

Philadelphia Museum of Art

Search for the Director, Brind Center for African and African Diasporic Art Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

THE SEARCH

The Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA) seeks an accomplished scholar who is also a visionary and enterprising leader to serve as the inaugural Director and Curator of the Brind Center for African and African Diasporic Art. The new center is dedicated to the study, acquisition, and care of art from continental Africa and the African Diaspora. The Director and Curator will have the opportunity to lead a transformational endeavor for the future of the museum with the Center's specific goal of expanding the scope and reach of the collection, a key objective of the newly published PMA Equity Agenda. The Brind Center will initiate and promote scholarship, organize gallery installations, special exhibitions, public programs, and publications to build broader awareness of the global, historical, and contemporary contributions of the art of Africa and the African Diaspora across time.

The Director and Curator will oversee the budget of the Brind Center and manage a team of 4-6 staff members. An additional new curatorial position for African and African Diasporic art will be established, as well as a fellowship program dedicated to the training and mentorship of graduate students in this expanding field, an important goal of the Center. The position is also responsible for developing long-term strategies that will inform the growth and capacity needs of the Center to meet priorities. The museum has a total annual operating budget of \$62 million and an endowment valued at \$600 million. PMA recently concluded a \$600 million capital campaign, the largest for any cultural organization in Philadelphia's history.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to conduct this assignment. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to Isaacson, Miller as indicated at the end of this document.

PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART

The Philadelphia Museum of Art was founded in 1876, the year of the nation's centennial, in the city that launched the Declaration of Independence. In 1928, in an exultant moment, the Museum opened its East Terrace doors, crowning the Benjamin Franklin Parkway and overlooking Center City. Since then, it has grown into an artistic campus made up of the landmark main building; the Ruth and Raymond G. Perelman building; the Rodin Museum; and two fine eighteenth-century houses in Fairmount Park: Mount Pleasant and Cedar Grove. The Museum was intended to express the city's highest aspirations and plazas and steps

are essential sites for both protests and celebrations including the Pope's visit, Super Bowl celebration, Black Lives Matter marches, seminal concerts, and of course, Rocky, running the steps. It has become a beacon and the iconic image of Philadelphia.

In 2004, facing the need for significant capital repairs and more public areas, the Museum hired Frank Gehry to design a multi-staged effort to repair the essential infrastructure and open circulation to engage the Museum with its visitors. The Museum invested roughly \$300 million in moving loading docks, art handling, garages, partial renovations, and other support functions. It followed with the four-year \$233 million "Core Project," that opened to wide critical acclaim in 2021. The renovation makes possible a completely different experience of the building, an architectural embrace to welcome people and opening circulation to new and expanded exhibitions.

Over half of the PMA's visitors come from the U.S. with international visitors making the trek for the quality and breadth of its offerings. Overall, the visitors skew young and diverse as the Museum focused on engaging millennials succeeding by 2020 for an average visitor age of 32, and with two-thirds of all visitors between 18 to 45 years old. Roughly a third of all visitors are Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), a number that rises to two-thirds from the city of Philadelphia. The percentage of non-white visitors has doubled over the last 10 years, reflecting, for the first time, the demographics of the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA), and a direct result of focused community outreach, Pay What You Wish admission on Friday nights and first Sundays. This focus will be shared by the incoming Senior Curator.

THE POSITION

Reporting to the Deputy Director and Chief Curator, the Director will work closely with the curatorial and education departments to develop possibilities for cross-curatorial dialogue, exploration, and collaboration. The wide ranging and deeply influential arts of Africa and its Diaspora are strongly represented across many departments at the museum already, ranging from modern and contemporary to American art and from Prints, Drawings and Photographs to Costume and Textiles. Through the vision of the Director and Curator, the Brind Center will build and inspire a robust, more inclusive art narrative for all Philadelphians and visitors as a national and international destination for art. The successful candidate will have the opportunity to shape the Center's philosophy and program to work closely with colleagues, scholars, artists locally and globally, peer institutions, and community organizations to expand the audience for and advance scholarship of African and African Diasporic art.

In partnership with Museum leadership, the Director will:

- Envision the strategic direction of the Brind Center, ensuring alignment with the institutional strategic plan;
- Collaborate with museum departments engaging with the collections to enhance and leverage the depth and breadth of the museum's offerings and programs;

- Develop a dynamic programmatic vision that engages educationally and artistically with the local and global community;
- Distinguish the Center and Museum as a leader among peers in championing and advancing the art, study, care, exhibition and broad appreciation of art of African and the African Diaspora internationally;
- Strategically influence the collections plan to fully represent and highlight the areas of African and African Diasporic art;
- Cultivate stakeholder relationships to provide long-term financial sustainability and growth;
- Enhance the Museum's mission through expanding its regional, national, and international reach;
- Lead, develop, and empower a high performing team and model and contribute to a culture of collaboration throughout the museum.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The ideal candidate should have the following experience and qualifications:

- A level of education appropriate to the position, preferably a Ph.D. in a relevant field.
- A passion for and deep knowledge of African and African Diasporic art, art history, the art world, and its key players;
- Clear and evidenced familiarity and experience with African and African Diasporic cultures;
- Respected among peers, scholars, and well-connected and conversant in national and international arts circles;
- Evidence of leadership in and strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusivity;
- Leadership in developing a culture of collaboration within an institution, familiar and comfortable with matrixed environments;
- A deep commitment to broad public engagement and educational programming;
- A demonstrated track record identifying institutional needs and priorities; inspiring colleagues to engage in joint projects, and overseeing operations in a complex organization;
- Demonstrated success in donor cultivation and fundraising;
- A desire to invest in the regional community, its artists, and its citizens;
- Adept interpersonal skills; superb oral and written communication skills to present ideas clearly and persuasively;
- Diplomatic and collegial with political savvy, judgment, and discretion;
- Strong personal integrity and work ethic, as well as a sense of perspective and, ideally, humor.

LOCATION

Forty-five million people live within 200 miles of the city, putting Philadelphia at the core of the country's wealthiest and most densely populated area. The impressive collection of universities and medical centers has helped to spawn a growing, entrepreneurial economy that has become steadily more prosperous. The

city attracts people nationally and globally and is served by a fine and accessible airport, offering 500 daily departures to 130 non-stop destinations in the country and around the world. Philadelphia boasts a vibrant culture rich with history central to the development of this nation, entertainment, and sports; varied, and outstanding dining; outdoor activities; and splendid arts. Philadelphia has borne and influenced numerous popular cultural movements that have since become iconic. The city offers several other internationally significant collections and museums, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Opera and the Ballet, and an impressive mix of well attended theater companies. Philadelphia has more public art than any other city in the nation with nearly 4,000 massive murals grace the walls and display the essence of neighborhoods in Philadelphia.

The city remains accessible and affordable compared to its cousins in the North and South. *U.S. News and World Report* ranked ranks Philadelphia in the top 15 Best Affordable U.S. Destinations. The combination of a robust culture, an expanding economy, rich transportation nodes, and affordable living has attracted young people. Philadelphia's population of millennials is growing at a faster rate than in any of the nation's 30 largest cities.

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 in confidence to:

Sarah James and Ryan Leichenauer
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/philadelphia-museum-art/director-brind-center-african-and-african-diasporic-art>

At the Philadelphia Museum of Art, we actively seek to employ a diverse group of people who embody our organizational values. PMA welcomes and encourages individuals of all backgrounds to apply, especially those from marginalized and underrepresented groups in the museum field, who are inspired by its shared purpose and enjoy working collaboratively with others. The Philadelphia Museum of Art is proud to be an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to age, ancestry, citizenship or immigration status, color, disability, ethnicity, familial status, gender identity and/or expression, genetic information, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, veteran status, or any other protected status.