



**Search for the Director, The Institute of Contemporary Art
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

THE SEARCH

The Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania (ICA) seeks an innovative, collaborative, and visionary leader to serve as its next Daniel W. Dietrich, II Director.

The ICA is a pioneering institution dedicated to the exploration and presentation of contemporary art and ideas. Established in 1964, ICA has carved out a unique niche within the Philadelphia arts ecosystem, serving as a launchpad for innovative artistic expression and cultural dialogue. ICA develops and presents exhibitions, commissions, events, publications, and special projects that champion new, experimental, and underrecognized artists and ideas. The institution is committed to fostering an inclusive environment that encourages collaboration and deep engagement with diverse communities.

ICA's mission centers on creating transformative experiences through art, where audiences are invited to connect with artists and their work in meaningful ways. By prioritizing risk-taking and supporting cross-disciplinary projects, ICA empowers artists to challenge conventional boundaries and explore new forms of expression. This commitment to bold programming not only enriches the local arts scene but also contributes to broader conversations about social justice, identity, and community resilience.

As a vital resource for students, faculty, and residents alike, ICA serves as a space for rigorous research, convening discussions, and collaborative initiatives. The institution actively engages with the University of Pennsylvania and other organizations to build vibrant, creative ecosystems that extend beyond its walls.

THE ICA TODAY

The Institute of Contemporary Art believes in the power of art and artists to inform and inspire. The ICA is free for all to engage and connect with the art of our time.

Guided by core values of *Collaboration*, *Experimentation*, and *Learning*, ICA creates transformative experiences with art and ideas, encouraging experimentation, deep connection, and boundless curiosity with artists and audiences.

- **Collaboration** drives the belief that partnerships create resilient, thriving communities. ICA works with artists and organizations to build inclusive, vibrant, creative ecosystems on campus, throughout Philadelphia, and beyond.
- **Experimentation** encourages risk-taking to spark cultural transformation, supporting artists in creating cross-disciplinary projects that challenge expectations and disrupt conventions.
- **Learning** underscores ICA's evolving community of practice, producing vital scholarship and bold programming that inspires dialogue across disciplines, ages, backgrounds, and abilities—fostering collective growth and cultural advancement.

Since 1963, ICA has championed the University's commitment to cultivating the next generation of imaginative creators and thinkers. Through commissions, exhibitions, programs, publications, and special projects, ICA fosters bold experimentation, curiosity, and discovery. ICA's evolving community of practice is committed to producing vital scholarship and innovative programming that engages a broad and inclusive public as an audience in the ongoing dialogue about contemporary culture. The ICA is focused on further expanding its impact by reaching and engaging individuals from all backgrounds to explore the possibilities of art and ideas.

The ICA has an operating budget of \$5.9M, 54 staff (24FT and 30PT), a 25-seat international Board of Advisors, and a 38,000-square-foot building with approximately 10,000 square feet of gallery space. The ICA annually presents three to five exhibitions, including a major installation on the façade and 50–75 public programs, attracting 30,000 visitors in person and approximately 250,000 online. Learn more about the ICA [here](#).

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

The University of Pennsylvania traces its origins to 1740 when a trust was formed to establish the Charity School of Philadelphia. Later, in 1749, Benjamin Franklin presented his vision for a new type of learning institution that, unlike other American Colonial colleges, would not focus on education for the clergy but would instead prepare students for lives of business and public service. The proposed program of study would become the nation's first modern, non-sectarian liberal arts curriculum.

More than 260 years later, Penn continues to blaze trails in education and is a leader in the arts and humanities, the social sciences, architecture, business, law, medicine, communications, and education, among other disciplines. Penn is also home to a dynamic and thriving arts community that enriches the academic and cultural fabric of the institution. Iconic cultural centers like the Penn Museum, Penn Live Arts, the Platt Student Performing Arts House, and the Arthur Ross Gallery join the ICA in offering opportunities for creative exploration and engagement. The university's new strategic framework, [*In Principle and Practice*](#), emphasizes its mission to be inventive, engaged, interdisciplinary, anchored in Philadelphia, and building creative partnerships around the world.

Penn's deep commitment to the arts is further exemplified by the recent appointment of Timothy Rommen as [*the inaugural Vice Provost for the Arts*](#). In partnership with ICA's Director and other arts leaders across campus and Philadelphia, the Vice Provost will ensure that students, faculty, and the broader community have access to world-class venues, performances, and exhibitions, fostering an environment where creativity and innovation flourish.

WEST PHILADELPHIA

The ICA is in the bustling heart of West Philadelphia, a vibrant community renowned for its rich cultural tapestry and historic significance. This area is a melting pot of traditions, reflecting the voices and contributions of a wide array of communities. It is home to a thriving arts scene, including live music and theater, as well as cultural festivals that celebrate the diverse cultural backgrounds of its residents. Situated within University City, the academic epicenter of the region, West Philadelphia also boasts a wealth of cultural institutions, independent bookstores, local galleries, and performance spaces that contribute to its compelling energy and character. The neighborhood's magnetic individuality is fueled by youthful innovation, a steadfast commitment to artistic and cultural exploration, and a vibrant exchange of ideas that bridges its academic and residential communities.

THE DIRECTOR POSITION

The next Director of the ICA will step into a regionally, nationally, and internationally relevant institution at the forefront of contemporary art. They will have the extraordinary opportunity to shape the ICA's future – and, with success, the future of the city and the field – driving its mission as a bold hub for experimentation, groundbreaking ideas, intellectual rigor, and the cultivation and launch of visionary artists. In taking on the role, the Director will:

- Build upon and extend the ICA's reputation as an innovative, world-class, progressive cultural destination, both virtually and in person.
- Ensure a compelling program that defies art world homogeneity.

- As chief executive, manage effectively the day-to-day operations of the ICA. Commit to and support a caring and creative workplace environment, considering systems and infrastructure that will keep the ICA proactive, responsive, and sustainable.
- Leverage the assets, resources, and interdisciplinary expertise across the University to support curricular initiatives, research, and student engagement for the mutual benefit of the ICA, the greater university community, artists, and the field.
- Articulate the ICA's position in the Philadelphia art community and its mission in creating transformative experiences through art and ideas.
- Work effectively and strategically with ICA's Board of Advisors and the development team to expand fundraising and friend-raising; help recruit to the Board where appropriate; and cultivate new and deepen existing donor relationships to facilitate financial sustainability, ongoing excellence, and growth.
- Advance diversity, equity, accessibility, belonging, and inclusion efforts internally and externally. Foster a welcoming culture and ethos where staff want to work, guests want to visit, and the creative community will support.
- Initiate, support, and strengthen collaborative relationships within the ICA and across the University.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

- Personal integrity and intellectual independence. Compelling and passionate about art and ideas with an irrepressible sense of purpose and mission.
- Institutional experience in a leadership capacity, including a deep knowledge of emerging contemporary art, educational and outreach programs, artist development, and governance structures.
- Ability to provide vision and a clear strategic direction, building on predecessors' successes and defining, communicating, and executing clear priorities without succumbing to bureaucratic muddle.
- Proven financial acumen; ability to manage a seven-figure operating budget, physical plant, and dedicated team of employees.

- Demonstrated ambition and record of success in fundraising and broad audience engagement.
- Significant background and experience creating and managing curatorial programs, major scholarly exhibitions, and publications; an advanced degree in an appropriate academic discipline or equivalent knowledge and experience.
- Ability to work collaboratively with staff, students, and academic personnel in a university environment.
- Proven commitment to diversity, equity, accessibility, belonging, and inclusion, including the recruitment and retention of excellent and diverse collaborators, artists, workforce, and Board.
- Experience envisioning and executing high-impact collaborations, capitalizing on and contributing to Philadelphia's unique cultural ethos and dynamic.
- Exceptional oral and written communication skills, whether in the elevator or at the podium.

COMPENSATION

The salary for this position \$220,000 – \$280,000 and is commensurate with experience.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

The ICA has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this important recruitment. Please direct all inquiries, nominations, and applications electronically and in confidence to:

Sarah James, Ben Tobin, Quizayra Gonzalez
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-pennsylvania-institute-contemporary-art/director>

The University of Pennsylvania is an equal opportunity employer that is advancing inclusive excellence. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, age, protected veteran status, or other protected categories covered by the UC nondiscrimination policy.