

Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art
Bentonville, Arkansas
crystalbridges.org

CHIEF CURATOR



OVERVIEW

Dream. Discover. Do. Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art seeks a Chief Curator to lead the Curatorial and Collections Management departments toward accomplishing the Museum’s mission of “welcoming all to celebrate the American spirit in a setting that unites the power of art with the beauty of nature.” The Chief Curator will report to the Executive Director to help shape and implement the Museum’s curatorial objectives. The Chief Curator will collaborate with the Director of the new Momentary under development, and with the Director of Curatorial Affairs who will be leading two major Museum art initiatives. The Chief Curator will be encouraged to champion fresh thinking and approaches to art and to seize opportunities to be creative, experimental and innovative.

The Chief Curator must be a flexible leader and self-propelled manager with a collaborative spirit. They will be adventurous and entrepreneurial, and be comfortable working within a non-traditional organizational structure that values cross-departmental collaboration, teamwork, and seeking new ideas from unconventional sources. The Chief Curator will be committed to exploring the evolving relationships between art museums and their audiences with an emphasis on art experiences in service to visitors. Primary responsibilities include oversight of department administration and budget; inspiring and mentoring the staff teams; as well as collection growth, research and care; developing an exciting exhibition program in collaboration with the Director of Curatorial Affairs and the Director of Exhibitions & Interpretation; and donor development and stewardship. The Chief Curator can also create his/her own curatorial projects as time permits.

The Chief Curator serves as a member of the senior management team under the leadership of Executive Director Rod Bigelow, who envisions Crystal Bridges as a national model for leading-edge museum experiences. At six years old, Crystal Bridges is in many ways a start-up institution poised for significant advancement in its next phase of development. The extraordinary vision and support from the Museum's founder, Alice Walton, and the Walton Family Foundation, has positioned Crystal Bridges to have significant cultural impact in the region, nationally, and globally. The Chief Curator will play a pivotal role in bringing out-of-the-box thinking and curatorial leadership in support of the Museum's goals, and new initiatives yet to be imagined.



ABOUT THE MUSEUM

Opened to the public on November 11, 2011, Crystal Bridges was founded in 2005 by the Walton Family Foundation. Since opening, the Museum has welcomed 3.4 million visitors and garnered 14,000 households in its membership. More than 150,000 schoolchildren have taken part in the Museum's Willard and Pat Walker School Visit program. The Museum has a staff of 250 and an annual budget of \$28 million.

The Museum takes its name from a nearby natural spring and the bridge construction incorporated in the building. Designed by world-renowned architect Moshe Safdie, the 201,000 square foot complex comprises a series of pavilions that house galleries nestled around two spring-fed ponds, and includes meeting and classroom spaces and a large, glass-enclosed gathering hall. Sculpture and walking/bike trails link the Museum's 120-acre park to downtown Bentonville, Arkansas. The Museum is rapidly building an internationally recognized collection of American art, featuring both historical and contemporary masterpieces.

In spring of 2017 Crystal Bridges Museum announced the creation of an innovative contemporary arts venue now under development in downtown Bentonville. Newly named the Momentary, it is an adaptive reuse project that will transform a decommissioned Kraft Foods plant south of Crystal Bridges into a multi-disciplinary space for visual and performing arts and an artist-in-residence program. The Momentary will open in 2020 under a dynamic new director recruited from Europe.



COLLECTION AND EXHIBITIONS

Crystal Bridges' collection spans five centuries of American art from the 17th century to today and is comprised of 2,500 paintings, works on paper, sculpture, photography, and new media. It includes art by Gilbert Stuart, John Singleton Copley, Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, Winslow Homer, Thomas Eakins, Mary Cassatt, James McNeil Whistler, John Singer Sargent, Robert Henri, George Bellows, Stuart Davis, Edward Curtis, Marsden Hartley, Georgia O'Keeffe, Jacob Lawrence, Alfredo Ramos-Martinez, Norman Rockwell, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Joan Mitchell, Donald Judd, Marisol, Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol, Fritz Scholder, Romare Bearden, Louise Bourgeois, Faith Ringgold, Ruth Asawa, Mark Di Suvero, Emmi Whitehorse, Kerry James Marshall, and Carrie Mae Weems. The Museum also embraces architecture in its collections including the Bachman-Wilson House, a 1956 Frank Lloyd Wright Usonian home, and Buckminster Fuller's Fly's Eye Dome. The collection, which is available online at www.crystalbridges.org, continues to grow today thanks to an acquisition endowment with an emphasis on fulfilling the Museum's mission of welcoming all.

The Museum presents a varied temporary exhibition program that responds to and expands the collection reach to broad audiences. To accomplish this, Crystal Bridges organizes and partners with other institutions to present thematic explorations ranging from Mexican-American border issues and the American road trip to monographic presentations of such well-known artists as Norman Rockwell and Dale Chihuly.

POSITION RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE:

- Contribute to the creation, management, and strategic direction of the Curatorial and Collections Management departments, ensuring alignment with the strategic plan and other key departments of the institution.
- Serve on the senior management team.
- With an entrepreneurial mindset, partner with leadership of the Momentary, Art Bridges, and other art initiatives to activate curatorial engagement.

- Oversee collection growth, research and care; develop an exciting collection exhibition program in collaboration with the Director of Exhibitions & Interpretation and the Director of Curatorial Affairs.
- Galvanize the Curatorial team in conjunction with the Exhibitions & Interpretation and Education teams to create innovative temporary exhibition content and exhibition programming.
- Collaborate in the development of installation and interpretation plans for the Museum's collections and exhibitions.
- Identify, recruit, hire, train, manage, mentor, inspire and evaluate staff members to achieve the goals of the department and Museum.
- Oversee the Collection Management team in their work to identify, implement, and monitor best available standards of care and protection for both the permanent collection and borrowed art works.
- Provide collection-plan strategies, evaluating and proposing acquisitions and gifts, and overseeing the acquisition process.
- Collaborate with Museum Advancement to identify and secure works of art as well as funding for the permanent collection, exhibitions, publications and other programs through donor cultivation.
- In partnership with Education provide direction on plans for the Museum's programmatic development as it relates to the permanent collection.
- Plan, develop, implement, and manage approved budgets, and allocation of resources for the department.
- Actively participate in guest assessment to ensure community engagement.
- Participate in the production of publications on the permanent collection and temporary exhibitions. Conduct research and write exhibition labels, didactics, and catalogues as well as contributing articles to scholarly and popular journals when appropriate and as time permits.
- Ensure the Museum has a lively and productive relationship with peer professionals and institutions locally, regionally and nationally.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

Education, Training, and Traits:

- Minimum: Master's degree in art history or related field.
- Applied knowledge of professional museum principles, practices and procedures.
- Knowledge of research tools and methodology.
- Self-directed and motivated.
- Collaborative by nature.
- Flexible and helpful.
- Thrives in a fast-paced environment.
- Thrives in a start-up atmosphere, one of continual growth and rapid change.
- Entrepreneurial, creative risk-taker, out-of-the-box thinker.
- Non-hierarchical style of leadership.

Work Experience:

- Minimum of 4 years management-level museum or comparable experience required.
- Minimum of 5 years applied curatorial experience.
- Demonstrated experience managing substantial department, project and/or program budgets.
- Other experience that demonstrates ability to lead and achieve within nontraditional structures, creative enterprises and cultural initiatives.

Skills and Abilities:

- Excellent written, verbal, and listening communication skills and a demonstrated ability to communicate clearly and professionally.
- Strong staff management and mentoring skills.
- Demonstrated organizational planning, problem-solving and collaboration skills.
- Effective interpersonal skills, tactful, and diplomatic.

- Evidences a style of trust and respect, support rather than control, and team over self.
- Ability to interpret the collection and to communicate knowledge about it in a manner that is relevant to the general public.
- Ability to perform and oversee scholarly research in the field.
- Highly developed public speaking skills.
- Self-directed, able to work independently and effectively.
- Understands and maintains highest ethical standards related to organizational responsibilities and public accountability.
- Ability to create and successfully manage an annual budget.
- Proficient computer skills in MS Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Database and additional software knowledge preferred.

ABOUT BENTONVILLE AND THE REGION

Bentonville is the headquarters of Walmart, the world's largest retailer and the world's largest corporation on the Fortune 500 list. The Walton family, through its Walton Family Foundation, continues to make significant cultural investments in the city and region and, as part of its mission, is helping Northwest Arkansas become known as a place focused on high quality of life for all. Bentonville has developed dramatically in recent years, and today, a lively downtown supports restaurants, breweries, shops, entertainment venues, and the Amazeum, an interactive children's museum.



Bentonville is located within the Ozark Mountain region and has a wealth of outdoor-recreation opportunities. Over the past decade, the community has developed some of the best bike-trail infrastructure in the central United States, with almost 100 miles of soft-surface bike trails, with many accessible from the city and the Museum. In 2016 *Outside Online* named Bentonville one of the top 25 “best burgs on the planet.” Interstate 49 provides convenient access to nearby Ozark National Forest and to other cities. Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport is nearby and offers daily, nonstop flights to major cities nationally.

The city and region offer a wide range of cultural amenities including music, theatre, ballet and opera. The 1,200 seat Walton Arts Center in Fayetteville, 30 miles away, is the largest performing arts center in Arkansas and is home to Symphony Northwest Arkansas, TheatreSquared, Trike Youth Theatre, and the Community Creative Center, providing art studios for adults and youth. Walmart AMP (Arkansas Music Performance) is a 7,000-seat outdoor venue featuring popular contemporary music and other performances in Rogers, 9 miles away. Faulkner Performing Arts Center at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville is a 587-seat music venue; and the Arends Arts Center in Bentonville is a multi-use facility that is home to the Northwest Arkansas Ballet Theatre and host to opera and other performances. The Bentonville Film Festival occurs every May.



In addition to Bentonville, nearby options for living include Rogers, Lowell, Springdale and Fayetteville, home to the University of Arkansas, which saw record enrollment in 2017 with 27,500 students. The University is one of the top ten fastest-growing public universities in the nation. There are five other private colleges and universities within 20 miles of Bentonville. In August 2017, the Walton Family Charitable Support Foundation established the School of Art through a \$120 million gift to establish and support a school of art. This gift creates the first and only accredited, collegiate school of art in the state of Arkansas, and will propel art education and research in the state forward while also providing unparalleled access and opportunity to students. The long-term goal is to help position the School of Art as a center of excellence in art education, art history, graphic design and studio art curriculum. Core to this initiative is strengthening the relationship between the Museum and the University of Arkansas.

Nominations and Applications are Welcome

This is a highly attractive opportunity to work in a senior position at a renowned and rapidly transforming AAMD-member museum that has ambitions to be one of the world’s great art destinations. Nominations and applications are welcome in strict confidence by contacting Dan Keegan or Marilyn Hoffman at searchandref@museum-search.com.

How to Apply

All applications and nominations are kept confidential. Email cover letter and résumé (Word documents preferred), salary requirement, and names of 3 references with contact information by February 1, 2018 to: Dan Keegan and Marilyn Hoffman, Museum Search and Reference, searchandref@museum-search.com. EOE. References will not be contacted without prior permission of the applicant.

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