Kemper Art Museum

Director and Chief Curator

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

The Search

The Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis (WashU) seeks a Director and Chief Curator to shape the next chapter of the Kemper Art Museum (Kemper).

KEMPER ART MUSEUM

WashU

The Kemper Art Museum is one of the nation's leading academic museums, a cultural landmark, and a hub for scholarly and creative engagement situated amongst the innovative research and creative practices of the Sam Fox School, the academic excellence of Washington University, and the vibrant arts ecosystem of St. Louis. The Kemper's world-class collection of more than 8,700 artworks has especially strong holdings of 19th-, 20th-, and 21st-century European and American art and a growing collection of global art. The next Director and Chief Curator will build on two decades of institutional growth under Dr. Sabine Eckmann and work with newly appointed Sam Fox School Dean Charlie White to develop a compelling vision for the museum's future, advancing its artistic and intellectual identity, developing its collection and exhibition program, deepening its relationships across WashU and St. Louis, as well as enhancing the Kemper's national prestige and international value. The Director and Chief Curator is supported in this work by a dedicated staff of 23 employees and an annual budget of $6.2 million.

Reporting to the Dean of the Sam Fox School and partnering with a leadership team deeply committed to the Kemper, the Director and Chief Curator will provide conceptual and administrative leadership for the museum and will be responsible for all aspects of the museum's operation. The Director and Chief Curator will unite and develop a talented staff, build philanthropic and patron support, and represent the museum with integrity, sound judgment, and a strong external voice. Grounded in the Kemper's collection, the Director and Chief Curator will advance thoughtful stewardship and strategic growth of the Kemper's holdings, strengthening their use for teaching, research, and public engagement. The Director and Chief Curator will deepen interdisciplinary and community

partnerships, increase the museum's visibility and accessibility, and reinforce the Kemper's role as both a vital university and civic resource.

Washington University and the Sam Fox School have retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the recruitment of the next Director and Chief Curator. Please direct all applications, nominations, and inquiries to Isaacson, Miller as indicated at the end of this document.

About The Kemper Art Museum

The Kemper Art Museum is part of the intellectual heart of both the Sam Fox School and WashU more broadly, while also serving the St. Louis public as a premier artistic and cultural institution. Founded in 1881 as the first art museum west of the Mississippi River, the Kemper was eventually relocated to the main WashU campus in 1960. Nearly half a century later, in 2006, the museum was jointly unified with the College of Art and the College of Architecture to form the Sam Fox School. The launch of the School realized WashU's vision for an interdisciplinary hub for the arts.

The physical footprint of the Kemper, whose building was originally designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Fumihiko Maki, has evolved over time. In 2019, as the East End of the WashU campus was being extended to abut Forest Park, the Kemper Art Museum underwent a major renovation and expansion. The striking 5,600-square-foot addition features new and renovated galleries and a glass-and-steel lobby that connects to the Weil Sculpture Garden. Today, the Kemper includes over 18,000 square feet devoted to exhibition/gallery space. The renovation was a pivotal moment in the evolution of the Kemper Art Museum, following nearly two decades of tremendous growth and preceding the adoption of the 2023-2033 Strategic Plan.

Exhibitions at the Kemper Art Museum are curated with the highest standards of intellectual rigor and engage critically with questions of sociopolitical, environmental, and cultural import. The museum is also a pedagogical and cultural resource for the University, providing a dynamic teaching and learning space utilized by academic departments across campus. Students at WashU can pursue paid internships and professional training at the Kemper through opportunities such as the Kemper Teaching Fellows Program and the Arthur Greenberg Curatorial Fellowship. Faculty are invited to design customized class visits, curate exhibitions for the teaching gallery, and utilize the museum's study room as a dedicated research space. Public tours, lectures, panels, workshops, performances, and school visits complement museum exhibitions and attract visitors from the greater St. Louis area and include programs such as the Public Lecture Series and Kemper Unplugged.

Collections and Exhibitions

The Kemper's collection maintains a focus on modern and contemporary art, with deep holdings in European and American works from the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. Highlights of the collection span painting, photography, sculpture, and installation art, plus a selection of important antiquities. Efforts to augment and enhance the Kemper's collection focus on globalizing the museum's holdings, addressing historical gaps in the collection, and recognizing the increasingly hybrid nature of cultures around the world. The museum's collection also includes sculptures and installations embedded in the built environment of WashU as part of initiatives to celebrate public art and drive engagement with the Kemper.

For the 2026-2027 academic year, the Kemper is featuring 10 exhibitions, including permanent collection rotations, special exhibitions, teaching gallery, and video gallery exhibitions. Exhibits are often cross-disciplinary and support the Kemper's mission as a teaching museum that contributes to academic and research excellence at WashU.

Structure and Personnel

The Kemper Art Museum is part of the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts, which also includes the Colleges of Art and Architecture. As such, the Museum's Director and Chief Curator holds a critical position within the Sam Fox School, reporting directly to the Dean and engaging in active collaboration with the Directors of the Colleges. While the Sam Fox School is the museum's academic and administrative unit, WashU's Central Fiscal Unit provides funding for the Kemper.

In addition to the Director and Chief Curator, the Kemper employs 23 full-time staff members who support exhibitions and collections, business operations, curation, publication, and learning and engagement. The Director and Chief Curator supervises the Assistant Director for Exhibitions & Collections, Senior Curator, Head of Publications, Head of Learning & Engagement, and Assistant to the Director & Business Operations Coordinator.

There are two committees that support the work of the Kemper Art Museum. The Art Collection Committee, a subset of the Sam Fox School National Council, helps to guide and steward the museum's acquisition and collection strategies. The Director's Advisory Committee, comprising WashU faculty and students, provides guidance and consultation on museum plans and initiatives at semesterly meetings.

Finances and Fundraising

The Kemper's budget of $6.2 million includes allocations from the University, endowment funds, and annual fundraising. The William T. Kemper Foundation endows the Director position and underwrites major exhibition projects. This year, the Museum secured its first endowed curatorship through the support of Kenneth and Nancy Kranzberg. Fundraising for the Kemper is facilitated through direct partnership with University Advancement and bolstered by the Kemper Director's Circle, a philanthropic network of invested and generous donors.

Role of the Director and Chief Curator

The Director and Chief Curator provides conceptual, administrative, and operational leadership for the Kemper, overseeing policy-making, financial and institutional planning, donor and public relations, and staffing. The position has primary artistic, intellectual, and academic responsibility for collections, exhibitions, publications, and programs, serving as a critical driver of strategic direction and progress towards priorities that advance the Kemper's mission.

As a key member of the leadership team of the Sam Fox School, the Director and Chief Curator is responsible for shaping the development of collaborative programs with the Sam Fox School, WashU, and external institutions. This position represents the Kemper, Sam Fox, and WashU on local, national, and international levels and works to increase Kemper's public profile and impact.

Key Opportunities and Challenges for the Director and Chief Curator

Craft a vision for the museum's next era

Building on the 2023-2033 Strategic Plan and two decades of growth, the Kemper's next Director and Chief Curator will have the opportunity to define a bold next chapter, evaluating and refining the museum's strategic priorities while preserving its many strengths. They will steward an institution that both benefits from and enhances the intellectual vitality of Washington University's faculty, staff, and students, the breadth and energy of the arts across campus, and the vibrant arts culture of St. Louis. The Director and Chief Curator will provide a clear, compelling vision for the Kemper, sustaining excellence in its collections, exhibitions, publications, academic collaborations, and outreach, while guiding its next phase of growth and impact. The Director and Chief Curator will advance ambitious curatorial and collections strategies while continuing to create accessible and engaging experiences for students, faculty, local schools, community partners, and broader public audiences.

Broaden access and engagement for the museum's wide range of audiences

The Director and Chief Curator will position the Kemper as both an essential university museum and a cultural institution with influence throughout St. Louis and across the national and international museum landscape, raising awareness and engagement among a wide range of constituents. The Director and Chief Curator will continue to build generative relationships across the Sam Fox School and the wider university, stewarding and strengthening many existing partnerships across disciplines, cultivating new faculty and university partners, and situating the museum at the center of educational activities and initiatives on campus. Externally, the Director and Chief Curator will sustain and expand opportunities to engage across the city and region. St. Louis provides a vast cultural resource with dynamic arts institutions that call the city home, including the Saint Louis Art Museum, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, Pulitzer Arts Foundation, Griot Museum of Black History, and Counterpublic. The Kemper also has strong relationships and programming with local school districts and students. The Director and Chief Curator will invest in relationships such as these, taking care to balance the Kemper's local impact and its broader reach across the region and beyond.

Lead and develop a talented team of museum staff

The Kemper Art Museum employs a dedicated staff with a broad range of tenures and experience. The Director and Chief Curator will invest in staff development, engage the leadership team in decision-making, and entrust this team to lead in their areas of expertise. In addition, they will promote regular, transparent communication across departments, ensuring cohesion amongst the team.

The Director and Chief Curator will be responsible for administration, people leadership, financial stewardship, university relations, and the practical work of running the museum, while respecting the expertise required across the curatorial, registration, education, publications, collections, and exhibitions functions. They will be an effective, personable, and ethical people leader who values the museum's talented staff, sets clear priorities, and manages change thoughtfully.

Build long-term sustainability through strong fundraising and financial management

Resource development and financial management are central to this leadership role. The next Director and Chief Curator will be expected to deepen the Kemper's donor base; secure support for exhibitions, acquisitions, education, and engagement; and steward funds responsibly. The position requires close and thoughtful partnership with the central advancement team to support fundraising efforts. In

conjunction with the advancement team, the Director and Chief Curator will promote compelling institutional narratives to communicate the Kemper's mission and impact.

Grow and steward the collection with ambition and rigor

The Director and Chief Curator will curate selected exhibitions while leading and supporting the curatorial team. They will steer the Kemper's overall artistic and curatorial direction—overseeing stewardship of the collection and the exhibition program—while sustaining a culture rooted in innovation, excellence, and exploration. By employing strong connoisseurship, applying knowledge of the contemporary art market, and fostering essential relationships with artists, galleries, and collectors, they will identify significant opportunities to build the permanent collection through gifts and acquisitions.

The Director and Chief Curator will engage artists and audiences to strengthen the museum's local, national, and international renown and contribution, differentiating the Kemper within the broader museum landscape. This will require clarity of purpose, strong professional networks, and a commitment to expansive thinking around the museum's distinctive identity.

Qualifications and Characteristics

The search committee welcomes candidates who bring distinguished artistic and intellectual judgment, effective organizational leadership, and enthusiasm for the possibilities of an academic museum.

Candidates should demonstrate:

- Inspirational, visionary leadership and dedication to the mission and values of the Kemper; the ability to elevate, champion, and inspire a passion and respect for the museum's collection, exhibitions, and programs across audiences
- Ability to provide effective, transparent administrative leadership alongside strategic, high-level institutional planning and implementation
- Capacity to collaborate with leaders and faculty across the Sam Fox School and WashU, inviting dialogues around a range of disciplines; dedication to the Kemper's role as a teaching museum that serves students and supports WashU's research enterprise
- Investment in community engagement and the role of the museum in contemporary society, maintaining relationships with existing partners and building connections with new ones

- A strong commitment to uplifting and developing a high-performing team; a track record of fostering cross-departmental collaboration and coordination
- A compelling and persuasive public presence, capable of connecting with and inspiring the public, staff, faculty, students, community partners, artists, patrons, and arts leaders
- Proven success in fundraising; commitment to cultivating and expanding philanthropic support in line with strategic priorities and ambitious collection goals
- Background and experience creating and managing curatorial programs, major scholarly exhibitions, and publications
- An advanced degree in an art-related field is required; a PhD is preferred

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. View the position and submit materials here.

> *Ben Tobin, Partner*
> *Nella Young, Managing Associate*
> *Kate Gladstone, Associate*
> *Alaine Small, Managing Search Coordinator*
> *Isaacson, Miller*

Washington University in St. Louis is committed to the principles and practices of equal employment opportunity. It is the University's policy to provide equal opportunity and access to persons in all job titles without regard to race, ethnicity or shared ancestry, color, national origin, citizenship (where prohibited by federal law), age, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, protected veteran status, or genetic information.

As a federal contractor, the university maintains affirmative action programs to implement its equal employment opportunity policy for individuals with disabilities and protected veterans, in accordance with Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974 (VEVRAA), as amended.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Kemper Art Museum. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by Kemper Art Museum would supersede any conflicting information in this document.

Additional Information About WashU and the Sam Fox School

Washington University in St. Louis

Washington University is a private research university with deep roots in St. Louis that was founded in 1853. The University offers student-centered educational excellence within a world-class, research-intensive environment that attracts students and faculty from all 50 states and over 120 countries. WashU educates approximately 13,800 full-time students across eight academic divisions: Arts & Sciences, School of Continuing & Professional Studies, Brown School, Bursky School of Public Health, Olin Business School, Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts, McKelvey School of Engineering, School of Law, and School of Medicine. The student population is divided almost equally between undergraduate and graduate/professional students.

WashU belongs to a small class of elite universities characterized by a deep commitment to excellence in education as well as in research and scholarship. Over the last two decades, the University has invested significantly in its student enterprise, constructing new residence halls, academic buildings, and a university center, expanding student services, and maintaining its strong commitment to personalized attention and small class size. The University's need-blind and loan-free policies demonstrate an institution-wide commitment to access and inclusion. Among the class of 2029, 53% identify as students of color and 23% are Pell Grant eligible.

The Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts

The Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts is a vibrant community of makers and scholars committed to addressing social and environmental challenges through design and creative practice. The School offers 15 unique degree programs for both graduate and undergraduate students across the College of Art and the College of Architecture, in addition to housing the Kemper Art Museum. Creative research centers, including Island Press and the Office for Socially Engaged Practice, offer meaningful opportunities for co-curricular involvement and growth. The School enrolls approximately 800

students, drawing on the expertise of more than 70 full-time and 60 visiting and part-time faculty who expand the School's connections to contemporary global practice.

In 2022, the Sam Fox School launched a 10-year strategic plan, Shaping the Future, which focuses on digital transformation in art, architecture, and design; leadership in sustainable practices; strengthening local, national, and global communities; and building academic and research excellence.