



Position Specification

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

Director

Private and Confidential

Our Client

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) is a non-collecting institution dedicated to presenting the best and most exciting international, national, and regional art of our time. Over its 70+ year history, CAMH has gained an authority and stature as one of the oldest non-collecting, alternative exhibition spaces in the nation that is devoted exclusively to contemporary art. CAMH prides itself on presenting new art and documenting its role in contemporary life through exhibitions, lectures, original publications, and diverse educational programs and events. Free to the public, CAMH strives to be available and accessible to all.

History & Growth

Founded in 1948 by a group of seven Houston citizens, this newly-formed institution had a goal to present and document new art and its role in contemporary life. CAMH's history of exhibitions began with those presented at various sites throughout the city, including early exhibitions held in collaboration with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, such as *This is Contemporary Art* and *L. Moholy-Nagy: Memorial Exhibition*. The success of the institution's early efforts led to the building of a small, professionally equipped facility in 1950. It was in CAMH's first home that ambitious exhibitions of the work of Vincent van Gogh, Joan Miró, Alexander Calder, and Max Ernst were presented. In addition, exhibitions by artist John Biggers and his students from the then Texas Negro College (now Texas Southern University) reflected Houston's commitment to highlighting the work of diverse emerging and local artists. In 1972 the Museum moved into its iconic stainless-steel building in the heart of the Houston Museum District, designed for CAMH by the award-winning architect Gunnar Birkerts. Throughout the 1990s, CAMH began to focus on art made within the past 40 years, and to extend its reach internationally.

Reflecting back on the history of the institution showcases CAMH's role in defining contemporary art's history. Many of the artists who were shown at CAMH early in their careers are now luminaries of the art world and central to postwar art historical narratives, including Charles Eames, Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauschenberg, Philip Glass, Yvonne Rainer, Laurie Anderson, Cindy Sherman, Nancy Graves, and many others. CAMH has an annual operating budget of approximately \$3 million, and a staff of 26 full time staff and a number of additional part time staff. In fiscal year 2018, the Museum hosted approximately 70,000 visitors.

Exhibitions & Publications

The Museum continues to occupy its highly-recognizable space today. CAMH's two floors of gallery space offer six to eight exhibitions each year. Exhibitions presented in the Brown Foundation Gallery feature work by leading internationally-recognized artists working at the vanguard of contemporary art, as well as thematic exhibitions organized around aesthetic and social questions central to the nature of art and life today. While in the Nina and Michael Zilkha Gallery, the focus is on work by established artists as well as those who are emerging and early in their careers. Some notable examples have included: *Donald Moffett: The Extravagant Vein*; *Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art*; *Trenton Doyle Hancock: Skin and Bones, 20 Years of Drawing*; *Marilyn Minter: Pretty/Dirty*; *Annabeth Rosen: Fired, Broken, Gathered, Heaped*; and *Walls Turned Sideways: Artists Confront the Justice System*.

Each exhibition at CAMH is accompanied by a publication designed for an audience of both scholars and the general public. While the catalogues provide lasting documentation of CAMH's exhibitions, they also contribute to original knowledge and scholarship about contemporary art and the international discourse

around it. CAMH's respected publication program is an important means through which the Museum's national and international reputation (including among artists) has been established and maintained.

Education & Public Programs

In addition to traditional public programming including lectures, music, film, performing arts events, and guided gallery discussions, CAMH offers a number of unique educational and public programs to connect with the broader Houston community. On the first Saturday of every month, the Museum hosts an Open Studio—a drop-in, hands-on event with activities related to current exhibitions for creatives of all ages.

Longstanding partnerships with other cultural institutions also enrich the public programming at CAMH. Loft Concerts with Musiqa are the result of an ongoing collaborative partnership. The renowned contemporary classic music group celebrates CAMH exhibitions through concerts that highlight new music inspired directly by the work on display. Beginning in 2016, CAMH launched its Art at Noon program—a short and informal gallery talk followed by light lunch. Art at Noon invites curators, professors, artists, and a host of other creatives and professionals to discuss an exhibition from a different perspective.

CAMH also coordinates a Teen Council. One of the first organizations of its kind in the United States, this collaborative, creative incubator provides high school students with opportunities in leadership, visual literacy, and life skill development. During weekly meetings the council is introduced to the inner workings of museums and to the dynamic Houston arts community. Activities are decided upon by its members and can change from year to year, but past programs developed by the group include art markets, exhibitions, fashion shows, film screenings, listening parties, music festivals, and poetry slams. Every other year, the Council organizes an exhibition in the Nina and Michael Zilkha gallery featuring new work by young Houston-area artists. CAMH is proud to be celebrating twenty years of youth empowerment in the arts through Teen Council programming.

Current Momentum & Looking Forward

CAMH recently undertook an intensive strategic planning process, which validated the truly singular role the Museum plays in the Houston region by serving as a lens through which emergent social norms and cultural perspectives about the region, the country, and world can be viewed. As a non-collecting institution, CAMH continues to present “of the moment” work continuously over time, which allows it to be perpetually and truly contemporary. The Museum has reaffirmed its character as a provocative and independent organization, known for breaking down barriers and embracing challenging and difficult topics, often serving as a foil to more traditional ways of making and talking about art. It strives to be a leader not a follower, providing alternatives to what is considered normal, accepted, and expected in the art world. Correspondingly, the Museum is nimble, flexible, and ever-changing in a way that most organizations cannot be. The Museum, and its next Director, have an opportunity to capitalize on this rich history.

To this end, CAMH's strategic plan asserts a strong framework for the future, which carves out high level goals and specific objectives for strategic activity in the areas of programs and outreach, facilities and infrastructure, staff, communications, finances and fundraising, and governance. The CAMH team and Board of Trustees have already made significant progress in activating the Museum's strategic plan in these areas, and the momentum continues to build. The new Director will have a prominent/influential role in shaping the planning process going forward.

CAMH is where history is made—this Museum has presented the first solo career-launching shows for many artists who have emerged as the most important of the 20th century. This legacy can and must be raised up, built upon, and continued in perpetuity. The next Director will have the opportunity to further shape this direction with even more precision, and to build on this exciting momentum.

Houston

Houston is the largest city in Texas and the fourth-largest in the U.S. with a population of approximately 2.3 million (while the metro area population tops 6.3 million). It is also widely recognized as one of, if not the most, culturally and ethnically diverse cities in the world. According to the last census, Houston was estimated to be 44% Latino, 25% White, 23% Black, and 6% Asian. Nearly half of all residents speak a language other than English, and more than 145 languages are spoken across the city. Nearly 30% of the population is foreign-born.

While also known as home to NASA and the hub of the nation’s oil and gas industry, Houston has a rich and vibrant arts and culture scene. CAMH is located in the Museum District, a cluster of nineteen cultural institutions that also include the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Menil Collection. The District is in the heart of the city, has its own stop on the metro line, and hosts an estimated 8.7 million visitors each year. More recent flagship cultural institutions in the city include the Menil Drawing Institute (the first freestanding facility in the US created especially for the exhibition, study, storage, and conservation of modern and contemporary drawings), and the new Moody Center for the Arts (an interdisciplinary art center at Rice University). The MFA Houston’s Core Program at the Glassell School of Art and the University of Houston’s celebrated MFA program further enrich the vibrant artistic communities in the city, as do more than 70 galleries.

The Theater District in downtown Houston is home to nine professional performing arts organizations and ranks second in the country in terms of theatre seats in a concentrated area. It is one of only five American cities with permanent professional resident companies in all of the major performing arts disciplines (the Houston Grand Opera, the Houston Symphony Orchestra, the Houston Ballet, Theatre Under the Stars, and the Alley Theatre). A robust culinary community reflects the diversity of Houston, with the city regularly ranking on national lists of best food cities in the country.

Houston’s economy is tied, in part, to its geographic position to the Gulf Coast—the Houston Ship Channel and the Port of Houston is one of the nation’s busiest seaports. It is also home to a large concentration of corporate headquarters – the second largest number of Fortune 500 companies are based in Houston (after New York City). The Texas Medical Center is a non-profit umbrella organization which houses over sixty medical institutions and constitutes the largest medical complex in the world. Manufacturing and industry, higher education, and finance also are key sectors of the Houston economy.

The Role

The Director of Contemporary Art Museum Houston reports to the Board of Trustees of the Museum. In this role, the Director has authority over all aspects of CAMH, including refining strategic vision, artistic and programmatic direction, developing budgets, fundraising, and overall advocacy for CAMH’s mission in Houston and beyond. The successful candidate must be a visionary, innovative, inspiring, and fiscally responsible leader with a passion for contemporary art.

The new Director will be a dynamic and innovative leader who is eager to step into this position during a pivotal moment of transition for CAMH. Under this Director's guidance CAMH will increase its leadership role and visibility as an inclusive and engaging artistic player, refining and cementing the unique space and impact the Museum creates in this community. Implicit within this will be the Director's ability to draw upon their expertise in contemporary art, as well as knowledge of and connectivity to national and international communities of artists and other contemporary art institutions, to heighten CAMH's impact, focus, and reputation.

The successful candidate will raise the Museum's profile by strongly articulating a future vision and building on the current strategic plan and corresponding momentum in order to further evolve CAMH's programming and exhibitions. Critical to the Director's success will be the ability to fundraise effectively in coordination with the Board of Trustees. The successful candidate will have a track record of approaching resource-building with significant creativity and clarity of purpose. They will promote senior staff talent and expertise in support of the Museum's goals and will encourage curators and others to take an active role in representing the institution. Ensuring a wide range of donors feel included and involved, the new Director will increase and diversify financial support from individual donors, foundations, corporations and, where relevant, government funders, for annual operations, future capital projects, and growth of the Museum's endowment.

The Director will also serve as CAMH's primary spokesperson throughout Houston and the broader United States. They will be accessible and able to interact with the wide range of constituencies important to the Museum with the goal of expanding audiences and broadening the institution's stakeholder relationships. The Director will also build strong partnerships with other organizations throughout Houston, as well as nationally. The Director will work with the curatorial, education, and program staffs to develop and expand programming that enhances the Museum's position as a key player in Houston's highly diverse, dynamic, and growing arts and cultural community.

The Director will leverage the Museum's dedicated professional staff and will ensure that the strategic objectives are collectively agreed upon, effectively implemented, and realized in a fiscally responsible manner. They will engage and fully utilize the strengths of a capable and experienced senior leadership team, including a seasoned Deputy Director (currently serving as Interim Director), Curators, Director of Communications and Marketing, Director of Education and Public Programs, Director of Development, Registrar, and Preparator.

The Director will inspire the volunteers and support organizations to work in concert with the strategic goals of the Museum. They will approach the financial administration of the institution with resourcefulness, sound judgment, and a clear understanding of budgets.

Candidate Profile

The CAMH Director will demonstrate a decisive and yet collaborative leadership style, entrepreneurial drive, and interpersonal gravitas, tact, diplomacy, and discernment. The successful candidate will exhibit a deep knowledge of and passion for contemporary art, as well as a fundamental belief in art and creativity's value in society. They will have an understanding of and perspective on the important role that non-collecting institutions play in the 21st century arts landscape. In addition to leading the artistic direction of the Museum, this individual will be an enthusiastic and energetic champion for the institution externally. The ideal candidate will have experience curating or overseeing the curation of innovative exhibitions of contemporary art which have contributed to shifting dialogues.

They will also bring a track record of entrepreneurial and strategic leadership experience, and the ability to lead through change. The successful candidate will have the ability to motivate staff, donors, the community of Houston—as well as national arts leaders interested in what an arts platform like CAMH can mean to its community—around a shared vision. They will build on current momentum, and will continue to breathe life into the Museum’s vision, helping to shape CAMH’s strategy from their own experience and philosophy.

This person will have earned a reputation for effective management and leadership, as well as effectiveness in partnering with a Board and senior management team. They will be an excellent communicator and listener, as well as have an eagerness to cultivate relationships with diverse constituencies both internally and externally. The Director will be a civic-minded leader who is comfortable and eager to dive into Houston’s social and cultural environment, and committed to investing the time and energy needed to solidify CAMH’s reputation as a creative leader in connecting Houston’s many and diverse audiences.

The next leader of the Museum will have demonstrated a high level of achievement in developing or contributing to a compelling and forward-looking strategy for an organization, building the financial, operational, and ideological support for its implementation, and skilfully balancing and aligning the needs of multiple interests. In particular, they should have experience managing institutional transition, and will be energized by building the Museum’s strategy for the future, as well as advancing its stature, recognition, and audience engagement locally and more broadly. The successful candidate will be a natural team builder with the energy, optimism, and drive to lead CAMH into the future.

In terms of the performance and personal competencies required for the position, we would highlight the following:

Setting Strategy

- Track record as an innovative and entrepreneurial thinker, comfortable taking risks; will have the vision, creativity, and judgment to identify nuanced objectives and lead an inspiring plan for CAMH’s future.
- The inclination to seek and objectively analyze data from a variety of sources to support decisions and to align others with the organization’s overall strategy.
- The ability to effectively balance the desire/need for broad change with an understanding of how much change the organization is capable of handling, to create realistic goals and implementation plans that are achievable and successful and which respect CAMH’s institutional history.
- The ability to develop a productive and mutually fulfilling relationship with the Board of Trustees and Museum staff in guiding the articulation of CAMH’s new vision and strategy and, in some ways, identity for the future.

Executing for Results

- The ability to translate CAMH’s over-arching strategy into clear goals, while committing the Museum to improved performance; tenacious and accountable in driving results.
- Comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty; the ability to adapt nimbly and lead others through complex situations.

- A leader who is viewed by others as having a high degree of integrity, sensitivity, and forethought in their approach to making decisions; the ability to act in a transparent and consistent manner while always taking into account what is best for the organization.
- Will approach the financial oversight of the Museum with an even-handed and reasoned approach to decision-making.

Resource Development

- Will have experience building an institution's funding base—in partnership with the Board—to increase and diversify financial support from individual donors, foundations, and potentially corporations and government funders for both annual operations and future capital needs, as well as to continue building the endowment.
- The ability to inspire loyalty to and support of CAMH and continue to carve out its distinct niche and place in the Houston cultural and philanthropic communities, as well as elevate the reputation of and excitement around the Museum.
- Will engage their professional network to substantively further CAMH's mission, particularly through partnering with the Houston community and key collectors.

Relationships and Influence

- Naturally connects and builds strong relationships with others both inside and outside the institution, demonstrating strong emotional intelligence and an ability to communicate clearly and persuasively.
- An ability to inspire trust and followership in others through influence, enthusiasm, passion in their beliefs, and active drive; will persuasively communicate CAMH's direction and strategy both internally and externally and assure effective communication among the Museum's stakeholders including the Board of Trustees and the growing donor community.
- Encourages others to share the spotlight and visibly celebrates and supports the success of the team.
- Creates a sense of purpose/meaning for the team that generates followership beyond their own personality and engages others to the greater purpose for the organization as a whole.

Leading Teams

- The ability to attract and recruit top talent, motivate the team, delegate effectively, celebrate diversity within the team, and manage performance; they will encourage and celebrate the talents of that team while also holding each accountable to mutually agreed-upon goals.
- Will foster a culture of collaboration, mutual respect, teamwork, and empowerment, and will have the ability to counsel and coach the senior management team and curatorial leadership for success.
- The ability to persevere in the face of challenges, and exhibit a steadfast resolve and relentless commitment to higher standards, which commands respect from followers.
- A leader who is self-reflective and aware of their own limitations; leads by example and drives the organization's performance with an attitude of continuous improvement by being open to feedback and self-improvement.

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- Must have the ability to create excitement and lead with inspiration, balanced with the judgment to provide calm, consistent guidance and leadership to internal staff.

Personal Characteristics

- An energetic and inspiring leader who genuinely enjoys and excels in both the internal and external aspects of a museum Director's role.
- Will embrace the Houston community professionally and personally, enjoying the opportunity to live in the city and region.
- Tirelessly and optimistically drives the Museum forward in clarifying and asserting its local and national identity and individuality. The new Director will lead CAMH with integrity, courage, and enthusiasm.

An Equal Opportunity Employer: Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) does not and shall not discriminate in employment on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status.

Contact

Russell Reynolds Associates has been exclusively retained for this search and prospective candidates are invited to contact Russell Reynolds Associates directly. All inquiries and discussions will be considered strictly confidential. To apply or for more information, please contact CAMHouston@russellreynolds.com.