the Columbia Museum of ART

Title: Director of Curatorial Affairs and Chief Curator

Reports to: Executive Director

About the Columbia Museum of Art
The Columbia Museum of Art (CMA), located in the heart of South Carolina's capital city, is a leading cultural institution dedicated to welcoming all people to experience and engage with art. Since 1950, the CMA has built a collection of more than 7,000 works spanning American, Asian, European, and modern and contemporary art. Through exhibitions, collections, learning and engagement, and partnerships, the museum serves its community while contributing to the cultural life of the region.

The CMA is entering an important period of institutional growth and opportunity. Philanthropy, community partnership, and sustainable revenue development are central to the museum's ability to advance its mission and build for the future.

Position Overview: The Director of Curatorial Affairs and Chief Curator is the Columbia Museum of Art's senior curatorial leader and a key member of the Museum Leadership Team. Reporting directly to the Executive Director, the position provides vision, strategic direction, scholarship, and administrative leadership for the museum's curatorial program and works in close partnership with the Executive Director to shape the artistic and intellectual direction of the CMA. The Director leads an ambitious and forward-looking program of exhibitions, permanent collection installations, acquisitions, commissions, loans, research, publications, and interpretation. The position ensures that the museum's artistic program advances the CMA's mission, strategic priorities, and commitment to access, inclusion, multiple perspectives, and meaningful engagement with broad audiences.

Position Responsibilities: This is both a senior leadership and practicing curatorial role. The Director is expected to maintain an active program of research, scholarship, acquisitions, exhibition development, writing, lecturing, and curatorial work while providing strong leadership and mentorship to the curatorial team. The position currently also oversees collections management and art operations. These responsibilities are presented as a distinct section to clearly define this portfolio within the museum's current organizational structure.

Strategic and Institutional Leadership

- Serve as a member of the Museum Leadership Team, contributing to institutional strategy, multiyear and annual planning, budgeting, policy development, and assessment.
- Establish and implement a cohesive curatorial vision that advances the CMA's mission and strengthens its local, regional, national, and international relevance.

- Provide informed recommendations on exhibitions, acquisitions, deaccessions, collection priorities, scholarship, partnerships, and other matters affecting the museum's artistic program.
- Establish departmental priorities, goals, work plans, and performance measures while fostering a culture of excellence, collaboration, accountability, intellectual curiosity, and creativity.
- Contribute curatorial expertise to museum policies, accreditation, professional ethics, risk management, and institutional best practices.
- Attend Board of Trustees and Executive Committee meetings when invited and provide presentations, reports, and recommendations as requested by the Executive Director.

Curatorial Vision, Exhibitions, and Interpretation

- Lead the development and implementation of an ambitious multiyear exhibition calendar encompassing CMA-organized and traveling exhibitions, permanent collection installations and rotations, artist projects and commissions, and significant loans.
- Develop a balanced exhibition portfolio that reflects the breadth of the CMA's collections and mission while introducing compelling artists, ideas, cultures, histories, and perspectives.
- Oversee the research, development, scheduling, budgeting, contracting, interpretation, installation, and evaluation of exhibitions and related curatorial projects.
- Originate, research, and curate or co-curate exhibitions and permanent collection presentations, maintaining an active scholarly and curatorial practice.
- Cultivate original CMA projects and collaborations with artists, guest curators, scholars, lenders, museums, universities, and other partners, including opportunities for traveling exhibitions, publications, lectures, symposia, and broader scholarly engagement.
- Ensure rigorous and accessible interpretation across exhibitions and collection galleries, including gallery texts, labels, publications, programs, and digital content.
- Work in tandem with Learning & Engagement from the earliest stages of exhibition and program development to integrate scholarship, interpretation, educational objectives, public programming, and visitor experience.
- Collaborate with Communications and other departments to develop accurate and engaging public storytelling around exhibitions, artists, research, and the collection.

Collection Assessment, Development, and Scholarship

- Lead a comprehensive assessment of the CMA's permanent collection, evaluating its strengths, gaps, significance, condition, use, representation, research needs, and opportunities for strategic growth.
- Using the assessment as a foundation, develop and periodically update a detailed multiyear collection development plan in partnership with the Executive Director, staff, and appropriate committees.
- Serve as the museum's senior curatorial authority for collection development, recommending acquisitions, gifts, commissions, deaccessions, conservation priorities, provenance research, and areas for further scholarship.

- Establish acquisition priorities and recommend strategic use of the CMA's multimillion-dollar acquisitions endowment to advance the collection plan, institutional mission, and long-term stewardship responsibilities.
- Lead and encourage scholarship that deepens understanding of the collection, its artists, histories, provenance, and cultural contexts, while maintaining high scholarly standards across exhibitions, publications, interpretation, and digital content.
- Ensure that acquisitions and deaccessions receive appropriate curatorial, provenance, legal, ethical, financial, and collections review.
- Cultivate relationships with collectors and prospective donors of works of art whose interests may advance the museum's collection priorities.

Curatorial Department Leadership and Staff Management

- Lead and administer Curatorial Affairs, providing vision, mentorship, management, professional development, and accountability for departmental staff.
- Current direct reports include the Senior Registrar, Curator(s), Senior Preparator, Senior Collections Manager, and Curatorial Assistant, as reflected in the museum's current organizational structure.
- Establish performance expectations, delegate projects effectively, evaluate and coach staff, and support professional and scholarly growth.
- Guide curators in exhibitions, collection research, acquisitions, publications, donor relationships, and the development of scholarly expertise.
- Plan departmental staffing and resources with the Executive Director and oversee or participate in recruitment, onboarding, performance management, and the coordination of guest curators, interns, fellows, consultants, and other contributors.
- Foster strong cross-departmental collaboration, particularly with Learning & Engagement, Development, Communications, Finance, Visitor Experience, and Operations.

Collections Management and Art Operations

- Provide executive oversight for registration, preparation, collection care, art handling, storage, conservation coordination, loans, exhibition logistics, installation and deinstallation, and related art operations.
- Supervise the Head Registrar, Senior Preparator, and Senior Collections Manager and ensure effective coordination among registration, preparation, curatorial, conservation, facilities, security, and exhibition teams.
- Ensure collections and loan activities meet professional standards, museum policies, lender and insurance requirements, legal and ethical obligations, and accepted standards of care.
- Establish priorities with appropriate staff for preventive conservation, treatment, storage, environmental monitoring, emergency preparedness, and long-term preservation.
- Ensure exhibition and collection projects are appropriately scoped, scheduled, budgeted, staffed, and coordinated to protect works of art and support high-quality presentation.

- Contribute to capital and facility planning affecting galleries, collection storage, art movement, environmental conditions, security, and collections stewardship.

Collections Committee and Governance

- Serve as a member of the Collections Committee and principal senior curatorial staff liaison, attending all committee meetings and ensuring timely follow-up.
- Work with the Executive Director and committee leadership to develop agendas, recommendations, documentation, policy updates, and strategic collection discussions.
- Present proposed acquisitions, deaccessions, conservation priorities, collection plans, and other matters requiring committee consideration, and support periodic review of the collections management policy and related policies.

Fundraising, Donor, and Collector Engagement

- Partner with the Executive Director and Director of Advancement to cultivate support for exhibitions, acquisitions, publications, conservation, collection initiatives, endowed funds, and other curatorial priorities.
- Build and steward relationships with collectors, donors and prospective donors of art, foundations, sponsors, and other supporters aligned with the museum's priorities.
- Participate in donor and collection visits, cultivation and stewardship activities, presentations, proposals, grant development, and appropriate travel.
- Provide compelling curatorial content, project narratives, budgets, and impact information for grants, sponsorships, donor communications, and other fundraising initiatives.

External Relations and Institutional Profile

- In tandem with the Executive Director, serve as a visible ambassador for the CMA and strengthen the museum's profile within local, regional, national, and international arts communities.
- Build relationships with artists, scholars, curators, museums, universities, galleries, dealers, collectors, foundations, cultural organizations, community partners, and other leaders in the field.
- Represent the CMA through lectures, panels, conferences, media opportunities, professional associations, studio and collection visits, and other appropriate activities.
- Develop strategic partnerships that expand scholarship, audience engagement, exhibitions, loans, research, and institutional reach, while remaining current with developments in art scholarship and museum practice.

Budget and Administrative Responsibilities

- Develop and manage Curatorial Affairs operating and project budgets in coordination with the Executive Director and Finance, ensuring responsible stewardship of museum resources.
- Develop multiyear exhibition and collection forecasts and identify significant future resource requirements.

- Oversee exhibition budgets, curatorial contracts and agreements, project schedules, expenditures, forecasts, and deliverables, communicating material changes or risks promptly.
- Ensure departmental records, contracts, reports, and institutional documentation are accurate and maintained according to museum policies.

Minimum Qualifications

- Master's degree in art history or a closely related field required; PhD preferred.
- Minimum of eight years of progressively responsible curatorial experience in an art museum or comparable institution, including at least three years of supervisory and departmental leadership responsibility.
- Demonstrated expertise in at least one of the CMA's principal collecting areas — American, Asian, European, or Modern and Contemporary art — together with broad knowledge and intellectual curiosity across periods, cultures, and media.
- Distinguished record of conceiving, researching, organizing, and implementing exhibitions and collection installations, with evidence of original scholarship.
- Demonstrated knowledge of collection development, acquisitions, deaccessions, provenance research, conservation, collections stewardship, exhibition development, and current museum practices.
- Demonstrated success leading and developing teams and cultivating relationships with donors, collectors, artists, scholars, trustees, museum colleagues, and institutional partners.
- Experience supporting grants, fundraising, acquisition funding, or other external support for curatorial and collection priorities.
- Excellent written, verbal, interpersonal, presentation, organizational, and project-management skills.

Leadership Competencies and Professional Expectations

- Strategic and imaginative thinker able to translate curatorial vision into achievable multiyear plans.
- Accomplished scholar and communicator able to make complex ideas meaningful and engaging for broad audiences.
- Collaborative leader who values partnership, transparency, respectful dialogue, accountability, and shared institutional success.
- Commitment to access, inclusion, multiple perspectives, and meaningful museum experiences for the diverse communities of Greater Columbia, South Carolina, and beyond.
- Sound judgment and discretion, with the ability to balance long-range strategy, multiple projects, changing priorities, and operational responsibilities.
- Commitment to the highest standards of professional ethics, scholarship, collections stewardship, and museum practice.

Work Requirements

- Regular evening and weekend work in connection with exhibitions, installations, programs, donor events, and other museum activities.
- Occasional regional, national, and international travel for research, courier responsibilities, donor and collector visits, conferences, exhibitions, and institutional partnerships.
- Ability to work in galleries, collection storage, installation environments, and office settings and to participate appropriately in activities involving works of art and exhibition installations.
- Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable qualified individuals to perform the essential functions of the position.
- This position requires a criminal background check.

Job Type: Fulltime, 40 hours per week, exempt with supervisory experience.

Skills and Abilities: Be a positive employee and advocate for the museum, interacting courteously and respectfully with others, internally and externally. Should have passion for the job and the museum and is creative, innovative, agile, and flexible. A highly motivated team player who is enthusiastic and proactive, and who thrives in a fast-paced environment. Possesses a strong sense of urgency, priority, and follow-through. Can work independently, anticipate needs, and manage multiple tasks and assignments simultaneously. Ability to work collegially with other staff and partner across divisions to achieve common objectives. Discretion and sound judgment are required. Maintains the highest professional and ethical standards.

Compensation and Benefits: The salary range for this position is **$115,000–$135,000 annually**. Final compensation will be based on relevant experience, demonstrated fundraising success, qualifications, and other appropriate considerations. Benefits include Health, dental, life, and life and long-term disability plans, state retirement, paid PTO, holidays, and sick leave, and parking provided.

Application Process: The Columbia Museum of Art is an Equal Opportunity Employer, committed to diversity, accessibility, equity, and inclusion. Confidential inquiries, applications, and recommendations are welcome.

Please email cover letter and resume to **joinourteam@columbiamuseum.org** with “Director of Curatorial Affairs and Chief Curator” in the subject line.