

# ARIF KHAN:

## In Conversation with Collective Constructs



UNMAM Director, Arif Khan (CENTER), speaks with visiting guests at the Hindsight/Insight 2.0 opening reception.

### Episode Description:

A museum is a huge institution, and often comes with decades of baggage—navigating that history, and making it relevant to audiences today, is no easy task. **Arif Khan** knows about this challenge: he's been the Director of the University of New Mexico Art Museum since 2016, overseeing exhibitions, raising funds to keep the museum growing in strength, and making sure everyone feels welcome in the space.

In our conversation with Khan, we gained insight into the challenges of university museums in general, and a little hindsight about what makes UNMAM special.

### References:

Association of Academic Museums and Galleries

### People Mentioned:

**Kathleen Howe.**

**Geoffrey Batchen**, is an Australian art historian.

**Robert Mapplethorpe** (1946 - 1989) was an American photographer.

**Raymond Jonson** (1891 - 1982) was an American-born Modernist painter known for his paintings of the American Southwest.

**The Transcendental Painting Group.**

**Agnes Pelton** (1881 - 1961) was a modernist painter.

**Miguel Gandert**, is a documentary and art photographer.

**Van Deren Coke** (1921 - 2004) was an American photographer, scholar and museum professional.

**Beaumont Newhall** (1908 - 1993) was an American curator, art historian, writer and photographer.

Click here to listen to the full episode on *HERE TO INSPIRE: UNM Art Museum Journal*

# LEARNING ENGAGEMENT:

## Think-Pair-Share Questions

Arif Khan talks about public, private, and academic museums and galleries, like UNMAM. After listening, use the prompts below to form your own ideas, then discuss them with a partner and share with the class.

Can it be a museum without a permanent collection?

In what ways do family archives (photo album pictures) change when they become part of a museum collection?

## Building-Critical-Awareness Discussion Questions

Consider the word “museum.” Who decides what a museum is? How does our definition shape how we think about museums and the people who work in them?

Consider the word “ownership.” From a museum perspective, is owning a piece of art more valiant than borrowing it? What might be some reasons for these two different approaches on the part of a museum?

Arif discusses deaccession of objects from a museum. He describes how oftentimes more thought goes into “removing” an object from a museum than in the acquisition process. Why might an object enter a museum? Why might an object leave a museum collection?

## Learning & Exploration Activities

University Museums, Public Museums and Private Museums have websites. Go online and review a few of each. What information do they provide? How can you tell if a museum is public or private? How are they different? For example, how does the information of the Whitney Museum of Art (private), compare to the University of New Mexico Museum of Art (university)?

How do you make an art collection from 50 years ago relevant to people today?

What do you imagine art history and art practices will look like in 100 years from today? Do you picture it as existing in a physical space? What does it look like? What would you purchase right now, for a collection that will resonate with students in 100 years?