

Nancy and Steve Crown Family Chief Curator
Whitney Museum of American Art

THE SEARCH

The Whitney Museum of American Art seeks an intellectually curious, collaborative leader with deep art historical expertise and a forward-looking vision to serve as its next Nancy and Steve Crown Family Chief Curator. As the preeminent museum dedicated to American art, the Whitney presents, collects, and champions the art of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Through groundbreaking exhibitions, a world-renowned collection, and enduring partnerships with living artists, it advances creative inspiration, scholarship, and inclusive public engagement, and welcomes the curator who will help shape its next chapter.

Reporting to the Alice Pratt Brown Director (Director), the Chief Curator will join the Whitney at a pivotal moment for the institution and the field as a key member of its senior leadership team. In close collaboration with the Director and talented colleagues, they will help shape the Whitney's artistic vision and institutional priorities, oversee its Curatorial and Publications Departments, and ensure that an energizing, compelling, forward-looking vision informs exhibitions, collections, scholarship, and interpretation.

The Chief Curator will provide strategic leadership for the stewardship and interpretation of the Whitney's collection of more than 26,000 works and guide an ambitious program of exhibitions, acquisitions, and scholarship. Working closely with colleagues in conservation, education, digital, publications, registration, research, and administration, they will foster a dynamic, integrated approach to the Whitney's artistic and scholarly endeavors that distinguishes it from local and international peers and appeals to audiences and patrons alike.

The successful candidate will be an accomplished curator and cultural leader with a distinguished record of scholarship, exhibition-making, and engagement with artists. Combining intellectual rigor, aesthetic judgment, and a singular perspective, they will translate bold ideas into action and inspire others around a shared purpose. An effective mentor and skilled relationship builder, they will lead a large, diverse team

and cultivate meaningful partnerships with artists, collectors, scholars, trustees, donors, and the broader cultural community.

The Whitney Museum of American Art has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this recruitment. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be submitted in confidence to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT THE WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Founded in 1930 by artist, sculptor, and philanthropist Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, the Whitney Museum of American Art was established to champion living American artists at a time when many of the nation's most innovative creative voices struggled to find opportunities to exhibit their work. Beginning in 1907, Whitney became one of the foremost patrons of American art, purchasing and exhibiting works by emerging artists often overlooked by established institutions.

The Whitney opened to the public in 1931 on West Eighth Street near Fifth Avenue and has remained at the forefront of contemporary culture ever since. Through a series of expansions and relocations, including its move to the Marcel Breuer-designed building on Madison Avenue in 1966 and, most recently, to its current home at 99 Gansevoort Street in 2015, the Whitney has continually evolved to serve artists and audiences alike. Today, situated in the heart of New York City's Meatpacking District, the Whitney is one of the city's most dynamic cultural destinations, presenting groundbreaking exhibitions, public programs, and community-centered initiatives that engage diverse audiences from around the world.

Innovation has been a hallmark of the Whitney throughout its history. The Whitney was the first institution dedicated exclusively to the work of living American artists and has consistently identified and elevated influential voices long before they achieved broad recognition. Artists such as Jasper Johns, Jay DeFeo, Glenn Ligon, Cindy Sherman, and Paul Thek received their first major museum surveys at the Whitney. At the same time, the Whitney's commitment to collecting contemporary work has enabled it to build one of the world's most important collections of American art. The Whitney has also been a leader in new artistic mediums, becoming the first New York museum to present a major exhibition of a video artist when it showcased Nam June Paik in 1982.

The Whitney's commitment to access and inclusion has become a defining feature of its contemporary identity. Since introducing expanded admission initiatives, the Whitney has welcomed nearly one million visitors annually, with more than one-third attending through free-admission programs. These efforts have broadened the Whitney's reach among younger, more diverse, and culturally engaged audiences. Three signature programs anchor this work: Free 25 and under, providing free admission to visitors aged 25 and under; Free Friday Nights, a weekly evening program combining art, music, conversation, and community; and Free Second Sundays, offering free admission and family-friendly programming for visitors of all ages. Together, these initiatives reflect the Whitney's ongoing commitment to removing barriers to participation and ensuring that contemporary American art remains accessible to all.

Scott Rothkopf | Director

Scott Rothkopf became the Alice Pratt Brown Director in November 2023 after more than a decade of progressive leadership within the institution. Since joining the Whitney as a curator in 2009, he has played a pivotal role in shaping the Whitney's artistic vision, exhibition program, and long-term strategy. His tenure has included appointments as Associate Director of Programs, Deputy Director for Programs and Nancy and Steve Crown Family Chief Curator, and Senior Deputy Director, positions through which he oversaw exhibitions, publications, collection management, and institutional planning while serving as a key member of the Whitney's senior leadership team.

Widely recognized for his curatorial leadership, Rothkopf has organized or co-organized some of the Whitney's most acclaimed exhibitions, including Jasper Johns: Mind/Mirror, Laura Owens, Jeff Koons: A Retrospective, Glenn Ligon: AMERICA, and Wade Guyton OS. His work reflects a deep commitment to advancing contemporary artistic practice while strengthening the Whitney's role as a platform for ambitious, artist-centered scholarship and public engagement.

Beyond his curatorial work, Rothkopf has published extensively on leading contemporary artists and has contributed to the broader cultural discourse as an author, editor, lecturer, and critic. He has served as a guest speaker and advisor to numerous museums, universities, and cultural organizations, and previously served on the Board of Trustees of the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation. As Director, Rothkopf brings a combination of scholarly rigor, institutional knowledge, and strategic vision that positions the Whitney to continue its leadership role in shaping the future of American art and culture.

The Whitney is governed by a 52-member Board of Trustees, which provides fiduciary oversight, strategic guidance, and stewardship of the museum's mission, collections, and financial sustainability.

ROLE OF NANCY AND STEVE CROWN FAMILY CHIEF CURATOR

The Nancy and Steve Crown Family Chief Curator is a member of the Whitney's senior leadership team and the principal steward of its curatorial vision, collections, exhibitions, publications, and scholarly agenda. Leading a team of 26, including eight Curators, the Director of Publications, the Senior Manager of Curatorial Administration, and a Curatorial Assistant, the Chief Curator will bring a visionary perspective to the Whitney's future, setting clear priorities and advancing ambitious exhibitions, scholarship, collection development, and programming.

An intellectually rigorous, artist-centered leader, the Chief Curator will keep artists' ideas and practices at the heart of the museum's work. They will nurture exceptional curatorial talent and foster a culture of collaboration, accountability, autonomy, and respect.

Aligning curatorial priorities with broader institutional goals, including audience engagement, learning, accessibility, digital strategy, and the visitor experience, the Chief Curator will serve as a

trusted advisor to the Director and executive team. Sound judgment, adaptability, and clarity will guide complex decisions

A visible ambassador, the Chief Curator will engage scholars, collectors, cultural institutions, foundations, Trustees, donors, partners, media, and the public. Working with the Director, the Advancement team, and the Board they will support fundraising, acquisitions, and strategic partnerships, strengthening the Whitney's standing as a leading voice in American art and cultural discourse.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Artistic and Intellectual Leadership: Provides visionary artistic and intellectual leadership, working with the Director and curatorial team to define a compelling institutional point of view that positions the Whitney as a leading voice in American art within broader global, historical, and interdisciplinary contexts. As a senior curatorial thought partner, shapes programmatic priorities, scholarship, and long-term artistic strategy, anticipating developments in contemporary art, technology, and museum practice. Champions ambitious exhibitions, publications, and public initiatives that reflect the breadth of American art and connect artists, audiences, and ideas.

Curatorial, Collections & Publications Leadership: Provides strategic and intellectual leadership for Curatorial and Publications, setting priorities, policies, resource allocation, and accountability. Oversees a comprehensive collection strategy spanning acquisitions, gifts, deaccessioning, research, interpretation, stewardship, and display, working with curators, trustees, donors, collectors, and artists to evolve the collection in keeping with the museum's mission. Ensures that decisions on acquisitions, loans, provenance, and stewardship meet the highest standards of scholarship and ethics. Leads publications and scholarly initiatives that advance fresh approaches to research and interpretation, integrated with education, digital, and public programs.

Exhibitions, Public Engagement, & Institutional Impact: Serves as senior content authority for exhibitions, shaping a cohesive program grounded in a clear artistic vision that encourages curatorial experimentation, interdisciplinary thinking, and new approaches to interpretation. Partners with senior leaders on exhibition planning, sequencing, budgeting, and resources, aligning them with institutional priorities and audience needs. Fosters collaboration across collections, publications, education, digital content, and public programs to create integrated, engaging visitor experiences.

Operational & People Leadership: Leads the Curatorial and Publications divisions, fostering a collaborative, inclusive, high-performing culture grounded in excellence, professional integrity, and shared purpose. Recruits, develops, and retains exceptional talent, creating pathways for professional growth and succession. Sets clear priorities and decision-making frameworks that empower teams, encourage intellectual curiosity and thoughtful risk-taking, and support continuous learning. Oversees departmental budgets so that investments in people, programs, and scholarship reflect strategic priorities, and partners with Human Resources on talent strategy and organizational change.

Institutional Collaboration & Strategic Leadership: A key member of the senior leadership team, aligns artistic and scholarly priorities with broader institutional goals. Collaborates with leaders in Education,

Marketing, Visitor and Member Experience, Communications, Digital Content, Exhibitions and Collections Management, Research Resources, Registration, and Operations to integrate curatorial work with audience engagement, accessibility, learning, and digital innovation. Contributes to strategic planning and advises the Director on artistic, scholarly, and operational matters, building consensus around priorities and helping navigate opportunities and challenges.

External Relations, Advancement & Institutional Ambassadorship: A highly visible spokesperson, represents the museum's collections, exhibitions, and scholarship across the national and international art community, cultivating relationships with artists, scholars, museums, galleries, foundations, collectors, media, and the public. With the Director and Chief Advancement Officer, helps identify, engage, and steward donors, patrons, and trustees in support of the museum's priorities. Engages acquisition committees and patron groups while building partnerships that expand the museum's visibility, influence, and impact across the cultural sector.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The Whitney Museum of American Art welcomes candidates from diverse curatorial disciplines. This position is not defined by a specific collection area, but by a candidate's breadth of vision, leadership capabilities, and readiness to help shape the future of a world-class institution.

Required Experience

- **Vision & Strategy:** A bold, forward-looking vision for American and contemporary art, coupled with a clear understanding of the evolving role of museums in the 21st century.
- **Curatorial Leadership:** Minimum of 10 to 15 years of progressive curatorial experience, distinguished by successful leadership within a major art museum or comparable cultural institution.
- **Ecosystem Expertise:** Deep knowledge of, and established relationships across, the contemporary and American art ecosystem, encompassing artists, scholars, collectors, galleries, and peer institutions.
- **Team & Organizational Leadership:** Proven ability to manage multidisciplinary teams and guide organizations effectively through periods of strategic growth and change. Prioritizes institutional vision over individual legacy.
- **Academic Background:** An advanced degree in art history or a related discipline, complemented by a robust record of scholarship and specialized expertise in twentieth- and twenty-first-century American art.
- **Professional Distinction:** A recognized record of impactful exhibitions, transformative acquisitions, publications, and broader contributions to the field.
- **Translational Vision:** The capacity to translate intellectual and artistic concepts into compelling institutional programs and strategic priorities.
- **Diversity & Inclusion:** An unwavering commitment to expanding access and representation across artistic programming, scholarship, collections, and staff leadership.
- **Philanthropy & Engagement:** Demonstrated experience in fundraising and a collaborative approach to partnering with donors, collectors, volunteers, artists, and the broader public.

- **Cross-Functional Oversight:** Expertise in coordinating or working closely across collections, conservation, publications, exhibitions, and scholarly research.
- **Industry Fluency:** A strong command of emerging trends in contemporary and digital art, technology, and progressive approaches to museum practice.
- **Communication:** Exceptional written, verbal, and interpersonal communication skills, with the ability to articulate complex ideas with clarity and impact.
- **Collaborative Culture:** A collegial, inclusive leadership style that respects deep expertise while fostering innovation and shared accountability.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The compensation range for this role is anticipated to be between $300,000–$320,000. Salary information is a general guideline only. The Whitney considers factors such as (but not limited to) scope and responsibilities, career experience, education/training, internal equity, and market and business considerations when extending an offer.

The position is located in New York City. The demands of the role necessitate a commitment to being a consistent physical presence and may require occasional work nights, weekends, and holidays.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and resumes with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website linked here to the attention of Sarah James, Quizayra Gonzalez, and Siobhan Hanley.

The Whitney Museum of American Art is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The Museum does not discriminate because of age, sex, religion, race, color, creed, national origin, alienage or citizenship, disability, marital status, pregnancy, partnership status, caregiver status, veteran status, gender (including gender identity), sexual orientation, genetic information, predisposition, or carrier status, arrest or conviction record to the extent required by applicable law, credit history, domestic violence, sexual violence, or stalking victim status, or any other factor prohibited by law. The Museum hires and promotes individuals solely on the basis of their qualifications for the job to be filled. The Museum encourages all qualified candidates to apply for vacant positions at all levels.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by the Whitney Museum of American Art. 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 the Whitney Museum of American Art would supersede any conflicting information in this document.