

Supporting the renewal of the Jewelry Gallery at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston

Beneficiary: Museum of Fine Arts of Boston (MFA)
Location: Boston, USA
Grant Cycle: February 2023 - May 2024
Amount: EUR 280.380,00
Type of Grant: renewal project
Promotion of Arts & Culture
Website: www.mfa.org/

Founded in 1870 and opened to the public on July 4, 1876, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA) is one of the largest, most comprehensive museums in the United States and features a world-renowned jewelry collection. Over the last fifteen years, the MFA has acquired nearly thirty designs by Elsa Peretti and holds the largest museum collection of Peretti's work in the United States. The collection spans Elsa Peretti's fifty-year career—from early examples of her jewelry and fashion accessories to her legendary designs for Tiffany & Co., including the Bone Cuff, the Bean, the Bottle, and the Snake. The MFA collection also contains important photographs by Elsa Peretti's friend Hiro that document their decades-long artistic partnership. Amassed over more than a century, the jewelry collection at the MFA today comprises more than 22,000 works that span 6,000 years and boasts a wide array of materials, techniques, and functions; from Neolithic Chinese jades to Ancient Greek gold, medieval pendants, and the most comprehensive collection of 20th-century studio jewelry ever assembled. Among its many invaluable treasures, the MFA collection contains a particularly noteworthy catalog of ancient jewelry, a growing collection of nineteenth and twentieth-century high-style jewelry, and the Daphne Farago Collection of contemporary jewelry. When the MFA's jewelry gallery first opened in 2006, the rotating displays of its extraordinary holdings generated excitement, as well as a greater awareness of the artistry of jewelry, among public audiences. While the gallery was successful, its casework and display furniture showed considerable wear after many years of frequent use; and its layout, lighting design, and monitoring systems required serious updates. In light of these gallery infrastructure problems and

the negative impact of the global pandemic, the gallery was downsized and now holds just one pedestal case for very small jewelry displays. The Museum has therefore committed to renovating and reinstalling this key gallery in order to create a modern, secure, flexible, and attractive setting worthy of its exceptional jewelry collection. To reflect the full excellence of the MFA's jewelry collection and educate the public on the artistry and significance of jewelry through its extraordinary holdings, the Museum is embarking on an ambitious plan to redesign, renovate, and reinstall its widely popular jewelry gallery for the first time in over a decade. The inaugural installation in the MFA's renovated gallery will feature 200 highlights from the jewelry collection and will explore various themes, including materials and techniques, design, and body adornment. A small, rotating selection from our outstanding collection of jewelry design drawings will illustrate the creative process behind jewelry creation. A flexible display element will be used to showcase a rotation of new acquisitions, light-sensitive materials, special loans, or creations by a single artist. This newly refurbished gallery will benefit regular Museum visitors, but will also be of keen interest to local and international students, jewelry scholars, educators, artists, collectors, and enthusiasts. This project, which received a grant from the **Nando and Elsa Peretti Foundation**, provides the jewelry collection at the MFA with new secure and durable display cases that ensure the object's conservation and cleanliness. It also provides new seating, labels, and exhibition texts; as well as, a new lighting system for enhanced viewing. There is also funding for scientific research on objects and new photographic documentation of previously un-photographed works.

Update

On May 18, 2024, the renovated Jewelry gallery at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (MFA) was inaugurated with the exhibition "Beyond Brilliance: Jewelry Highlights from the Collection". Celebrating the universality of body adornment throughout the ages and across cultures the exhibition presented highlights from the museum's renowned collection, exploring how jewelry can communicate strong messages about its wearer and exemplify the art and culture of its time. More than 150 objects were presented in a jewel box-inspired space, including Elsa Peretti designs: Claw necklace, Open Heart pendant, Whip belt, Open Bottle pendant, Snake belt/necklace, Serpent buckle in jade and belt, Sphere necklace and Perfume set.

"This space showcases the MFA's outstanding collection of jewelry, one of the most expansive in the world," said Emily Stoehrer, Rita J. Kaplan and Susan B. Kaplan Curator of Jewelry. *"Beyond Brilliance celebrates the depth and breath of the collection by examining objects past and present to discover the universality and creativity that jewelry offers."* The Nando and Elsa Peretti Foundation supported "Beyond Brilliance: Highlights from the Jewelry Collection" and its gallery renewal.