Saint Louis Art Museum
Barbara B. Taylor Director
St. Louis, MO
The Current Situation and Opportunity

The Saint Louis Art Museum is uniquely positioned to be a leader among cultural institutions. Such leadership is exemplified by establishing itself as an anchor in its community, serving as a gathering site and convening entity, and facilitating the engagement of a broad range of audiences with art and artists.

At this historic moment, art museums and other cultural institutions are facing challenges on many levels – navigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic for their visitors and staff, enduring financial strains, and stewarding their collections responsibly. The challenges must be faced while responding to and addressing societal issues, including those related to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion. These issues form part of broader conversations around the relevance of art and the museums displaying it, and the significant positive impact these institutions could and should have on their communities in the 21st century.

The Museum possesses a readiness for change and inquiry, rather than a desire to remain static. In June 2020, the Museum’s Board of Commissioners directed three of its officers to work as a study group to examine what the Museum is doing to heal racial disparities in the region and what more could be and should be done. The result of this work is the Diversity Study Group Report discussed below.

The Museum’s next Director will arrive at an institution poised to forge its next chapter from a position of stability and strength, ready to implement new and ambitious goals with a strong commitment to expanding its role in the community while maintaining the high standards of its own history. Intentionally, the Museum’s current strategic plan concludes in 2021 to allow the new Director to play a pivotal role in envisioning the Museum’s future. Working in conjunction with the Museum’s governing boards, its very capable team, and its various constituents, the Museum’s next Director will have the opportunity to shape and implement a plan which will enhance the Museum’s profile as one of the leading encyclopedic public museums.
About the Saint Louis Art Museum

Mission: The Saint Louis Art Museum collects, presents, interprets, and conserves works of art of the highest quality across time and cultures; educates, inspires discovery, and elevates the human spirit; preserves a legacy of artistic achievement for the people of St. Louis and the world; and engages, includes, and represents the full diversity of the St. Louis community supporting it.

The Saint Louis Art Museum was founded in 1879 at the close of a decade that saw the establishment of many art museums across the eastern half of the United States.

In 1906, the Museum moved to its current location in Forest Park (one of the largest urban parks in the U.S.). Its building was the only permanent structure to be created for the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition. Designed by architect Cass Gilbert, this beaux arts-style building remains an integral part of the Museum’s history and identity, as well as a central icon of the St. Louis community.

In 2005, British architect Sir David Chipperfield was selected to design a much-anticipated expansion. The expansion, a Gold LEED-certified building, opened to the public in 2013, adding more than 224,000 square feet of gallery space and an underground parking facility to the Museum campus. The campaign to support the expansion raised more than $160 million, the most successful such initiative for a cultural institution in St. Louis’ history. The project was completed on time, under budget, with the remaining debt paid off 30 years early.

The Saint Louis Art Museum was the first publicly funded art museum in the United States and remains both an endowed cultural entity and a political subdistrict of the State of Missouri. The Museum is a member of the Zoo Museum District (ZMD), one of the largest tax-supported cultural districts in the country. Other member organizations include the Saint Louis Zoological Park, the Missouri Botanical Garden, the Saint Louis Science Center, and the Missouri History Museum.

The Museum is governed and supported by dedicated and active Boards of Commissioners, Trustees, and Friends. As a member of the ZMD, the Commissioners serving on the Board of Commissioners are individually appointed by the Mayor of the City of St. Louis and the County Executive of St. Louis County based upon the recommendation of Museum Boards.

The Museum derives its funds from several sources, with a significant portion of revenue provided by property tax levied in St. Louis City and County. This has enabled the Museum to maintain free admission to its guests. The Museum’s annual operating budget is approximately $35 million. The endowment, primarily held in the St. Louis Art Museum Foundation, was over $243 million as of January 28, 2021.

The Museum maintains a staff of more than 230 full-time and 75 part-time employees, including multiple nationally - and internationally - recognized scholars in their fields. The Museum also boasts a volunteer corps of nearly 200 people.
Since its founding, the Museum’s world-class encyclopedic collection has grown to more than 34,000 objects, representing cultures from all continents save Antarctica, ranking the institution among the top comprehensive museums in the nation. Particular strengths are Chinese bronzes (ancient and 17th/18th century), art of the Ancient Americas, the largest assembly in the world of the creative output of the German painter Max Beckmann, the work of George Caleb Bingham, and the Ballard Rug Collection with strength in Turkish examples.

From the early days of its existence, the Museum has collected contemporary art, including a 1903 painting by Monet acquired in 1915, during the artist’s lifetime. That focus has continued, giving the museum considerable strength in a broad representation of significant works by major German artists from the beginning of the 20th century until the end. In general, the collection is strong in the work of artists of various nationalities working in the 20th century. The collection also contains significant works of decorative arts, prints, drawings, and photographs.

In June 2020, the Museum’s Board of Commissioners directed three of its officers to work as a study group to examine what the Museum is doing to heal racial disparities in the region and what more could be and should be done. The result of this work is the Diversity Study Group Report, which was adopted unanimously by the Board of Commissioners. The Report contains almost 150 recommended actions and areas of further study that are now being diligently pursued through a deliberate process by staff and governing bodies.

The Report sets forth clear, transparent standards against which the Museum will hold itself accountable, and establishes processes that allow for the design and execution of operating strategies to address diversity, equity, and inclusion through the Museum’s governing committees, management, and staff. The Report provides for immediate actionable initiatives as well as longer-term considerations requiring additional discussion, input, and planning. The next Director will continue to shepherd implementation of the Report’s recommendations by working with the Museum’s governing bodies to ensure that the Saint Louis Art Museum represents principles of diversity and inclusion, applying these principles in all that the institution does.

For more information about the Saint Louis Art Museum, including overviews of its educational and community programs for a wide range of audiences, including students and teachers, teens, families, as well as adult programs which include talks, presentations, performances, and films, please visit the Museum’s website.
About the Region: St. Louis, Missouri

St. Louis offers a certain sense of community difficult to find in many metropolitan areas. As local leader Darren Jackson explains, “The value of living in St. Louis is unmatchable. Any other city, you can’t get this type of community. St. Louis is so small in the best way.” Please see this video for some vivid images of the City and surrounding area.

The St. Louis Art Museum is located in the center of 1,326 acre Forest Park known as the "Heart of St. Louis." Forest Park has hosted several significant events, including the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition and the Summer Olympics. Historic and charming neighborhoods are woven throughout the area -- The Central West End and University City border Forest Park; Soulard and Tower Grove are close to downtown; Ferguson to the north; Kirkwood and Glendale to the south; and Clayton, Ladue, Town & Country, and Chesterfield to the west.

Amidst a growing and thriving arts and cultural community with major offerings, the city features the St. Louis Symphony, several professional theater companies, a free zoo, a science center, and the globally recognized Missouri Botanical Garden. Outdoor adventures and sports drew over 28 million annual visitors in 2019 for leisure, conventions, meetings, and business travel. The region has received national acclaim for its major universities (Washington University and St. Louis University to name just two) and renowned medical centers.

There is a range of free attractions for families, a vibrant award-winning food scene, an abundance of excellent city/county and state parks, the recreational river system, and nearby lakes. New entertainment options -- City Foundry and the Armory District in Midtown, The District in Chesterfield, Riverpointe in St. Charles -- are all exciting entertainment destinations. And winding through the region, connecting it all, are the more than 128 miles of Great Rivers Greenway’s trails for hiking, biking and exploring. The region is lush with natural wonders -- the mighty Mississippi and Missouri rivers, state and national forests, the Ozark mountains, and historic wine country.

In 2023, Major League Soccer team St. Louis CITY SC is set to kick off its inaugural season in a state-of-the-art stadium not far from the champion Blues and Cardinals. That same year, a $175 million expansion and facelift on America’s Center convention center is slated for completion. Nearby, the $1.75 billion National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency’s campus will mark the biggest federal investment project in the history of the city, and local universities and innovation hubs are amplifying the region’s position as a leader in geospatial technology.

St. Louis is proud of its recognition as being a city with a fast-growing life sciences market. Cortex Innovation Community and the Danforth Plant Science Center provide start-up opportunities in technology and biological science. Along with committed leaders from some of the region’s largest companies and organizations, and with regional initiatives such as LaunchCode, STL.works and NPW, fostering equity is a commitment in a region full of exciting opportunities for skill training and continuing education.
Main Focus, Priorities, and Key Responsibilities

The Barbara B. Taylor Director is the chief executive of the Museum and is responsible for setting the Museum’s direction, implementing the Museum’s strategic plan, catalyzing the organization to move forward, and fostering the engagement of others in this endeavor for the public good. The Director is a leader, both internally and externally, guiding the Museum’s fulfillment of its mission at a strategic, organizational, and operational level. Additionally, the Commission and Governing Boards are important partners to the Director in all these processes. Two particularly important components of this role for the Museum are active, engaged, and transparent communications, along with exceptional talent management.

Champion for Art and the Role of the Museum: The Director is a champion for art across time and cultures. The Director actively keeps art at the center of the Museum’s mission and activity, advocates for art in the broader world, speaks to the abiding principles and best-practice standards of a leading museum, and helps shape the role of the Museum in helping the community deal with its challenges.

Architect for Change: The Director is a thoughtful architect for the evolution and growth of the Museum, combining vision, planning, and deliberate action to realize change over time. Such an architect anchors the designs for the future with an understanding of past accomplishments and within the present context.

Steward: The Director is a proactive steward of the Museum’s assets, including people, collections, finances, facilities, profile, reputation, and external relationships. The steward role considers current needs and attends to requirements for long-term health.

Public Face and Civic Presence: The Director embodies the mission and role of the Museum in the community, among arts and culture organizations in St. Louis, with City and County stakeholders, and with regional, national, and international partners. The Director speaks, acts, and collaborates on behalf of the Museum in the broader civic realm. The Museum has special responsibility to the community by reason of its tax funding.

Specifically, the next Barbara B. Taylor Director of the Saint Louis Art Museum will be responsible for the following:

Leadership

- Provide inspirational leadership to the Museum, with respect for its history and a creative vision for its future. Serve as the experienced and influential representative of the Museum locally, as well as in the regional, national, and global arts/cultural museum community.

- Collaborate with the various Boards, staff, and other constituents to refine the Museum’s long-term goals, creating and executing a new overall strategic plan. Engage the Board members as active participants in fundraising efforts, and in cultivating and identifying potential Trustees and donors.
● Create a positive working environment for the entire organization, fostering strong staff morale and an atmosphere of teamwork and mutual support among all staff. Implement policies and procedures that ensure ongoing professional development, and motivate and guide a highly functioning team.

● Advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion through oversight of the Museum’s new Office of Diversity as framed by the Diversity Study Group Report, and in collaboration with the Board of Commissioners’ Diversity Committee. The Director will advance DEI across the full spectrum of leadership roles, including staff leadership and management, talent development, governance, programming, and external relationships.

● Maximize fiscal sustainability through multiple earned and contributed revenue streams. Responsibly manage an annual operating budget of $35 million. Work with the Board of Commissioners and Board of Trustees to communicate with transparency, and provide them with high-quality information to support sound policy decisions and facilitate their fiduciary responsibilities.

**Fundraising & External Relations**

● Meet the needs of and address requests from the ZMD, carefully attending to the public funding mechanisms that provide financial support for the Museum; maintain respect of and for taxpayers who collectively constitute the largest group of “funders” of the Museum.

● Cultivate major gifts from individual donors and steward the institution’s most significant past, current, and potential donors.

● Encourage collectors in developing their collections and steward gifts of art to the Museum’s permanent collection.

● Guide the Development and External Affairs teams in implementation of their key functions. Those functions include annual membership; annual fund; donor cultivation, appreciation, and retention; major gifts and planned giving; government agencies; corporate and foundation relations; marketing and communications.

● Serve as the primary spokesperson and advocate for the Museum to a range of external audiences locally, nationally, and internationally, underscoring the role of art and culture to these communities.

**Artistic & Programmatic Leadership/Audience Engagement**

● Provide experience, scholarship, and stature in order to enhance the Museum’s profile in the artistic and museum community regionally, nationally, and internationally.
• Oversee the work of curators in continuing to develop a vision for the Museum’s collections, exhibitions, and programs that reflects a commitment to creative excellence that is accessible to a range of audiences as described in the Diversity Study Group Report.

• Embrace the power of new and interactive technology and its applications to advance exhibitions, programs, the visitor experience, scholarship, and internal museum functions such as fundraising and collections management.

• Continue to assess the current collection, while continuing to move the Museum forward with its acquisitions and deaccessioning; actively safeguard the physical health of the collection, diligently informing the Boards of any long-term considerations.

• Provide understanding and knowledge of the art and museum world and its key players, together with an ability to translate this into meaningful collaborations and exhibitions for the institution that address the community, national, and international audiences. Actively cultivate relationships with artists and collectors interested in deepening their own as well as the Museum’s collections.

• Foster and encourage scholarly activities that elevate the Museum’s profile nationally and globally, including publications and articles, seeking industry and academic recognition for specific portions of the collection, as well as for noteworthy exhibitions and artists.

• Work in close collaboration with staff and volunteers to enhance the visitor experience before, during, and after their time at the Museum, ensuring positive and enjoyable experiences for all audiences.

• Continue to explore new ways to reach new audiences, create innovative exhibitions and initiatives, and partner with outside individuals and organizations to develop meaningful programming.

Operations

• Develop, implement, and accomplish the annual operating plan and annual budget of the organization as approved by the Board of Commissioners and Board of Trustees, working with staff to evaluate day-to-day operational effectiveness of the Museum and align resources to fulfill strategic goals.

• Oversee, along with guidance and support from the Boards, budgeting, annual financial audits, tax filings, and maintenance of requisite correct and complete records.

• Maintain the healthy operation of the Museum under all state, county, and other local rules and regulations and contractual requirements, and in keeping with the best practices and standards of collecting museums.

• Communicate with and make requisite reports to the ZMD taxing district and interface with other ZMD member institutions.
Key metrics for success in this role includes:

- Positive, measurable results in the areas of responsibility above.
- Responsible budget development and oversight so that all operations are sustainable and in line with earned and contributed funds.
- Presenting the Museum as an organization that is open, inclusive, and representative of the multiple communities and cultures that shape the region.

Candidate Profile

The ideal candidate should possess the following professional experience and expertise, key competencies, and personal qualities.

Professional Experience and Expertise

At least 10 years of executive experience in the nonprofit sector and in increasingly senior roles, overseeing a team of professionals while navigating complex organizational structures and processes. Top candidates will have an advanced degree in art, art history, arts management, or another relevant field; candidates with equivalent professional experience and successful track records of accomplishments will also be considered.

Passion for art and museums: knowledge of and commitment to art history and scholarship; depth and breadth of knowledge appropriate to the Museum’s collection. Experience working with a range of art collections. Domain expertise in the principal functions of art museums. A high level of energy and enthusiasm for art and its role/purpose/opportunities in today’s world/community.

Political acumen and governance experience: experience with complex institutional governance bodies; facility in building relationships with constituents; diplomatic skills and political sophistication.

Experience in fundraising and philanthropy: understanding of fundraising principles and strategy; experience building philanthropic relationships; experience with collectors in a philanthropic context. Able to provide high-touch engagement with all of the Museum’s constituents.

Experience in financial stewardship: knowledge and experience in the funding models and strategies of multifaceted cultural institutions, including public funding. A strong record of successful oversight and management of finance and operations, with the perspective to consider the impact of decisions and make sound recommendations.

Appreciation for and experience in guiding processes: a respect for and ability to lead and manage processes involving an intersecting range of internal and external constituents.
Demonstrated success via building a framework of sound processes so that staff have the freedom to do their best work and the organization can serve its audiences at a high level.

**Well-honed communication skills:** effective in communicating verbally and in writing with a high degree of sensitivity, serving as the outward-facing representative of the Museum. Able to speak and write fluidly about the Museum’s legacy, impact, and future direction to all audiences. Superb public speaking abilities, equally comfortable in presenting to small groups as well as large audiences, internally as well as externally.

**Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

Genuine belief in and deep commitment to the values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility; an understanding of how those values animate the entire Museum enterprise; and an appreciation of their relevance to the Museum as a publicly-funded institution. The Director will bring an inclusive and collaborative ethos and approach to advancing DEI at the Museum and in the Museum’s engagement with the community as a willing and humble partner and collaborator.

Experience in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion work in an organization or community context. Ideally the next Director will have material prior experience in DEI work.

**Other Professional and Personal Qualities**

**Respected and recognized leader in the art and museum field:** A person with credibility, experience, and gravitas as a leader and champion of art. Inspirational in manner that elevates the engagement and commitment of others.

**Thoughtful advocate for the role of museums in the current era:** An individual with deep personal interest in art, a nuanced appreciation for the evolving role of museums, and an active voice in this conversation. An enthusiastic, credible, and persuasive spokesperson for the Museum and in the field.

**Approachable, open, and outward facing:** A person energized and engaged by the opportunity for dialogue, conversation, and communications with others. Dedicated to reaching out to people and serving as an ambassador for the Museum in the community and for the Community itself.

**Compassionate listener:** An empathetic leader who listens to voices throughout the organization and in the community. An ability to connect with people of all backgrounds and invite them into conversation.

**Empowering:** A person who fosters the engagement, growth, and achievement of others as an aspect of their leadership. Results-oriented with a collegial, team-oriented working style.
Decisive, flexible, and resilient: A person able to translate vision and plans into actions and outcomes. A tolerance for ambiguity; nimble in adjusting to changing circumstances and shifting priorities.

Collaborative thought leader: Consultative partner to the Boards and other constituents, demonstrating strong “EQ” (emotional intelligence).

Intellectually curious: Genuine and broad intellectual interests and openness to new ideas, thinking, perspectives, and experiences.

Trustworthy and courageous: This person will possess underlying ethical values, integrity, strength, and confidence along with humility and a healthy sense of humor.

Interest in becoming a citizen of St. Louis community: A person with the will and interest to make connections and become embedded in the St. Louis community. Motivated by the possibilities of both the Museum and its community.

Contact

Koya Partners, the executive search firm that specializes in mission-driven search, has been exclusively retained for this engagement. Naree W.S. Viner and Stephen Milbauer are leading this search. To make recommendations or to express your interest in this role please visit this link or email smilbauer@koyapartners.com. All nominations, inquiries, and discussions will be considered strictly confidential.

The Saint Louis Art Museum is an equal opportunity employer and strongly encourages applications from people of color, persons with disabilities, women, and LGBTQ+, and other underrepresented applicants.

About Koya Partners

Koya Partners, a part of the Diversified Search Group, is a leading executive search and strategic advising firm dedicated to connecting exceptionally talented people with mission-driven clients. Our founding philosophy—The Right Person in the Right Place Can Change the World—guides our work as we partner with nonprofits & NGOs, institutions of higher education, responsible businesses, and social enterprises in local communities and around the world.

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