



MONTCLAIR ART MUSEUM

3 South Mountain Ave.
Montclair, NJ 07042
973-746-5555
montclairartmuseum.org

POSITION DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE:	Curator of Native American Art
DEPARTMENT:	Curatorial
SUPERVISOR:	Chief Curator
DIRECT REPORTS:	none
LAST REVISION DATE:	August 2020

The Montclair Art Museum is conducting a search to fill a three-year position of Curator of Native American Art. Funded by the Luce Foundation, the position offers an exciting opportunity for the Curator to work with the Museum’s renowned collection of Native art of North America.

Overview

The Montclair Art Museum (MAM) is currently accepting applications for a three-year, grant funded position of Curator of Native American Art. The Museum’s goal is to engage in further fundraising to establish this position as permanent. The selected hire will have a unique opportunity to make a meaningful impact on the presentation of MAM’s renowned collection of Native art of North America in its dedicated Rand Gallery and throughout the Museum more broadly. The Curator will work to achieve key goals of engaging current, innovative ideas around the representation of Indigenous communities and art museum collections and exhibitions, via collaborative approaches. Throughout the three-year period, the Curator will have access to an eight member Advisory Board of leading Native and non-Native scholars and artists, as well as MAM’s Chief Curator, all of whom will offer ideas and perspectives for consideration in developing the Museum’s Native American programs. The Curator will oversee the presentation of the Fall 2021 incoming traveling exhibition, *Color Riot!*, from the Heard Museum, featuring Navajo textiles from c. 1860 to 2018. Additional projects will include curating a site-specific artistic intervention opening in early 2022, and will culminate in September 2023 with a new installation of the Museum’s Native American collections in the Rand Gallery.

This full-time, salaried position is responsible for the research, collecting, and exhibition of objects in the Museum's Native American art collection; the development of exhibitions; and helping to shape related educational programs. The Curator will also be consulted about the care of the collections which is the responsibility of the Registrarial staff. The Curator will prioritize and begin to establish a practice of building strong, active, ongoing relationships with Native communities. The Montclair Art Museum's staff and Board of Trustees are fully and personally committed to this process of developing and maintaining these relationships.

About the Montclair Art Museum and its Collection of Native Art of North America

Having celebrated its centennial in 2014, the Montclair Art Museum (MAM) is widely recognized as one of the nation's oldest, leading regional art museums. Situated on Lenape land in the suburban New Jersey town that shares its name, the Museum cares for and interprets its distinctive world-class collection of over 12,000 works of American art, including more than 4,000 works of Indigenous art, one of the foremost collections of Native art of North America in the Northeast. As the only museum in New Jersey focusing on American and Native art, MAM's collection of Indigenous arts represents tribal communities across the United States and Canada. More than 175 art objects have been rotated continuously in a 1984 square foot gallery dedicated to the display of historical and contemporary Native artwork. Furthermore, since 1995, Native works have been regularly featured alongside artwork by non-Native artists from MAM's permanent collection throughout the Museum galleries. This multifaceted approach distinguishes MAM, allowing for a broader, more nuanced understanding of the complexities of American art history and creating opportunities for greater access, as well as deeper exploration.

Dating of artwork in the collection spans the period of ca.1200 C.E. to the present day. Strengths of the collection include 200 fine baskets, many of which were part of the original gifts to MAM in 1914 by co-founder, Florence Rand Lang. This well-documented collection of 19th century California baskets forms the core of the basketry collection, numbering 500 today. Among other strengths, are several hundred examples of turn of the last century Plains beadwork, Seminole clothing from the early 1800's, Navajo jewelry, and ancient and contemporary Pueblo pottery. In recent decades, MAM has focused on acquiring contemporary artwork by famed Native artists in all mediums, including painting, photography, sculpture, ceramics, and jewelry. Contemporary artists represented in the collection include Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Virgil Ortiz, Dan Namingha, Kay WalkingStick, Jody Folwell, Cara Romero, Sonya Kelliher-Combs, Preston Singletary, Jeffrey Gibson, and many others.

A complete inventory, recataloguing, and photography of the collection were completed in March 2019. A conservation survey of the collection was completed with the help of a National Endowment for the Humanities Preservation Assistance Grant in 2019.

Primary Responsibilities and Duties:

The successful candidate will report directly to the Chief Curator and work with the Museum's Director, Curatorial staff, and Education department to oversee a full-time, three-year project funded by the Luce Foundation to create an exciting reinstallation of works from the Native American art collection that are central to the Museum's mission, with increased focus on diversity and inclusion. The Curator will work with the Museum's director, curatorial and education staff.

Responsibilities include:

Create, develop, and oversee the phased reinstallation of Native American art and cultural artifacts in Rand Gallery engaging diverse Indigenous perspectives, current scholarship, and decolonizing perspectives and methods.

Oversee presentation of exhibitions of Native American art from within and outside (i.e. the traveling exhibition from the Heard Museum, *Color Riot!*, opening fall 2021).

Engage with and gain support from local and national Native people to advise on ways to more fully engage their communities, especially the Lenape and other Indigenous people who now call the tristate area home.

Establish relationships with Native artists and work with them to develop specific exhibitions and accompanying programs.

Serve as staff liaison member on the Board of Trustees' Art Committee. Develop acquisitions priorities and possible deaccessioning plans for the Native American art collection. Cultivate relationships with collectors and potential donors.

Write interpretative didactics and assist with developing and participating in related educational and marketing/website/eMuseum content, public programs and Docent training. Develop interpretive materials and publications for varied audiences through collaborative processes and with a commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Select and oversee other Native American permanent collection objects installed throughout the Museum within the context of broad, thematic, rotating exhibitions.

Participate in various fundraising and public relations initiatives of the Museum; engage with and develop programming for the Friends of Native American Art special interest group.

Participate in the activities of the Curatorial Department, including Registrar's Office, with regard to loan requests, budgeting, collections management, and installation needs, as well as collections management and conservation priorities. Oversee research and interpretation of the collection with particular attention to provenance and incorporation of source-community information. Assist visiting researchers/scholars/curators with access to the collection, coordinate visits with tribal cultural heritage representatives, elders, academics, curators, and artists.

Respond to public and scholarly inquiries about Native arts at the Museum. In collaboration with MAM staff, oversee the Museum's continued compliance with NAGPRA, and review history of NAGPRA compliance with regard to any further unexpected issues that may arise. The original outreach to Native communities took place many years ago and the history of a group of objects repatriated in 2009 should be reviewed.

Requirements and Qualifications:

Experience and Skills:

- Minimum of 3-5 years of curatorial and related experience with Native American art collections in museum, gallery, or academic setting
- Demonstrated research, writing, and publication skills; expertise in one or more areas of Native American art with significant recent activity
- Sensitive understanding of current curatorial practices and methodologies regarding Native arts and culture, including provenance research and NAGPRA repatriation. Flair for the organization of exhibitions that engage both the public and scholarly audiences a plus
- Familiarity with collections care and handling
- Demonstrable connections with Native communities and abilities to work effectively with Indigenous communities in partnership with curatorial and other colleagues across Museum in executing projects such as special exhibitions, rotations, and educational programs
- Excellent speaking, interpersonal, and communication skills
- Ability to contribute to an inclusive and positive work environment
- Experience in cultivating donors and collectors a plus

Knowledge and Education:

- MA in History of Art, American Indian Studies, Visual Studies, Cultural Anthropology, Cultural History, or other relevant discipline is required; ABD or PhD, a plus. MFA or equivalent education also considered
- Expertise/engagement in broad spectrum of historical Native arts and general knowledge of American art and contemporary production
- Demonstrated achievement in current curatorial practices; strong organizational and writing skills

- Strong interpersonal skills to foster effective working relationships at all levels, must be collaborative, flexible, and enjoy teamwork. Supervisory experience a plus

The Montclair Art Museum, as a community-centered institution, is unequivocal in our stance against racism and injustice in all of its forms. MAM strives to maintain an environment that fosters productivity, creativity, and individual satisfaction by celebrating the many diverse traits of our community, which includes but is not limited to race, gender, nationality, age, religion, sexual orientation, and physical abilities. We see the arts as playing a critical role as a medium of observation, insight, education, articulation, and advocacy and seek to provide a platform for facing tough issues in our society as expressed through art. We seek candidates who combine a commitment to excellence in their field with a passion for this role for the arts and have creative ideas on how our exhibitions and programs can serve as an agent for societal change.