

Utah Arts & Museums

History Timeline

1899

The Utah Art Institute was established on March 9, 1899 by the Third Utah Legislature. Representative Alice Merrill Horne, a 31-year-old patron of the arts, ran specifically to advance an arts agenda. Horne's vision was of a state-run arts agency — one that would hold an annual art exhibition (now known as the Statewide Annual) and purchase visual art to create a permanent collection owned by the people of Utah. Horne also established more than 30 collections of Utah art in public schools so that all children, no matter their parents' income, would have direct contact with original art.



Alice Merrill Horne



Landscape, Southern Utah by Gordon Cope

1937

In 1937, the Utah Legislature changed the name to the Utah State Institute of Fine Arts and enlarged the board, appointed by the governor, to 13 members. Arts activity flourished during the Great Depression. Branch offices of the Institute were opened in Provo, Price, and Helper. Through the Federal Works Project Administration (WPA), artists were commissioned to create works which were placed in state and federal buildings.

1940s & 1950s

During World War II, the Utah State Institute of Fine Arts Board emphasized developing Utah's arts resources, which included a community orchestra and an emerging ballet company. Those organizations today are the world-class Utah Symphony and Ballet West. The Utah Original Writing Competition began in 1958 and continues today.



Left: Utah Original Writing Competition, Above: Ballet West, Utah Symphony at Abravanel Hall

1960s

Increased public appropriations through the creation of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), in 1965, allowed the Institute to offer arts services and programs in many disciplines. Wilburn C. West became the first full-time paid director. In 1967, the Institute became the Division of Fine Arts within the new Department of Development Services. The division has regularly received federal funding since the NEA's inception.

1970s

Community outreach programs were added under the direction of Ruth Draper, who was appointed director in 1974. The agency was housed in the Carriage House behind the Governor's Mansion in downtown Salt Lake City, and the agency initiated projects that became the Utah Media Center, the Utah Playwriting Conference, the Salt Lake City Arts Council, and the Utah Arts Festival.

In 1975, Draper learned that the historic James R. Glendinning home at 617 East South Temple, next door to the Governor's Mansion,



Ruth Draper and Vicki Bourns at Glendinning Home 40th anniversary celebration

was set to be demolished for a condominium project. Through Draper's efforts, the building was purchased by the State of Utah and renovated. The agency took up residence in 1979, under the Utah Department of Community and Economic Development.

1976

The Folk and Traditional Arts Program was established in 1976 to research and document traditional culture in the State of Utah, to educate the public about traditional and heritage arts, and to preserve and promote the perpetuation of artistic traditions and expressions of the cultural heritage of Utahns.

1979

The agency's name was changed to Utah Arts Council.

1980s

The Grand Beehive Exhibition, started by Utah Arts Council folklorist Hal Cannon, opened at the Salt Lake Art Center and traveled to Washington, D.C. in 1981 for display at the Renwick Gallery (part of the current Smithsonian American Art Museum).

In the early 1980s, the agency was a partner in incubating the Sundance Film Festival. Director Ruth Draper funded what was originally called the U.S./Utah Film and Video Festival. The Utah Arts Council ran the festival for the first several years before passing it on to actor/director Robert Redford and his Sundance Institute.

In 1984, the Chase Home in Liberty Park was restored and today is the



Chase Home Museum of Utah Folk Arts

home of the agency's Folk and Traditional Arts program.

In 1985, legislation was passed which provided that one percent of state facility construction costs be set aside for the arts. A Model Site Program for Arts Education was created. Carol Nixon was appointed executive director, with a 19-member staff to advance the state's cultural agenda. The agency's 90th anniversary was celebrated

with the inauguration of the Governor's Awards in the Arts. Arts Town Meetings were begun, and visual art fellowships and folk art apprenticeships came to fruition.

On Oct. 27, 1988, Governor Norman H. Bangert announced that the Union Pacific Corporation was donating the Union Pacific Depot to the Utah Arts Council to create a State Art Museum to house the Utah State Fine Art Collection.

1990s

In 1990, Governor Bangert recommended, and the Legislature unanimously appropriated, \$2.3 million to insure the vitality and stability of Utah's large and small nonprofit organizations. To complete the endowment package, in 1991, the Utah Arts Council received the largest federal grant given to Utah arts: a \$75,000 Challenge III grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Twenty percent of the federal money was to be used for nonprofit organizations; 20 percent provided an endowment to serve ethnic and minority populations; and 60 percent created an endowment for individual artists' services.

In the 1990s, a group of passionate museum professionals and



Utah Museum of Fine Arts

supporters came together to advocate for a state agency that would nurture and support the state's museums community. Many of Utah's museums are managed by volunteers, and to help those volunteers protect the heritage resources in Utah's museums, the Office of Museum Services was formed

in 1992, through state statute.

In the 1990s, in support of the National Endowment for the Arts, musician Ardean Watts staged a piano "play-in." Watts was chair of the Utah Arts Council board at the time.

In November 1999, a three-way deal gave ownership of the Rio Grande Depot to the Boyer Co., which had already purchased a 40-acre tract from Union Pacific for its Gateway development. The deal transferred ownership from the state to Salt Lake City, which in turn transferred title to Boyer. In return, the Utah Arts Council moved its art collection and Traveling Exhibition Program to a Boyer-owned former produce warehouse at 300 South and 500 West.

In 1999, the agency celebrated its 100th anniversary.

2000s

In 2001, the Museum Action Team, a dedicated group of citizen volunteers, was able to secure one-time funds of \$1 million from the Legislature to provide capital and operational grants to museums.

In 2004, the Change Leader Program was founded by Community Programs manager Anna Bolton, in collaboration with longtime associate Don Wilhelm. Change Leader took a new approach to training, focusing on individual leadership advancement



Change Leader Conference at Red Cliffs Lodge, Moab

and change management. The program also focused on creating a long-term professional development relationship with those who had participated in the Change Leader Institute.

In 2006, the Office of Museum Services and the Utah Arts Council were merged to create the Utah Division of Arts & Museums (also known as Utah Arts & Museums, or UA&M).

2010s

In 2018, the StEPs-UT Program was founded in close collaboration with Utah Humanities, and with support from the Utah Historical Society. The program, built upon the American Association for State and Local

History's Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations, was designed to move Utah museums through six areas of focus, assessing their institutional practices against national benchmarks.

In 2018, the landscaping around the Glendinning Home was redesigned to help preserve the structure and open up the view, both to and from the building. As part of that redesign, a concrete footing with built-in "tie down" and up-lighting was installed for the placement of an artwork as placemaker and landmark. For this concrete footing, the agency commissioned a site-specific artwork by Utah artist Heath Satow, a corten-and-gold sculpture representing a sego lily that includes references to agency founder Alice Merrill Horne. The agency also held an open house to celebrate 40 years in the Glendinning Home.

In 2019, the state celebrated the 150th anniversary of the joining of the transcontinental railroad in

Left: *AMH:1898* by Heath Satow



Transcontinental—Weber Canyon by Denaë Shanidiin and Russel Daniels

Utah. The agency initiated "Transcontinental: People, Place, Impact," a visual art exhibition at the Rio Gallery.

2020s

In 2020, the Breaking Barriers program was founded. "Breaking Barriers: A Cultural Accessibility Project" is a partnership between Art Access and the Utah Division of Arts & Museums to provide disability accessibility training and mentorship to our state's cultural institutions. The program began in person and quickly adapted to be virtual at the onset of COVID-19, ultimately making the program more accessible.

2020 also brought more than \$500,000 in funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to support the



Measurement of Museum Social Impact (MOMSI) project. MOMSI, a three-year research project, worked with 38 museums from across the United States to study the social impacts they had on individual visitors. The resultant data and toolkit earned additional funding from IMLS in 2023 to continue supporting this unique and valuable community of practice.



In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic struck the world, and agency staff worked remotely from home. Also in 2020, an earthquake damaged the Rio Grande Depot, home of the Rio Gallery. Thus, UA&M lost its primary exhibition space, along with the visual and public art staff offices.



Thrive 125 by Melissa Crowton

In 2021, Utah celebrated 125 years of statehood. The agency commissioned 13 artists to create work related to the anniversary for an exhibition titled "Thrive 125." Also in 2021, the agency commissioned artists to reimagine the state symbol for an exhibition titled "The New Beehive." 2021 brought a major grant from the National Endowment for the

Humanities (\$350,000 over three years) to fund the Utah Collections Preservation Program, in partnership with Utah Humanities. 2021 and 2022 saw major state and federal investments to offset the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. UA&M was actively engaged in distributing these funds (CARES Act and ARPA), as well as providing resources, hope, and inspiration.

In 2023, the agency moved out of its home of 44 years, the Glendinning Home, into temporary facilities on Highland Drive in Millcreek. The agency lost the Alice Gallery, an intimate exhibition space in the Glendinning Home.

Today, the agency is part of the Utah Department of Cultural & Community Engagement, whose executive director is part of the Governor's cabinet. We look forward to our new home with expanded exhibition and public spaces in the renovated Rio Grande Depot (in 2027).



Rio Grande Depot