

Human Resources

JOB OPENING

October 6, 2009

Director/CEO The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

The Museum

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, founded in 1933, is recognized nationally and internationally as one of America's finest encyclopedic art museums. The Nelson-Atkins serves the community by providing access and insight into its renowned collection of more than 33,500 art objects and is best known for its Asian art, European and American paintings, and modern sculpture. Housing a major research library and the Ford Learning Center, the museum is a key educational resource for the region.

The recent completion of the 165,000 square-foot Bloch Building by Steven Holl Architects marked a major milestone in the ongoing institution-wide transformation of the Nelson-Atkins. The multi-year project also encompassed the renovation of the original 1933 Nelson-Atkins neo-classical building and the expansion of the museum's renowned Kansas City Sculpture Park, and continues with renovations to the American and American Indian galleries as part of the reinstallation of the collection. The expansion increased museum space by 71%, providing new galleries, educational facilities, and support spaces. The museum raised more than \$200 million for the renovation and expansion, and \$170 million to grow the endowment fund. The expanded resources ensure that the institution continues to attract and engage the next generation of audiences and is equipped to present and interpret the art of the past, present and future.

The museum is dedicated to the enjoyment and understanding of the visual arts and the varied cultures they represent. It is committed through its collections and programs to being a vital partner in the educational and cultural life of Kansas City, and a preeminent institution both nationally and internationally. The museum is governed by the Board of Trustees of the Nelson Gallery Foundation, which currently has twenty members.

Collection

The museum's collections bring together masterpieces from major worldwide cultures spanning over 5,000 years. The museum opened its doors in 1933 as a gift to the community from William Rockhill Nelson (1841-1915), founder of The Kansas City Star. Contributions from the estate of Mary McAfee Atkins (1836-1911) helped complete the building.

Amongst the museum's better-known holdings is its magnificent collection of Asian art, especially the arts of China but also including significant holdings from Japan, South and Southeast Asia and Iran. The collection comprises pieces from many phases of Chinese art, with widely recognized strengths in painting, Buddhist sculpture, furniture and bronzes and jades, both ancient and modern.

The European painting collection includes masterpieces ranging from the Renaissance onward with notable strengths in 17th and 18th century artists. Artists represented by masterworks include Petrus Christus, Cranach, Titian, Bronzino, Wtewael, Caravaggio, Poussin, Guercino, Largillière, Canaletto, Boucher, Traversi, Vigée Le Brun, Turner, Constable, Millet, Monet, Pissarro, Degas, Gauguin, Caillebotte and van Gogh.

The American painting collection presents important works by Stuart, Cole, Church, West, Raphaelle Peale, Bingham, Homer, Hassam, Inness, Eakins, Peto, Bellows and Hartley. American Regionalists enjoy strong representation. The development of a comprehensive American Indian collection as a counterpart to the American collection has been an institutional priority.

The American and European decorative arts have enjoyed solid growth in late 19th and 20th century periods, building on a base of works from earlier periods that includes the renowned Burnap collection of English pottery. Arts of the ancient Mediterranean span major cultures with representative examples at high-levels of artistic achievement, including works from Persepolis and Nimrud. A small collection covers Romanesque and Gothic art with good examples.

The African collection, which has grown steadily, emphasizes artistic sensibility rather than geographic coverage.

The collections of modern and contemporary art in all media have expanded rapidly, with a major emphasis on sculpture that supports The Kansas City Sculpture Park, home to more than thirty monumental works, ranging from nine bronzes by Henry Moore to the iconic Shuttlecocks by Oldenburg and van Bruggen.

In 2005, the museum acquired the Hallmark Photographic Collection, which now numbers more than 7500 photographs.

Admission to the museum is free with an additional charge for special exhibitions, and the museum's attendance on an annual basis is over 350,000. The museum has a current operating budget of approximately \$22 million, an endowment of approximately \$300 million, a full and part-time staff of 287, and a significant core of volunteers.

The Role

The successful candidate will serve as The Menefee D. and Mary Louise Blackwell Director and Chief Executive Officer of the museum. The Director/CEO will report to and work with the Board of Trustees of the Nelson Gallery Foundation, he or she will provide the curatorial oversight, strategic leadership, and management expertise for the museum. The Director will oversee all the museum's professional staff and programs and, in close partnership with the Chair and leadership of the Board, will ensure that the museum's mission is clearly articulated and strategic objectives are collectively agreed upon and attained.

The Director will be an inspiring, energetic, and civic-minded leader who will serve as the museum's chief advocate locally, nationally, and internationally. He or she will represent the museum's interests to the public and enthusiastically embrace a leadership role in the arts and cultural community of Kansas City, the greater bi-states region, and beyond. It is expected that the Director will play a critical role in fundraising and work closely with the Board of Trustees and the museum's development team.

The Director will maintain and build upon the museum's high standards of curatorial excellence while also raising awareness and expanding the support base regionally and nationally. It is expected that the Director will continue to champion the museum's commitment to research, conservation, and publications as part of its overall educational mission. Lastly, the Director will promote a collaborative working environment within the museum and across departments.

Key Priorities

- Develop a comprehensive knowledge of the museum's history, collections, planned exhibitions and programs, organizational structure, finances and operations, and base of financial support.
- Forge a productive relationship with the Board of Trustees, staff, and key supporters of the museum; work with the Board leadership to effectively engage existing Board members and to recruit new Trustees; create opportunities for them to share their talents, insights, passions, and expertise in support of the museum's strategic goals.
- Build an engaged and increased base of supporters and purposely broaden the museum's audiences through innovative exhibitions, programming, and educational initiatives; explore ways to expand upon and strengthen current outreach activities; ensure the museum's reputation as an inclusive, inviting, and welcoming cultural destination.
- Continue to cultivate collaborative relationships with local cultural and educational institutions while also furthering the museum's goal of increasing its reach and reputation, balancing focus on the needs of the more immediate community in the greater Kansas City.
- Oversee the creation of a vibrant and balanced approach to exhibitions and programming that draws upon the collective talents of the museum's staff, highlights the diversity and strengths of the collection, and continues to expand and engage the museum's audiences.
- Continue to build national and international recognition of and appreciations for the museum's collections and exhibitions and as a center of excellence in terms of art historical research, conservation, and educational programming.
- Inspire, motivate, and lead staff; examine, determine, and develop an organizational structure that supports the museum's ambitions, anticipates strategic need, and reflects the diverse and significant talents of its staff.
- Explore and determine ways to use technology to increase access to the museum's collections and research library to better connect to academic and non-academic audiences.
- Develop a new strategic vision and plan for the museum that builds upon the museum's current strengths and identifies new opportunities.

Candidate Profile

The successful candidate will have significant and proven curatorial, management, and leadership experience in a museum or a visual arts-related organization. The candidate must exemplify a passion for the visual arts, and demonstrate a broad knowledge of art history coupled with expertise in his or her chosen field. Ideally, he or she will have had experience working with collections that include Asian and other non-Western art and will bring to the museum a connection to the global arts community. He or she will be an inspiring, energetic, and collaborative leader who will fully embrace the museum's educational mission through its exhibitions, programming, research, and engagement with both the local community and peer institutions on a national and international level.

The successful candidate must be a person of intellectual curiosity and warmth, and be both willing and eager to share his or her knowledge and understanding with the staff, donors, and other supporters of the museum. It is critical that the candidate be able to cultivate productive relationships with a broad range of constituents and demonstrate effectiveness building both public and private support for an organization. The Director will be an articulate, dynamic, and effective communicator, and will embrace the opportunity to serve the museum broadly as a local, national, and international cultural ambassador. It is also crucial that the Director has access to national and international networks of artists and arts professionals who can be called upon on the museum's behalf.

Additionally, the next Director will have had previous experience developing and implementing strategic initiatives within an organization, and will have earned a reputation for effectiveness in partnering with a Board and staff. The successful candidate will also have demonstrated success as a manager in terms of both staff and budgets preferably with projects of considerable complexity and strategic import.

It is expected that the Director will be a full participant in the community of Kansas City and will establish full-time permanent residency in the greater Kansas City area.

An advanced degree (M.A. or Ph.D.) in Art History or a related discipline is highly desirable.

Contact

Nominations and applications (please include a cover letter and resume) should be sent to the following address. Electronic submissions to nelson-atkins@russellreynolds.com are preferred.

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