

MAM**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Montclair Art Museum Announces Retirement of Longtime Chief Curator Dr. Gail Stavitsky



Dr. Gail Stavitsky, Chief Curator, Montclair Art Museum

MONTCLAIR, NJ—May 4, 2026—The Montclair Art Museum (MAM) today announced that Dr. Gail Stavitsky, the Museum's Chief Curator, will retire on July 1, 2026, after an extraordinary tenure spanning more than 30 years. Dr. Stavitsky joined MAM in May 1994 as Curator of Collections and Exhibitions and was elevated to Chief Curator in 1998, a role in which she

helped shape the Museum's curatorial identity, expand its national reputation, and deepen its commitment to American and Native American art.

Over the course of her career at MAM, Dr. Stavitsky curated more than 200 exhibitions, establishing the Museum as a leading center for the study and presentation of American art and material culture. Recognized as a leading scholar of American modernism, she was the lead curator for the landmark exhibition *Cézanne and American Modernism* (2009), accompanied by a major publication. She also curated and served as primary author for *Matisse and American Art* (2017), the first exhibition and catalogue to examine the profound impact of Henri Matisse on American artists from 1907 to the present.

Her exhibition record includes landmark projects that have traveled nationally and earned widespread critical acclaim. Among her many exhibitions at MAM, she curated *Precisionism in America 1915–1941: Reordering Reality* (1994), *Waxing Poetic: Encaustic Art in America* (1999), *Will Barnet: A Timeless World* (2000), *Cindy Sherman: The Unseen Transformations* (2004), *Roy Lichtenstein: American Indian Encounters* (2005), *Reflecting Culture: The Evolution of American Comic Book Superheroes* (2007), *Warhol and Cars: American Icons* (2011), and *Philemona Williamson: Metaphorical Narratives* (2017), all of which were accompanied by scholarly catalogues. She also co-curated *The New Spirit: American Art in the Armory Show, 1913* (2013) with Laurette McCarthy and co-authored the accompanying catalogue.

Among her recent exhibitions, Dr. Stavitsky organized *vanessa german...please imagine all the things I cannot say...* (2023), the artist's first solo museum show in the New York City area, which earned widespread critical attention including recognition among the top New Jersey art exhibitions of the year; *A to Sze: Collecting at MAM (2000–2025)* (2025), a collection-based exhibition celebrating 25 years of significant acquisitions that drew broad public engagement; and *Tom Nussbaum: But Wait, There's More!* (2025), the first full-career retrospective of the Montclair-based artist, which was well attended and accompanied by the first comprehensive publication on Nussbaum's work. Most recently, she co-curated *Shifting Terrain: Perspectives on Land in North America* alongside Laura J. Allen, Curator of Native American Art and Repatriation Coordinator, an exhibition that reflects the scope and scholarly depth of her career at MAM. *Shifting Terrain* typifies Stavitsky's pioneering approach to the integrative presentations of Native American and American art works that she has advanced since the start of her career at MAM with *Affinities and Influences: Native American Art and American Modernism* (1995).

Dr. Stavitsky has organized numerous permanent collection exhibitions, which have featured many of the hundreds of historic, modern, and contemporary art acquisitions that she has brought to the Museum—ranging from George Inness's *Sunset* (1892) and Georgia O'Keeffe's *Skunk Cabbage* (ca. 1927) to Andy Warhol's *Twelve Cadillacs* (1962) and Alteronce Gumby's *I Dream My Painting, then I Paint My Dream* (2024). She has played instrumental roles in the care and development of MAM's unparalleled collections of work by George Inness and Morgan Russell. Funding from the Luce Foundation enabled Stavitsky to hire a team (led by Gregory Galligan) to complete an inventory and finding aid of the Morgan Russell Collection of

original artworks and archival documents by one of the international pioneers of color abstraction in the early 20th century. Ever since curating *George Inness: Presence of the Unseen* (1994), she has worked closely with what is regarded as the greatest Inness collection in the world, which nearly doubled in size with the acquisition of twelve paintings during her tenure. She has organized the installations of the Inness Gallery ever since its opening in 2001 as a gift of Frank and Katherine Martucci. Their ongoing support has been vital to the growth of the collection and the current salon-style installation *George Inness: Visionary Landscapes New Works and Native Views*.

Dr. Stavitsky holds a Ph.D. in Art History from the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University and has written extensively for numerous publications. Prior to joining MAM, she participated in the curation of exhibitions at various institutions, including The New York Public Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Grey Art Gallery at New York University, as well as the Carnegie Museum of Art, where she served as Assistant Curator of Fine Arts from 1981 to 1983. In 2015 she received the John Cotton Dana Award for Museum leadership.

"Gail's impact on this museum, her field, and the community is immeasurable. During her extraordinary tenure, Gail's visionary leadership has guided MAM's collection strategy towards the inclusion of more diversity and contemporary art in the collection. We are profoundly grateful for the solid foundation she built for the Museum's future. Her strong scholarship, curatorial prowess, and work ethic are second only to her kindness, selflessness, and generosity. I count myself lucky to have worked with her." said Todd Caissie, PhD, Interim Director of the Montclair Art Museum.

"Given that MAM has been my beloved professional home and community for over 30 years, it is difficult to summarize what and how much the Museum means to me," said Dr. Stavitsky. "I have been provided with so many opportunities to curate innovative exhibitions that have advanced scholarship as the first of their kind. Among my personal favorites are *Steve Wheeler: The Oracle Visiting The 20th Century* (1997) and *Impossible Shadows: The Art of Larry Kagan* (2019), as well as the recent Tom Nussbaum retrospective. Developing relationships with artists has been one of the great perks of my position. The nurturing and growth of MAM's collection of more than 14,000 works has also been a tremendous privilege that I will always treasure. Finally, I am excited about my continued involvement with MAM! I am working on a variety of projects, including the upcoming site-specific exhibition opening in September, *Kate Dodd: You're Invited!* I look forward to seeing what the next chapters will be and cherish my ongoing connections with the Montclair Art Museum staff, leadership, and community-at-large."

Following her retirement, Dr. Stavitsky will remain engaged with MAM as Chief Curator Emerita, helping preserve the institutional knowledge built over her long tenure and ensuring continuity of the Museum's curatorial work.

The **Montclair Art Museum (MAM)** champions American and Native American art—past and present. Through bold exhibitions, hands-on programs, and deep community ties, MAM sparks creativity, connection, and conversation. Guided by its core values of respect, collaboration, education, and inclusion, the Museum is a vibrant hub where art meets ideas, and everyone is invited.

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Gallery Hours: Friday, 10 a.m.—6 p.m. / Saturday, 10 a.m.—6 p.m. / Sunday, 11 a.m.—5 p.m.

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