

DEDICATION OF NEW CUSTARD INSTITUTE FOR SPANISH ART AND CULTURE INSPIRES A NEW CHAPTER OF RESEARCH AND CONNECTION FOR SMU'S MEADOWS MUSEUM

Custard Institute launches tonight (Thursday) at 6 p.m. with inaugural symposium — “Context Matters: The Materiality of Objects in the Museum” — with acclaimed keynote speakers exploring why museums remain essential in an increasingly virtual world

DALLAS (SMU) — Oct. 5, 2023 — With a mission to greatly expand cultural research and educational programs, the **Custard Institute for Spanish Art and Culture** at the Meadows Museum, SMU, was dedicated yesterday (Oct. 4) as university officials, arts leaders and Custard family members celebrated the momentous milestone with a ribbon-cutting and reception in the new spaces. During remarks, museum leaders shared an update on the institute’s inaugural event — an international, two-day symposium titled *Context Matters: The Materiality of Objects in the Museum* — that launches tonight from 6-8 p.m. and continues Friday (Oct. 6) from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Meadows Museum (see symposium details below). The public is invited and may [register here](#).

Dr. P. Gregory Warden, the Mark A. Roglán Director of the Custard Institute for Spanish Art and Culture at the Meadows Museum, remarked at the event that “This beautiful new facility will allow us to continue to expand the museum’s strong research profile and engage the entire university community. The institute is establishing programs that will support emerging scholars and recognize outstanding research on the art of Spain. We will now also be able to create exciting new curricular initiatives on collecting, cultural heritage and museum management.”

The Custard Institute was founded to significantly increase the museum’s research activities by fostering interdisciplinary collaborations with peer institutions and by facilitating new ways of teaching and learning alongside SMU’s archives and libraries. Linda P. Custard ’60, ’99 and William A. Custard ’57 funded the Institute in 2021 with a \$3 million donation — at the time, the largest personal gift in the Meadows Museum’s history — which was matched by The Meadows Foundation.

Participating in the ceremonies were SMU President R. Gerald Turner; Bill and Linda Custard, who is an SMU Trustee Emerita and Chair, Meadows Museum Advisory Council; Brad Cheves, Vice President for Development and External Affairs, SMU; Elizabeth G. Loba, Provost, SMU; Samuel S. Holland, Algur H. Meadows Dean of the Meadows School of the Arts, SMU; Amanda W. Dotseth, Linda P. and William A. Custard Director of the Meadows Museum and Centennial Chair in the Meadows School of Arts, SMU; P. Gregory Warden, Mark A. Roglán Director of the Custard Institute for Spanish Art and Culture, Meadows Museum, SMU; and Peter M. Miller, President & CEO, The Meadows Foundation.

Located in the Meadows Museum's north wing (adjacent to the gift shop on the first floor), approximately 1,600 square feet of former educational spaces has been renovated and upgraded to house the Custard Institute, which includes a new state-of-the-art seminar room, lounge and offices for fellows and staff. The lounge — dubbed the museum's "living room" — will function as a salon with flexible furnishings to accommodate both informal and formal gatherings. Envisioned by architectural firm The Beck Group, the renovation also includes an expanded, non-circulating research library with an amalgam of several library collections for staff, volunteers and visiting researchers. Also available will be private work areas for scholars and fellows.

Warden's naming as director, which coincided with the launch of the institute in 2021, was part of the Custards' gift to ensure dynamic leadership was at the helm to guide the institute's formation. Warden, a former president of Franklin University in Lugano, Switzerland, is a University Distinguished Professor Emeritus and a Meadows Foundation Distinguished Teaching Professor at SMU, and an Altshuler Distinguished Teaching Professor at SMU's Meadows School of the Arts.

Dr. Amanda W. Dotseth, the Linda P. and William A. Custard Director of the Meadows Museum and Centennial Chair in the Meadows School of the Arts, commented that "The very best university art museums are unique on their campuses. They contribute to the intellectual life of higher education by unifying the theoretical with the tangible, supporting visitors in seeing the beauty in human creativity while also learning about the history, techniques, and forms that go into each object. For the Meadows Museum, an institution long grounded in scholarly excellence, the integration of an institute dedicated exclusively to research is as natural as it is visionary."

She added that thanks to Linda and Bill Custard and The Meadows Foundation, "the museum is now poised to reach new heights and take SMU into an 'ignited' new era."

The dedication of the new physical spaces for the Custard Institute and the presentation of its inaugural symposium caps off an exciting first year in office for Warden. In addition to shepherding the renovation and planning the symposium, Warden has also established an academic advisory board comprised of national and international experts; created the Mark A. Roglán Publication Award given to a publication for exceptional scholarship reporting; developed the Custard Institute Travel Fellowships funding research related for the study of Spain's art and culture; and awarded publications subventions to support peer-reviewed research publications in the English language on Spanish art and culture.

Warden also devised a partnership with the Edith O'Donnell Institute of Art History at The University of Texas at Dallas, the only two art history institutes at universities to be founded in the twenty-first century. The two entities are working on a digital heritage project entitled "Royal Prerogatives: The Bourbon Porcelain Rooms at Portici and Aranjuez," which will bring together art historians and cultural heritage technologists to create digital models of two of eighteenth-century Europe's greatest artistic and technological achievements. A postdoctoral fellow supported by and affiliated with both organizations has recently begun a year-long residency at the museum.

Inaugural symposium explores crucial role museums play in a digital world

Warden reports that this week's symposium, which honors Roglán's memory, will bring together local researchers and international experts on the topic of how art engages the viewer within the context of the museum. In an age when virtual technologies — include the growing use of AI — attempt to replace “real” interactions, they will address new questions: Why is the museum experience essential? What are the meanings of artworks or artifacts displayed in institutions?

Two notable keynote speakers — both published authors and acclaimed experts in this field — will tackle these topics tonight (Thursday) at 6 p.m. Anne Balsamo is the arts and humanities distinguished university chair at UT Dallas, and Maurizio Forte is the William and Sue Gross Distinguished Professor of Classical Studies and of Art, Art History, and Visual Studies at Duke University. On day two, the discussions continue with Michael Corris, art critic and emeritus professor of art, SMU; Anthony Elia, J.S. Bridwell Foundation Endowed Librarian and director, Bridwell Library, SMU; Amanda W. Dotseth, Linda P. and William A. Custard Director of the Meadows Museum and Centennial Chair in the Meadows School of the Arts, SMU; Adam Jasienski, associate professor of art history, SMU, and member of the Custard Institute Advisory Board; and Michelle Rich, Ellen and Harry S. Parker III Associate Curator of Indigenous American Art, Dallas Museum of Art.

The Custard Institute is located at the Meadows Museum, SMU, at 5900 Bishop Blvd. in Dallas, TX 75205. Learn more at [MeadowsMuseumDallas.org](https://www.MeadowsMuseumDallas.org)

About the Custard Institute for Spanish Art and Culture

The Custard Institute for Spanish Art and Culture (CISAC) at the Meadows Museum was established in 2021 thanks to generous gifts from Linda P. and William A. Custard and The Meadows Foundation. Its mission is to build on the museum's current research and educational programs and significantly increase the museum's research activities by fostering interdisciplinary collaborations with peer institutions and by facilitating new ways of teaching and learning in order to deepen our understanding of the impact of Spanish art and culture.

About the Meadows Museum, SMU

The Meadows Museum is the leading U.S. institution focused on the study and presentation of the art of Spain. In 1962, Dallas businessman and philanthropist Algor H. Meadows donated his private collection of Spanish paintings, as well as funds to start a museum, to Southern Methodist University. The museum opened to the public in 1965, marking the first step in fulfilling Meadows's vision to create “a small Prado for Texas.” Today, the Meadows is home to one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of Spanish art outside of Spain. The collection spans from the 10th to the 21st centuries and includes medieval objects, Renaissance and Baroque sculptures, and major paintings by Golden Age and modern masters. For more information visit [meadowsmuseumdallas.org](https://www.meadowsmuseumdallas.org).

About SMU

SMU (Southern Methodist University) is the nationally ranked global research university in the dynamic city of Dallas. SMU's alumni, faculty and over 12,000 students in eight degree-granting schools demonstrate an entrepreneurial spirit as they lead change in their professions, communities and the world.

###

CONTACTS:**Meadows Museum**

Becky Mayad

becky@mayadpr.com

214-697-7745

SMU

Nancy George

ngeorge@smu.edu

214-768-7674