

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 9, 2019

**THE DAVIS MUSEUM AT WELLESLEY COLLEGE PROMOTES AMANDA GILVIN  
TO SONJA NOVAK KOERNER '51 SENIOR CURATOR OF COLLECTIONS AND  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF CURATORIAL AFFAIRS**

WELLESLEY, Mass. – Lisa Fischman, Ruth Gordon '37 Shapiro Director of the Davis Museum at Wellesley College, has promoted **Amanda Gilvin** as the inaugural **Sonja Novak Koerner '51 Senior Curator of Collections and Assistant Director of Curatorial Affairs** at the Davis Museum. The endowment of the position was established in 2019 with the generosity of Wellesley College Alumnae Sonja Novak Koerner ('51) and her husband Michael M. Koerner.



In her new position, Gilvin will work with Fischman to oversee all curatorial matters at the Museum, define the vision and direction for the collections, generate publications, and create programs that draw on and expand the mission of the institution. She will supervise the curatorial department, coordinating closely with other Davis departments as well as with faculty, students, and staff on the Wellesley College campus. Gilvin assumed her new role on July 1, 2019.

“Since her arrival three years ago, Amanda has been an ambitious force at the Davis,” said Fischman. “She has undertaken extensive research into the history of collecting African art at Wellesley College, mined the Museum’s collections to organize several intellectually and aesthetically inspiring exhibitions, and re-staged the permanent collections galleries to highlight African art. She has also developed an innovative partnership with Wellesley’s department of computer science—to enrich and contextualize what has heretofore been an understudied area of our holdings through the application of AR technology in our galleries. She has created strong connections and built promising relationships across campus and

across New England, crafted specialized teaching opportunities and gallery talks, supervised students, advocated successfully for acquisitions, and brought new critical perspectives and dynamic force to her work at the Davis.”

A specialist in the arts of Africa and the African diaspora, Gilvin joined the Davis Museum as Assistant Curator in 2016. She came from Skidmore College, where she was a Visiting Assistant Professor of African Art. Prior to her tenure at Skidmore, Gilvin held the Five College Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship in African Art and Architecture at Mount Holyoke College and Smith College. During this three-year period, she co-curated *El Anatsui: New Worlds at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum*, installed the first permanent gallery dedicated to African art at the Smith College Museum of Art, designed and taught courses on African art and culture, and advised on museum acquisitions at both colleges.

During her time at the Davis Museum, Gilvin has curated several exhibitions: *Yinka Shonibare MBE: Guns Drawn*; *Jacob Lawrence: The Legend of John Brown*; and *Life on Paper: Contemporary Prints from South Africa*. She co-curated *Fragment: A Museum’s Mid-Century Legacy*, and organized the Davis presentation of *Soulful Stitching: Patchwork Quilts by Africans (Siddis) in India*. She has been awarded two Warhol Foundation Grants for the development and realization of her upcoming exhibition, *Fatimah Tuggar: Home’s Horizons*.

Gilvin writes on textiles, contemporary art, and museums of Africa and the African Diaspora, and her articles have been published in *African Studies Review*, *Critical Interventions*, *African Arts*, and *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*. Her forthcoming book, *Mining Beauty: Art and Development in Niger* includes an analysis of the Musée National Boubou Hama du Niger.

Gilvin earned a Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) and a Master’s degree in Art History from Cornell University. She earned a Bachelor’s degree in English from Kenyon College. Her doctoral dissertation was titled “The Warp of a Nation: The Exhibition and Circulation of Nigerien Art, 1920-Present.” Her field research in Niger was funded by a Fulbright-Hays fellowship.

## **ABOUT MICHAEL M. KOERNER CM AND SONJA NOVAK KOERNER**

Based in Toronto, major philanthropists Michael M. Koerner CM and Sonja Novak Koerner are renowned for their generosity in many fields, and are particularly recognized for their contributions in the arts and medicine in Canada. A recipient of many awards—recently the International Society for the Performing Arts (ISPA) Angel Award—Michael Koerner was born in Prague, Czech Republic, attended schools in England and Canada, and studied at MIT and Harvard. President of Canada Overseas Investments Limited since 1958, he founded the Koerner Family Foundation in 1986. Sonja Novak Koerner was born in Lima, Peru and graduated from Wellesley College in 1951.

## **ABOUT THE DAVIS MUSEUM**

One of the oldest and most acclaimed academic fine arts museums in the United States, the Davis Museum is a vital force in the intellectual, pedagogical and social life of Wellesley College. It seeks to create an environment that encourages visual literacy, inspires new ideas, and fosters involvement with the arts both within the College and the larger community.

## **ABOUT WELLESLEY COLLEGE AND THE ARTS**

The Wellesley College arts curriculum and the highly acclaimed Davis Museum are integral components of the College's liberal arts education. Departments and programs from across the campus enliven the community with world-class programming— classical and popular music, visual arts, theatre, dance, author readings, symposia, and lectures by some of today's leading artists and creative thinkers—most of which are free and open to the public.

Since 1875, Wellesley College has been a leader in providing an excellent liberal arts education for women who will make a difference in the world. Its 500-acre campus near Boston is home to some 2,400 undergraduate students from 49 states and 58 countries.

###

Image credit: Photography by Juna Lee

Media Contact: Mary Agnew

617-512-7489, [Magnew@wellesley.edu](mailto:Magnew@wellesley.edu)

*High-resolution images and interviews available upon request*