

# Museum programs keep history engaging

**Amanda Sieradzki**  
Council on Culture & Arts

“The Grove Museum is a State of Florida museum, so we belong to the people of Florida,” says The Grove’s program coordinator Patricia Singletary. “We are here to serve you. I think the most powerful thing museums can do in the modern world is truly engage their community and represent the histories of this area.”

Singletary’s enthusiasm for history comes through in her voice as she speaks on the subject. She was an intern at The Grove in 2018 where she focused

on women’s history and created a tour packet for school groups. That spring, Singletary fell in love with the museum’s civil rights focus, and was hired as museum educator before being promoted to her current role.

The museum’s Handmade History program skillfully weaves Singletary’s passions for crafts and women’s histories together while providing a space for conversation in the community. Singletary says craft nights around the office sparked the idea in conjunction with a successful women’s history tour. Given the community’s interests, she wanted to create a program for adults that

would allow for roundtable discussion with the help of facilitators.

Since Handmade History started in February, it has been met with overwhelmingly positive responses. The upcoming event on Nov. 6 will focus on women in the arts and feature FAMU Visiting Assistant Professor of English, Dr. Yolanda J. Franklin, COCA’s Executive Director Kathleen Spehar and Director of the Foster-Tanner Fine Arts Gallery at FAMU, Aja Roache as roundtable discussion facilitators.

“We try to keep the crafts simple be-

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**Patricia Singletary is The Grove Museum’s program coordinator.**  
PATRICIA SINGLETARY

# Grove

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cause the conversation is the most important part of the event,” says Singletary. “It is up to the participants what direction they want their craft to go and what direction they want the conversation to go.”

Singletary graduated from Florida State University with a double major in history and women’s studies. History is in her blood as Singletary follows in her father’s footsteps. While he worked at the Museum of Florida History, a young Singletary had free range of the museum’s exhibits. She spent summers at the Knott House, volunteered as a living interpreter at Mission San Luis, worked in many museum gift shops, and interned with the Florida Historic Capitol Museum.

The summer before she started full-time at The Grove Museum, Singletary took an internship at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY. As a public programs intern, she gave tours on baseball history, but was surprised by the lack of a tour that included women, especially given the museum’s history of women in baseball exhibit. So, she took it upon herself to write one.

“I went through the entire museum and made space for women in each of the exhibits where there was no mention of them,” says Singletary, who strives for inclusivity and included the contributions of black and Hispanic female baseball players. “I’ve always been very interested in gender studies and women’s roles in history because that is talked about less, and I always look at things from an intersectional perspective.”

Singletary says writing a tour is similar to composing an essay. She considers how she will interact with her environment as well as address the needs and questions of visitors. Tours are kept between 30 minutes to an hour. Singletary follows a research outline and follows general trends and themes as guidelines.

At The Grove Museum, this means talking about the women who lived and worked in the house in relation to larger socio-political and historical movements such as the Slave Emancipation Act and the Civil Rights Movement. Singletary accesses Florida Memory, a State of Florida archive, as well as other resources to support her research. As far as inspiration goes, she looks up to women like Rosa Parks and Anne Bra-

## If You Go

**What:** Handmade History: Women in the Arts

**When:** 5:30-7:30 p.m. Wednesday

**Where:** The Grove Museum, 902 N. Monroe St.

**Cost:** \$5, geared towards ages 18+, includes supplies and refreshments

**Contact:** For more information please call 850-756-0246 or visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/handmade-history-at-the-grove-museum-women-in-the-arts-tickets-75152610481>.

den for their hard work and activism.

“I am consistently inspired by the women who did the background work to sustain the civil rights movement and didn’t get the credit or are just now being credited for what they did,” says Singletary.

This movement was the focus of the first Handmade History event. Themes have also included women in science and Southern womanhood with crafts relating to the conversation. Participants have assembled collages, painted rocks and learned to cross-stitch while building an inclusive community to discuss a wide range of topics.

For the women in the arts event, Singletary says the museum will provide canvases and various media in exchange for the \$5 ticket fee. She is especially looking forward to the invited facilitators and the directions the conversation could move in given women’s historical relationships to the field of arts and crafts.

Singletary is always happy to see participants lingering long after the program ends, chatting with one another and embracing. In the end, Singletary says it’s most important that the women in attendance feel seen and heard.

“Women are not a monolith, I am never talking about one group of people,” says Singletary. “There are so many different types of women in the world, and I want to discuss different perspectives. I want to be able to connect with women in my community and have them know that I want to work with them and support them so we can make the world a better place together.”

*Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area’s umbrella agency for arts and culture ([www.tallahasseearts.org](http://www.tallahasseearts.org)).*