the run of her exhibition this fall.

**BV: Do you believe museums exist to interpret the past or to change the future?**

LA: Both. With our contemporary exhibitions we can shape our visitor's understanding of the future of art and with our permanent collection we demonstrate the continuing relevance of the past.



**Nasher Sculpture Center**

# What Is an Exhibition?

An exhibition is a presentation of artwork focused on a main idea. To create an exhibition, curators, who are experts on art and history, first come up with a great idea for a story they would like to share with others. The story can be about an artist's life and work, a period of history, or it can be a big idea such as portraits throughout time. Curators create a list of all of the objects that they want to include in the exhibition. Then, they decide on how to place the objects in the museum to best tell their story.

**It's your turn to be a curator. Select the artworks you would like to place in the galleries and create a title for your exhibition.**





Arrange your artworks in the empty gallery.

EXHIBITION TITLE:

**Nasher Sculpture Center**