



Pritzker Director
Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

THE SEARCH

As the [Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago](#) (MCA) approaches its 60th anniversary in 2027, the institution seeks the next visionary Pritzker Director to partner with the Board in defining the institution's future ambitions and goals.

The MCA is one of the world's largest museums dedicated to contemporary art. Presenting and collecting contemporary art to cultivate new ways of seeing, igniting transformative experiences, and forging human connections, the MCA amplifies art as a call to action. The museum interweaves exhibitions, performances, collections, and educational programs to excite, challenge, and illuminate the visitor experiences and offers insight into the creative process.

Today, the MCA stands at a defining moment. The cultural landscape is shifting, audiences are evolving, and the role of museums is being reimagined. To meet this moment, the MCA seeks to build on its history of firsts to again innovate. Reporting to and working in close partnership with the Board of Trustees, the Pritzker Director leads a broad portfolio that includes but is not limited to artistic direction, community engagement, financial health, organizational culture, and local and global relevance. The Pritzker Director guides a talented team of 113 full-time and 18 part-time staff and oversees an operating budget of \$28M and endowment of approximately \$150M.

The MCA Chicago has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the recruitment of its next Pritzker Director. Please direct all applications, nominations, and inquiries to Isaacson, Miller as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART CHICAGO

In 1964, a group of collectors, art dealers, artists, art critics, and architects united with a shared belief that the city of Chicago deserved a contemporary art museum dedicated to exploring the new. Since its inception in 1967, the MCA's mission has been to exhibit experimental work in all media paired with ambitious public programs. In 1974, the MCA launched a permanent collection to expand its mission to preserve contemporary art for future generations that has since grown to include more than 2,500 works.

In 1996, a [building](#) designed by Berlin architect Josef Paul Kleihues opened on the summer solstice, welcoming 25,000+ visitors during a 24-hour public preview. In 2011, under the leadership of Pritzker Director Madeleine Grynsztejn and James W. Alsdorf Chief Curator Michael Darling, the MCA reimagined and restructured its approach to exhibitions, dedicating specific gallery spaces to thematic permanent collection shows, ascendant artist solo shows, and three new exhibition series: MCA DNA, Chicago Works, and MCA Chicago Plaza Project.

In celebration of the museum's 50th anniversary in 2017, the MCA completed an \$82 million fundraising campaign, leading to the redesign of the institution's free public spaces, including an innovative social engagement space, the Commons, and Marisol, its Michelin Guide-recognized restaurant.

Today, the MCA's [permanent collection](#) and temporary [exhibitions](#) span media and movements from the 1920s to the present and has proudly promoted the work and ideas of women artists. Through the Women Artists Initiative: a philanthropic commitment to further equity across gender lines and promote the work and ideas of women artists begun in 2020, 50 percent of the artworks acquired by the MCA have been created by women artists and women represent 54 percent of all artists shown across MCA exhibitions.

Performance and public programming are part of the MCA's DNA. Whether on stage, in the galleries, or across the museum's public spaces, the MCA's live arts programs connect audiences to today's most groundbreaking performance artists and spark dialogue about the boundaries between visual art and other media. The MCA's Learning Department creates diverse programs and experiences that bring students and families together to share creative experiences and explore contemporary art and culture.

As mentioned, the MCA will celebrate its 60th anniversary in 2027-2028 with a calendar of remarkable exhibitions, programs, and events that honor the museum's legacy and look toward its future. The museum's strengths—artistic risk taking, deep engagement with artists, and a commitment to meaningful public engagement—remain the foundation of the MCA and the springboard to its future.

To learn more about the history of the MCA, please visit: <https://mcachicago.org/about/history>.

ROLE OF THE PRITZKER DIRECTOR

The Pritzker Director serves as the MCA's chief contemporary art champion, strategist, fundraiser, and steward. They are responsible for advancing the MCA's mission, artistic excellence, and long-term financial and operational sustainability.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE PRITZKER DIRECTOR

The Pritzker Director will address the following interrelated opportunities and challenges:

Lead and execute a compelling vision aligned with the MCA's ongoing pursuit of experimentation

The Pritzker Director will build upon the institutional history and the goals of the MCA NEXT (2023-2027) strategic plan to lead an inclusive strategic planning process for the museum's next chapter. Engaging the staff, board, artists, and community, the Pritzker Director will develop programmatic and operational goals that are visionary, regularly communicated, and foster alignment across the organization. The Pritzker Director will also attend to the universal museum challenge of essential collection storage and care.

Strengthen and diversify the MCA's financial position

The Pritzker Director will bring financial acumen and experience with complex organizational budgets to actively manage daily operations and ensure a vital and healthy museum. Working closely with the Board and leadership team, the Pritzker Director will lead efforts to broaden and increase philanthropic investment, align contributed and earned revenue strategies to support institutional excellence, stimulate long-term growth, and promote strong fiscal governance. They will identify sustainable revenue sources to enhance institutional resources for programming, operations, and strategic capital projects that are aligned with the vision and scope of the museum. The Pritzker Director will also exercise budgetary discipline and prioritization to move the museum steadily towards annual balanced budgets, alongside numerous cultural peers navigating the pandemic's aftermath. The Pritzker Director will prioritize increasing the endowment to ensure long-term financial sustainability commensurate with growth.

Ensure a compelling artistic program that defies art world homogeneity

While actively maintaining the MCA's excellent international reputation, the Pritzker Director will remain deeply committed to cultivating relationships with artists across Chicago and beyond. Working with the Chief Curator, the Pritzker Director will strike a programmatic balance that includes, inspires, engages, and challenges audiences to consider and explore the new.

Cultivate and steward key relationships to expand MCA impact locally, regionally, and beyond

The Pritzker Director will advance the MCA's mission and relevance by strengthening relationships locally, regionally, and beyond including the public and Chicago in all its permutations, the MCA Board, its staff, collectors, global peers, local civic leaders, donors, artists, and collaborators. By deepening ties with other Chicago institutions and the broader contemporary art community, the Pritzker Director will build its collection and extend the museum's influence and visibility nationally and internationally.

Empower, inspire, and support the dedicated museum staff

The Pritzker Director will build on the MCA staff's institutional knowledge and commitment, to foster a culture that supports excellence, enriches collaboration, and seeds growth. Key priorities will include recruiting and retaining outstanding talent, accessibility, strengthening role clarity and accountability, and ensuring staff are positioned and inspired to do their best work.

Activate and strengthen board engagement

The Pritzker Director will partner closely with the Board to foster a collaborative culture that values diverse perspectives and constructive dialogue within a cohesive framework. Working closely with the Board Chair and board leadership, the Pritzker Director will sustain productive relationships with individual members, cultivate and engage new voices, strengthen effective governance, inspire emotional and fiscal investment, and ensure shared accountability for the MCA's strategic, artistic, financial, and operational priorities.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no one person may embody all, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications and personal qualities.

- A passion for contemporary art, artists, and ideas with the ability to build rapport with and command the respect and support of collectors, curators, colleagues, and the public;
- Demonstrated success as a senior leader of an art, cultural nonprofit, or civic institution exercising local and international reach and experience in increasing its visibility, attendance, and impact;
- Appetite for and successful record in revenue development, including individual, institutional, and endowment fundraising;
- Commitment to museum best practices, their implementation and impact;
- Experience leading, serving, and working with a collecting and governing Board;
- Demonstrated success in building meaningful partnerships with diverse constituencies;
- An inspiring, consultative, and transparent leadership style that fosters trust and accountability, with demonstrated experience leading change;
- Exceptional communication skills at ease encouraging and facilitating engagement;
- Experience building and managing budgets while driving sound financial and policy decisions within an organization of ideally comparable complexity and similar funding streams;
- Direct experience driving and executing strategic planning; and
- Demonstrated results driving programmatic and operational excellence.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

This is a permanent, full-time position based in Chicago with a targeted starting salary range of \$575,000 - \$675,000, 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/museum-contemporary-art-chicago/pritzker-director>.

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