



**Search for the Chief Curator, the Hammer Museum  
University of California, Los Angeles**

**THE SEARCH**

The Hammer is anchored by the transformative power of art and ideas to illuminate lives and contribute to a more just world. As an institution, it champions artists who challenge perceptions, spark imagination, and offer fresh perspectives on the world around us. Art not only provides aesthetic experiences but also offers profound insight into today's most urgent cultural, political, and social issues.

As a vibrant hub of intellectual and creative activity, the Hammer thrives on dynamic exhibitions and public programs—including lectures, symposia, film screenings, readings, and musical performances—that foster meaningful encounters with artistic expression. In partnership with the Director, the Chief Curator will have the opportunity to make a lasting impact on one of the most influential contemporary art institutions in the country.

The Hammer Museum seeks a visionary, dynamic, and artist-centered Chief Curator. The Chief Curator will lead the Hammer's artistic and curatorial direction—overseeing the stewardship of the collection, the exhibition program, and sustaining a culture rooted in artistic innovation, excellence, and exploration. Through exhibitions and collaborative initiatives, the Chief Curator will engage artists and audience and strengthen the museum's local, national, and international purpose and contribution.

The Hammer has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in identifying its next Chief Curator. Applications, nominations, and inquiries should be directed as outlined at the end of this description.

## THE HAMMER MUSEUM

As one of the three public arts institutions of the [School of the Arts and Architecture at UCLA](#), The Hammer Museum is dedicated to championing artists and artwork that provoke new ways of seeing, spark imagination, and inspire social change. Through its bold exhibitions and thought-provoking programs, the museum creates opportunities for meaningful engagement with the most urgent cultural, political, and social issues of our time.

Established in 1990 by Dr. Armand Hammer to house his collection of European and 19th-century art, the museum entered a pivotal partnership with UCLA in 1994. This collaboration broadened its scope to include the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts and stewardship of the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden. In 2018, the Hammer announced a \$180 million capital campaign to support an ambitious transformation plan for the museum's spaces. The funds have been used to expand exhibition and public areas, and to increase the museum's endowment. As a result of the campaign, the Hammer has significantly increased gallery space by adding 20,000 square feet of public space for programs, a works on paper study room, art storage, administrative offices, as well as the celebrated Alice Waters restaurant *Lulu*.

Situated in the heart of Los Angeles—one of the world's most vibrant and culturally diverse cities—the Hammer Museum plays a pivotal role in the region's creative ecosystem. Renowned for its commitment to free admission and inclusive programming, the Hammer serves as a dynamic platform for dialogue, experimentation, and community engagement. Among its most celebrated initiatives is [the \*Made in L.A.\* biennial](#), inaugurated in 2012 as the city's first exhibition of its kind. Now in its seventh iteration, the biennial highlights emerging and under-recognized artists working across a wide range of media, reflecting the city's distinctive, decentralized artistic landscape. Complementing this are the [Hammer Projects Series](#) and an ambitious slate of over 300 annual public programs—including lectures, symposia, film screenings, readings, and performances—that foster critical conversations and cultural exchange across disciplines such as art, politics, history, activism, the environment, music, and film.

The Hammer possesses world-class art holdings, including the growing Hammer Contemporary Collection, currently over 3,000 objects in all media, with a focus on works on paper and works by Southern California artists. Another ever-increasing collection is the UCLA Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, which has over 45,000 works on paper from the Renaissance to the present. The Hammer also has permanent collection galleries devoted to the Armand Hammer Collection and oversees the Murphy Sculpture Garden on the UCLA campus. The Hammer has 105 full-time staff and approximately 150 student employees, most of whom attend UCLA. The Hammer's staff is lean, highly capable, and indispensable to its mission.

Visit the [Hammer's website](#) to learn more.

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Zoë Ryan was appointed Director of the Hammer Museum in January 2025. Ryan previously served as the Daniel W. Dietrich II Director of the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania, where she led strategic initiatives that deepened community partnerships and championed experimental programming. Her leadership is marked by a dedication to collaboration, innovation, and equity—values she also advanced during her tenure at the Art Institute of Chicago as Chair and Curator of Architecture and Design. Ryan’s appointment signals a new chapter for the Hammer, building on its legacy as a dynamic force in contemporary art and civic dialogue.

The Board of Directors currently consists of 21 individuals with a spectrum of experience, including UCLA’s Chancellor and other senior administrators, as well as artists, collectors, and business and civic leaders. A national 37-member Board of Advisors supports the acquisition and collection-related affairs of the museum. The Hammer’s annual operating budget is approximately \$29M, and its endowment is approximately \$125M. A majority of the Hammer’s annual budget comes from fundraising, which is bolstered by generous major gifts, multi-level membership and donor groups, and institutional support. The remainder of the budget is funded by an endowment draw, an annual contribution from UCLA, an annual Gala, and various earned revenue sources.

In 1994, the Hammer signed a 99-year rent-free operating agreement with the Regents of the University of California to manage the museum. The museum pays its own operating expenses.

## THE CHIEF CURATOR POSITION

In partnership with the Museum's Director, the Chief Curator shapes and leads the creative and curatorial vision of the institution, overseeing the development of compelling exhibitions and the stewardship of the Hammer Contemporary Collection and UCLA’s Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden. As a key member of the senior leadership team, the Chief Curator's primary duties include the conceptualization, development, and direction of modern and contemporary in-house exhibitions; the determination of curatorial priorities; oversight of exhibition implementation; and selection and leadership of traveling and guest-curated exhibitions.

This position provides strategic leadership across the curatorial division – supervising the curatorial, exhibitions, publications, registration, and preparation staff in leading curatorial and collections initiatives in accordance with standard museum practice and the guidelines of the AAMD, AAMC, and AAM.

The Chief Curator is expected to engage actively with artists, scholars, donors, and the broader public, and participate in programs including lectures, symposia, and scholarly meetings. The Chief Curator also provides leadership to the Artist Council and Artist Residency program and oversees the Museum's Board of Advisors.

## THE TEAM

Reporting to the Hammer's Director, the Chief Curator will contribute to the museum-wide strategy and serve as a core member of the senior management team, ensuring the curatorial vision aligns with broader institutional goals. They will lead, mentor, and evaluate the curatorial department staff, fostering an environment of growth and development. The Chief Curator will set departmental goals, manage daily operations, and chair internal meetings to ensure the department runs smoothly. They will provide oversight to the Director of Exhibitions and Publications and the Director of Registration and Collections Management, ensuring that all areas are functioning cohesively. Collaboration with the Learning, Engagement, and Research department and the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts is key to supporting academic and community initiatives and fostering a deeper connection with the public. Additionally, the Chief Curator will participate in training for UCLA student educators and public-facing staff, helping to ensure that the museum's programs and exhibitions are communicated effectively to all audiences.

## CURATORIAL DIRECTION AND EXHIBITION MANAGEMENT

- Lead the development and execution of the Museum's curatorial vision in alignment with the Hammer's mission, institutional goals and museum standards.
- Develop and organize in-house and co-organized exhibitions, including working with artists, writing catalog texts, selecting works, and overseeing exhibition presentation.
- Determine exhibition traveling schedules and oversee institutional partnerships.
- Supervise exhibition budgets, contracts, loans, and other project logistics.
- Oversee guest curators and provide curatorial direction and feedback.
- Lead the production of exhibition catalogues, working closely with editors, writers, and designers.
- Coordinate conservation of artworks in exhibitions with outside conservators.
- Work cross-departmentally with internal teams to support and coordinate exhibitions.
- Review and approve exhibition materials, including grant content, marketing collateral, and interpretive texts.
- Maintain collaborative relationships with museums, collectors, and funders.

## COLLECTIONS STEWARDSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- Direct curatorial oversight of the Hammer Contemporary Collection and the Murphy Sculpture Garden.
- Lead acquisition strategy, evaluate gifts and purchases, and guide collections care and documentation.
- Liaise with collectors, dealers, donors, and university stakeholders to support collection growth.
- Develop and maintain collection policies in accordance with professional standards.
- Guide the work of art conservators on exhibition and collection pieces.
- Support public access to the collection through exhibitions, publications, and institutional partnerships.

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## INTERPRETATION AND COMMUNICATION

- Develop interpretive guidelines and establish implementation process in collaboration with key teams, including Learning, Engagement and Research, ensuring clarity and accessibility in all materials.
- Work closely with Communications to develop strategies that promote and communicate the curatorial program's vision and impact.

## FUNDRAISING

- Collaborate with the Development team to advance a vision and strategy for fundraising for curatorial and collections initiatives.
- Cultivate relationships with donors, collectors, patrons, and museum support groups to ensure long-term sustainability and visibility of the department.

## QUALIFICATIONS

- Master's degree in art history, curatorial studies, or a related field required; PhD or equivalent experience preferred.
- A deep understanding of and passion for the Hammer's mission and belief in art, ideas, creativity, and knowledge-building as a powerful engine for positive social change.
- Significant curatorial experience, including organizing major contemporary art exhibitions with scholarly rigor and public impact.
- Deep knowledge of contemporary art practices, histories, and discourses across diverse communities and global contexts.
- Experience supporting and fostering a variety of voices, perspectives and ideas through curatorial work that aligns with the mission of the Museum.
- Strong leadership skills with experience building, managing, and mentoring teams, and ability to support a dynamic and inclusive institutional culture.
- Proven ability to work collaboratively across departments and with external partners, artists, and communities.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including experience in public speaking, publishing, and grant writing.
- Ability to balance strategic vision with hands-on execution of exhibitions and programs.

- Familiarity with museum standards for collections care, acquisitions, and donor relations.
- Knowledge of and engagement with sustainability practices in exhibition-making is a plus.
- Enthusiasm for the Hammer Museum's mission and a demonstrated ability to support a dynamic, inclusive institutional culture.

## COMPENSATION

The posted salary for this position is \$180,000 - \$220,000 and is commensurate with experience.

## APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/hammer-museum/chief-curator>. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

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<https://policy.ucop.edu/doc/4000376/DiscHarassAffirmAction>