

# STANDING, STILL

University of Washington Museology Graduate Program  
2021 Master's Thesis Project  
By Danielle New & Hanna Corneliusen

A contemporary art exhibition promoting  
empathetic connections around the COVID-19  
pandemic

July 3rd - October 10th, 2021  
at  
The Museum of Northwest Art

## Framing

### Problem

**Empathy Deficit**  
48% decline in empathy  
among Americans in the last  
four decades (Konrath et al, 2011)  
+  
**COVID-19 Pandemic**

### Approach

**Storytelling**  
A tool for eliciting  
empathy in museums

## Purpose & Impact

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to create a storytelling exhibition where contemporary art museum visitors will form empathetic connections around the topic of COVID-19

**Outcomes:** Visitors form meaningful empathetic connections to promote mutual understanding

**Audience:** Contemporary art museum visitors at the Museum of Northwest Art (MoNA) in La Conner, WA

## References

Konrath S.H., O'Brien E.H., & Hsing, C. (2011). Changes in dispositional empathy in American college students over time: A meta-analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 15(2), 180-198. doi:10.1177/1088868310377395

Poster template courtesy of the Canva Design Website

## Deliverable

1 contemporary art exhibition, podcast series,  
collage-making workshop, & exhibit pamphlet

**Exhibit Theme:** "Standing, Still" aims to capture both the societal **standstill** caused by the pandemic and the resiliency of communities, who have emerged **still standing** after their experiences

### Exhibit Content:

- Artwork - 14 works from 11 artists, most living in the Pacific Northwest
- Pandemic Stories - 10 artist interviews fuel the exhibit label text and will be published as part of the MoNA Moments podcast
- Programming - A virtual collage-making workshop and exhibit pamphlet featuring additional information and interactive activities



"Standing, Still" design rendering by Olivia Oomen

## Process

- **Development Phase (Jan. - Oct. 2020)** - Preliminary Research, Budget, Scholarship Award, Goals & Exhibition Themes, Exhibit Proposal
- **Preparation Phase (Nov. 2020 - April 2021)** - Artist Selection & Recruitment, Tour Gallery Space, Artist Interviews
- **Design Phase (April 2021 - June 2021)** - Exhibit Design, Program Design, Label Design
- **Production Phase (April 2021 - May 2021)** - Thesis Deliverables, Label Production, Programming Development, Exhibit Brief
- **Implementation Phase (June 2021 - Oct. 2021)** - Installation, Exhibit Opening, Program Facilitation, De-installation

## Reflections

**Goal:** To elicit empathy in visitors through art and storytelling

**Next Steps:** Formal evaluation of visitors' change in empathetic feelings is recommended to measure project success

**Implications:** "Standing, Still" exemplifies the role museums can play in fostering empathy through storytelling

## Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Wilson O'Donnell, Regan Pro, Ellie Cross, Kim Simon, Maggie Paul, Olivia Oomen, Rosa Lasley, Angie Ong, UW Museology Graduate Program Faculty & Cohort, Sara Corneliusen, Michelle New, Barry Johnson, Blair Goldstein, Burke Smithers, Dawn Laurant, Jody Joldersma, Lisa Sheets, Lorena Krause, Lynn Whitford, Miggie Wong, Ries Niemi, Monee Chau, & the Museum of Northwest Art