

CURATORIAL INTERNSHIP

African American Crafts Initiative and Crafts of African Fashion

The Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage seeks two virtual interns this winter to be part of the African American Craft Initiative (AACI) and the Crafts of African Fashion (CAF) project. These internships are part-time and will run from mid-January to April 2022.

Over the years, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival has presented and documented hundreds of African and African American makers. These images, video files, and first-person narratives provide a rich source of documentation in the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections. We continue to add to this collection, amplifying underrepresented voices from past and present programs. We do this by adding research and oral histories of makers to the AACI database, writing articles for Folklife Magazine, producing virtual programming like Story Circles, circulating a monthly bulletin, and hosting virtual convenings.

By listening to and learning from experiences of African and African American artists and artisans in their own words, the interns will participate in activities to amplify these powerful legacies for generations to come. The interns will work under the supervision and mentorship of curator Diana N'Diaye and project coordinator Sloane Keller. The primary assignment will involve working as part of the AACI team, researching and helping to coordinate programming activities. The interns will also learn about the CAF project and assist with the development of funding proposals and programmatic activities. The interns will attend relevant virtual meetings, including all-staff, programmatic, and internship meetings.

Selected applicants will receive a stipend of \$1,500.

Learning objectives:

- Deepen knowledge of African and African American makers by conducting research, including oral histories for documentation and storytelling
- Learn how to update the database of African American makers and craft organizations
- Gain experience in researching and preparing resource materials for workshops and convenings
- Practical skills in logistical and coordination support for stakeholder convenings and other programming
- Strengthen writing and communication skills by drafting digital content including articles, blog posts, and reports to be published online
- Learn how to conduct research on potential fundraising and grant sources and contribute to proposal processes

The ideal candidates will have interest in and/or familiarity with African American expressive culture. Strong research and organizational skills required. French fluency preferred. The ideal candidates will have a strong willingness to develop new skills and work with a small, dynamic team on a variety of tasks and projects, often with competing priorities and timelines.

Background

The Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage's Cultural Sustainability program works with communities to bolster efforts to preserve and practice living cultural heritage in the face of social, economic, and political challenges. Through its work, the program works to understand and mitigate threats to cultural sustainability, scale our impact through partnerships, convenings, and thought leadership, and transform public understanding about cultural diversity.

The African American Craft Initiative aims to expand the visibility of African American artists and makers by highlighting the importance of their practices as essential to community economic and social health. Critically, the initiative aims to broaden the understanding of contemporary craft in the United States and demonstrate African American craft's contribution to cultural heritage. Through collaborative research, documentation, and public programming, AACI aims to improve and increase documentation of African American makers and their craft, develop and renew networks of support within the craft community, and increase public awareness of African American craft. These efforts will contribute to the continuity of these vital arts, adapted to local settings in ways that consider new environmental, social, and cultural factors.

Crafts of African Fashion supports African artisans, designers, and other stakeholders in the cultural industries sector to sustain heritage craft. CAF launched at the 2018 Smithsonian Folklife Festival Marketplace in partnership with the National Museum of African Art and the National Museum of African American History and Culture. The success of the launch signals a supportive cultural sector that can nurture diverse and distinct local African fashion design identities while at the same time developing sustainable local artisan enterprise. Working with local partners across Africa, CAF brings together artisans, designers, museums, scholars, educators, government officials, craft organizations, training centers, cultural tourism, and other stakeholders for collective activities to sustain heritage craft through increasing knowledge and awareness of artisans' work and their contributions to fashion.

To apply online, visit solaa.si.edu and create an account. After selecting Internship, specify the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage and indicate AACI/CAF internship on the application. **The submission deadline is December 31.** If you have questions, please contact intern coordinator Arlene Reiniger at ReinigerA@si.edu.

Selected interns will be required to pass a background check. Please check with your institution regarding course credit requirements, if applicable.