

Katharine Lee Reid
Doctor of Fine Arts

Katharine Lee Reid has had a 40-year career as an art museum curator, administrator and director. At a time when few women held leadership positions in large museums, Reid served as assistant and later deputy director of the Art Institute of Chicago (1982–1991), director of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (1991–2000) and director of the Cleveland Museum of Art (2000–2005). She transformed each of these institutions by balancing scholarly concerns with community and audience interests. Reid focused on eliminating barriers that people of all kinds felt about their experiences in art museums by means of well-written labels, meaningful gallery installations, guided and audio tours, computer access and major architectural revisions. She has been especially effective in reaching underserved audiences. The key to her success is her ability to understand how audiences respond to, enjoy and learn from works of art. Through her positions with the Association of Art Museum Directors, she has been a thoughtful leader in policy development, in promoting goals of diversity, and in responding to changing norms that influence and inform museum practice. She has guided the practices of museums with respect to the ethical collecting of archaeological materials, leading to a presidential appointment to the U.S. Department of State’s Cultural Property Advisory Committee. Her goal in this work is to develop a more flexible attitude in the art museum world toward the cultural treasures of other countries by focusing on exhibition rather than possession. In her work with The Getty Trust Museum Leadership Institute, she participated in developing and mentoring hundreds of senior museum professionals, and as a member of the Accreditation Commission of the American Association of Museums, she has encouraged best practices in a full range of museum activities. Today, Reid continues to be a generous and wise mentor, serving on the national advisory board of the Ackland Art Museum, the visiting committee for the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center at Vassar, and the board of advisors for the Nasher Art Museum at Duke University. Reid’s honors include an honorary degree from Knox College and membership in the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres de la Republique Française.

For outstanding accomplishment as a curator and advocate of the fine arts, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is pleased to confer on Katharine Lee Reid the degree of Doctor of Fine Arts *honoris causa*.