

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

5216 Montrose Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77006
CAMH.ORG | @camhouston

Press Release

Announcement

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston Appoints Melissa McDonnell Luján as Deputy Director



Photo of Melissa McDonnell Luján by Fernanda Varela.

HOUSTON, TX (September 11, 2023) –Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) announces a key leadership appointment with the addition of Melissa McDonnell Luján as Deputy Director. Luján brings extensive experience to CAMH leading Museum capital development projects that bridge design excellence with community engagement and civic impact. Luján will join the Museum in October.

#TrustArtists

Press Contact

For high-resolution images or
media inquiries, contact:

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As a non-collecting museum, CAMH is focused on the art of our time and realizing projects that create unexpected and unforgettable experiences with contemporary art. For 74 years, CAMH has introduced leading-edge artists to Houston, welcomed new audiences to contemporary art, and presented exhibitions that define global art history. Luján joins CAMH at an inflection point as the Museum prepares to celebrate its 75th year, is launching new civic initiatives in Houston, and initiates a new strategic and comprehensive campus planning effort. In her role, Luján will lead CAMH's internal operations, including capital and long-range planning initiatives.

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“CAMH is thrilled to welcome Melissa to join CAMH’s leadership,” says Executive Director Hesse McGraw. “Melissa is widely recognized as an innovative, pragmatic, and tenacious Museum leader. She approaches complex projects with a generous spirit of service to community and yet is highly disciplined in her approach to strategic objectives. It will be an honor to partner with her to chart CAMH’s future, which will jointly emphasize direct support for artists, benefits to our city and audiences, and positive societal impact.”

In addition to its exhibitions and education outreach, CAMH has significantly broadened its reach over the last three years through local partnerships with community organizations such as Houston Freedmen’s Town Conservancy and Houston Independent School District. Today, CAMH serves as a civic-minded organization with a dual, reinforcing focus on excellence in exhibitions and programming within the museum and meaningful impact with communities through partnerships and public art. With years of experience supporting work between museums, audiences, and stakeholder communities, Luján will provide critical operational leadership to CAMH’s effort to achieve catalytic impacts and to do so in a way that is sustainable for its staff, organization, and communities long-term.

About her appointment, Luján said, “As new opportunities and challenges unfold in the 21st century, cities, neighborhoods, and cultural organizations must ensure we are making space for artists—who imbue our daily lives with awareness, innovation, and meaning. Houston is a wonderfully idiosyncratic place for contemporary art. I am honored and excited to join the CAMH team as we celebrate 75 years and advance the Museum’s future through the prismatic lens of centering artists.”

Melissa McDonnell Luján is a museum professional with over 15 years of experience planning and managing capital and site-specific artist projects and leading operations activities for cultural organizations and private developers.

Luján is currently the Director of Project Development at the Menil Collection, where she leads capital projects and real estate development for the 30-acre urban museum campus. Recent major projects include the Menil Drawing Institute, which opened in 2018 and was designed by Johnston Marklee, the Hotel Saint Augustine, currently under construction adjacent to the Menil’s campus, and a comprehensive capital renovation plan for the Menil’s rental real estate. Over the past nine years at the Menil, Luján has held the progressive roles of Director of Operations, Director of Administration and Budget, and Budget and Project Manager.

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In addition to her work at the Menil, Luján has served as the treasurer on the board of *Gulf Coast: Journal of Literature and Fine Arts* at the University of Houston over the past seven years, on the Houston Art Alliance's Arts Disaster Resilience Advisory Committee, Montrose Livable Centers Advisory Committee, and is an active participant in the design community through the American Institute of Architects and the Rice School of Architecture.

From 2011 to 2014, Luján was Deputy Director and a project manager for Ballroom Marfa, a non-collecting contemporary art museum in Marfa, Texas. While living in Marfa, Luján was an instructor at the Texas Tech University College of Architecture El Paso and served on the boards of El Paso Opera, Amor Por Juárez, Marfa Montessori, and Marfa Public Library.

Before working in museums, Luján spent ten years in private design practice, including residential and small multi-family architecture, landscape, and retail design in Texas, California, Japan, and New York.

CAMH Mission

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston presents extraordinary, thought-provoking arts programming and exhibitions to educate and inspire audiences nationally and internationally.

General Information

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is located at 5216 Montrose Boulevard, in the heart of Houston's Museum District.

Hours

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| Wed | 11AM-6PM |
| Thu | 11AM-9PM |
| Fri | 11AM-6PM |
| Sat | 11AM-6PM |
| Sun | 11AM-6PM |

Admission is always free. For more information, visit CAMH.ORG or call 713.284.8250.

Luján has a Master of Architecture from Rice University School of Architecture in Houston, an Honors Bachelor of Arts in Spatial Arts and Design from Central Saint Martins in London, and an Associate of Applied Science in Retail and Exhibition Design from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City.

About Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

Established in 1948, CAMH is one of the oldest non-collecting contemporary art museums in the country, and is internationally known for presenting pivotal and landmark work by artists recognized as the most important of the 20th and 21st centuries. CAMH's mandate is to be present, to connect artists and audiences through the urgent issues of our time, and to adventurously promote the catalytic possibilities of contemporary art. CAMH's programming, both in and beyond the Museum, is presented free to the public, and advocates for artists' essential role in society.