

Academy Art Museum

Director

The Academy Art Museum seeks an experienced, dynamic arts professional to lead an exciting regional art museum; promote a strong vision for its exhibition program and permanent collection; generate support for its ambitious programming; increase visibility; continue progress in engaging ALL citizens.

Founded in 1958, and with an annual operating budget of \$1.6 million, the [Academy Art Museum](#) (AAM) is a small museum that punches well above its weight. As the only art museum on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, the museum takes seriously its mandate to expose local and regional audiences to visual art experiences that are intellectually rigorous, accessible, and engaging. With its proximity to the Chesapeake Bay and resulting tributaries, which create more shoreline in Talbot County than the entire west coast of the United States, the region is full of natural beauty and is known for its vibrant culinary and arts communities. Boasting one of the nation's most charming historic towns that includes galleries and artist studios, Easton is located just 1 hour from Baltimore, 1.5 hours from Washington, DC, 2 hours from Philadelphia, and 3.5 hours from New York City.

The museum is well supported by 27 Board Members plus 10 full-time and 7 part-time staff. It has a growing endowment of ~\$7 million and is in excellent financial health, with reserve funds for ambitious projects that exceed the operating budget. Since 1958, AAM has served as the region's artistic locus. Today, it operates in a 24,000 square foot complex, is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, and draws 30,000-45,000 visitors annually. In January 2023, the museum eliminated its admission fee to provide barrier-free access to everyone.

BACKGROUND

The Academy Art Museum collection contains 1,700 artworks, including prints and drawings by Mary Cassatt, Pablo Picasso, and Kiki Smith; photographs by Berenice Abbott, Ansel Adams, Graciela Iturbide, Lisette Model, and Zanele Muholi; works by pioneering African-American artists including Leonardo Drew, Sam Gilliam, Martin Puryear, and Renee Stout, among others. In 2008 AAM was selected as the Maryland recipient of the Dorothy and Herbert Vogel Collection. With its relatively young and small collection, AAM is in the unique position of actively shaping holdings that represent a fuller historical narrative through the inclusion of diverse artists. Each year the museum spends \$40K-\$70K on acquisitions and accepts an average of 30 donations of artworks through its relationships with private collectors and initiatives such as Museum Exchange.

AAM organizes between 8 and 12 original exhibitions annually for its three main galleries which comprise approximately 3,000 square feet of space. The exhibitions, which are drawn from the collection as well as from institutional and private loans, cover a range of themes and art from the 17th century to the current day. The museum also hosts in its main galleries an annual member and student show and collaborates with the sponsors of a community-based Waterfowl festival and a plein air exhibition, which is the largest in the U.S. The annual budget for exhibitions ranges from \$80K-\$120K. In spring 2023, the museum established a special fund for ambitious curatorial projects that exceed the operating budget.

The museum has benefited from a partnership with Art Bridges Foundation, which generously funds the transportation of loaned works by major artists and has subsidized related

educational programming. AAM also has relationships with the National Gallery of Art, High Museum, and Virginia Museum of Fine Art, among other institutions that share works from their collections to enhance AAM's shows.

Since 2017, the museum has implemented an annual Artist-in-Residence program in which artists receive housing, resources, and a capstone exhibition and catalogue. The initiative is fully funded through summer 2028. In fall 2021, the museum began commissioning for its atrium large-scale projects designed to enrich the visitor experience with visually captivating installations for all ages.

In January 2023, the museum announced an exciting capital project – the development of a state-of-the-art collection storage facility adjacent to the museum. The 5,000 square foot space is slated to break ground in fall 2024 and open one year later. AAM has engaged Brooklyn-based architect GRT to design the space. While the building's interior will serve a purely administrative function, the exterior will serve as an outdoor exhibition space featuring a display of artifacts uncovered in a series of archeological excavations commissioned by the museum on the site that tell the story of Henny and James Freeman. The Freemans were the first documented free Black landowning family in Easton and lived on the plot from 1787-1824. The site is in a historic neighborhood called The Hill, one of the earliest free Black settlements in the country. When complete, AAM's annex will enable the museum to better care for its collection and serve as an important stop for public engagement on The Hill Community Walking Tour. To learn more about the project, listen to Director Sarah Jesse and archeologist Jay Lunze discuss it on [WYPR's *On the Record*](#).

AAM is unique in being both a museum and an art academy. A commitment to both of these identities is at the heart of the Academy Art Museum. AAM programs its five art-making studios and Performing Arts Auditorium with more than 100 artmaking classes for adults, monthly lectures and concerts, weekly school tours, daily summer art camps, bi-monthly family days, a paid high school internship program for a cohort of up to 13 teens per year, and an annual Craft Show that draws more than 60 makers from around the country.

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Reporting to the Museum Board, the Director will manage the Academy Art Museum and orchestrate all services related to AAM's collections, exhibitions, programs, education, special events, marketing, and fundraising.

Priorities for the museum will be to:

- Fundraise for ambitious programming and solidify sustainability; diversify revenue sources and expand the circle of philanthropy.
- Maximize community engagement; retain a strong connection to AAM's loyal audience; build stronger connections to the broader community; engage community partners in mutually beneficial strategic partnerships.
- Increase visibility; strategically strengthen the exhibition slate to appeal to both broad audiences and the art world; re-imagine marketing efforts to reach a broad audience (locally, regionally, and nationally).

- Tighten the messaging and branding of AAM as a vital community resource for art education and access to a unique permanent collection and important exhibitions.
- Strengthen internal capacity; support a strong staff, strong Board, and strong volunteers.

Other responsibilities will be:

FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNICATIONS

- Serve as chief fundraiser for the museum; work closely with the staff, Board, and advisors to expand and diversify revenue streams and increase the annual budget; lead an exciting \$2.7M capital project to develop a state-of-the-art collection storage facility slated to break ground in late 2024; set high expectations for increased financial support from foundations, corporations, individuals, government, and fundraising events as well as earned income from membership, classes, camps, and other programs and sources.
- Serve as an articulate and persuasive spokesperson for the museum; represent AAM to all its constituencies, including funders, the arts and collector communities, civic organizations, allied businesses, and current and prospective visitors; cultivate strong and supportive relationships with other institutions in the region and in the arts community.

LEADERSHIP & GENERAL MANAGEMENT

- Manage the Academy Art Museum's business affairs with the intent of supporting its mission and goals for future growth and sustainability.
- With the Board, communicate the mission of the museum to the larger community and articulate the museum's place among cultural institutions in Talbot County, the state of Maryland, and the United States.
- Hire, supervise, motivate, develop, and evaluate staff, ensuring that staffing is appropriate to meet the organization's goals.
- Oversee the preservation and maintenance of the museum's physical assets (the collections, the building, and campus infrastructure).

EXHIBITIONS, COLLECTIONS, AND PROGRAMS

- Work with the Senior Curator to provide direction for the development of the collection and exhibitions, including the outdoor gallery at the museum's collection storage annex.
- Work with the heads of children, community, and adult programs to conceive outreach efforts and education programs; deepen visitors' appreciation for visual art.
- Strengthen relationships with other museums, collections, schools, universities, patrons, volunteers, and community members.

- Work with staff to develop a comprehensive plan to preserve, strengthen, and enrich the museum's collections; develop relationships with collectors and artists that may lead to appropriate gifts to the Academy Art Museum.

GOVERNANCE

- Set the strategic direction for AAM – in collaboration with the Board and under the direction of the Board's President – by creating and implementing the next strategic plan; and work collaboratively with the Board to execute the plan.
- Identify and help recruit new Board members who reflect the evolving demographics of greater Talbot County and whose talents, interests, and commitment will help further AAM's mission and goals.

IDEAL QUALIFICATIONS and PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will have/be:

- An advanced degree in art history, museum studies, or a related field and at least five years of experience in an art museum, visual arts organization, or arts center as a director, deputy director, division or department head, or chief curator.
- Measurable and successful results in increasing revenue through fundraising and membership and ticket sales, as well as managing growth and change.
- Experience collaborating successfully with patrons, donors, community leaders, artists, educators, government officials, and an organization's Board of Directors to strengthen said organization.
- Someone who is confident about, and capable of, seeing through to fruition the museum's annex construction project.
- Someone who feels connected to the museum's commitment to show exciting exhibitions of works by artists that are important to the art world at large, but also regional and local artists, and appreciates the museum's dual identity as both a museum and an art-making academy.
- Someone who shares the museum's commitment to art education and is prepared to support the critical role the museum plays in providing educational opportunities to students and adults on the Eastern Shore.
- A networker capable of leveraging existing relationships and forming new relationships to expand the resources and maximize the opportunities available to the museum.
- A strong oral and written communicator who will have a positive presence across all media and in a variety of interpersonal settings.
- A partner able to flexibly collaborate with diverse people and organizations; someone who understands the essential role of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access in sustaining the museum.

- A sophisticated understanding of digital technology and its application in a museum context.
- A mission-driven, outcome-oriented, diligent worker with high energy and initiative; a “doer” willing to work hands-on; experience in budgeting, program evaluation, planning, and management are essential.
- An emotionally mature individual with strong self-awareness and a good sense of humor; a good listener and strategist; comfortable receiving input from many sources and able to analyze and formulate disparate information into sound, well-organized plans.
- Intrepid yet tactful; determined yet respectful of others’ concerns; someone with the flexibility and creativity needed to find alternative ways to reach objectives when barriers arise; a skilled negotiator who does not drive themselves or others into a corner.
- A team builder – confident and competent, with strong skills in management and leadership; one who understands the subtleties of motivating and directing staff.

For more information please contact:

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