

Curator of Contemporary Art position, Rochester

Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, Rochester, New York

Betsy Foster

Memorial Art Gallery (MAG) of the University of Rochester

CURATOR OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Reports to: Curator in Charge

Supervises: Part-time Assistant Curator of Media Art

Status: FT 40 hrs/week

Salary range: \$55-80,000

To apply: Link to this website: <https://www.rochester.edu/human-resources/careers/>, click on "Search all jobs" and search for Job# 237801

About MAG

The Memorial Art Gallery (MAG) of the University of Rochester is a dynamic and growing civic art museum that is expanding the cultural footprint of Western New York and establishing itself as a notable contributor to the global conversation on contemporary art. Having recently received its largest gift ever, more than \$4 million to permanently endow MAG's contemporary art program, MAG is seeking its first Curator of Contemporary Art. The successful candidate will have the opportunity to work with an excellent professional staff to build on the momentum developed over the past seven years in establishing a global contemporary art program on behalf of an actively collecting and teaching institution with a robust exhibition program and deep ties to the community.

With more than 13,000 objects spanning five millennia, MAG is rooted in the western tradition of the encyclopedic collecting institution. It is now evolving into a 21st-century global art museum. In recent years the Museum has significantly grown its contemporary art program, with a new gallery dedicated to media art, the expansion of its Centennial Sculpture Park, and numerous important acquisitions, among them *Here she is...v1* by Charles Atlas, *Convertible Series, Group 10*, by Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, *Three Fujins* by Hung Liu, *Bakelite Robot* by Nam June Paik, *Bi'nnete (No Water)*, an installation of 30 unique paintings on paper by Wendy Red Star, *Portrait of Qusuquzah #6* by Mickalene Thomas, and *Martyrs (Air, Earth, Fire, Water)* by Bill Viola. Other important artists newly added to the collection are Pia Camil, Nick Cave, George Condo, Beauford Delaney, Sam Durant, Ja'Tovia Gary, Sam Gilliam, Sky Hopinka, Norman Lewis, Sol Lewitt, Cannupa Hanska Luger, Josiah McElheney, Grayson Perry, Sondra Perry, Preston Singletary, Kara Walker, and others.

An ambitious program of major commissions has further elevated the museum's profile, including media artist Isaac Julien's 10-screen video installation *Lessons of the Hour*, and Rashid Johnson's first permanent public outdoor work of art, which will anchor the expansion of the Centen-

nial Sculpture Park, currently under construction.

In the coming years the Curator of Contemporary Art will have the opportunity to work with Museum's director, their curatorial colleagues at MAG, scholars at the University of Rochester—a major private research institution—and consultants and experts in various fields to recognize existing traditions and histories and to rethink and reframe the history of art through a 21st-century global lens.

MAG stands for: Art and Culture; Learning and Joy; Accessibility and Inspiration; Stewardship and Integrity; and Community and Sociability. Our guests always come first, and every team member strives to provide outstanding customer service to all visitors and prospective visitors. Successful employment at MAG involves embracing and demonstrating these values every day.

Position Summary

MAG seeks a flexible, creative, and collaborative curator with broad expertise in modern and contemporary art in a variety of media, especially of the past 20 years, and a strong network of relationships among artists, gallerists, collectors, and professional colleagues to become its first Curator of Contemporary Art. This recently endowed position will be a formative one, having the opportunity to build on the Museum's robust record of success in recent years acquiring important works of contemporary art and commissioning major projects. This new position offers the ideal candidate an opportunity to have a significant impact upon the institution and the local, national, and international communities it serves. The Curator of Contemporary Art will supervise the part-time Assistant Curator of Media Arts and will serve as a vital part of the curatorial team. Reporting to the Curator in Charge, the Curator of Contemporary Art will be expected to travel widely and will have access to the funds needed to support the pursuit of contemporary acquisitions. The Curator will organize permanent collection installations and temporary exhibitions that will help advance the Museum's mission and achieve its strategic objectives in diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI).

The museum seeks a candidate who thrives on community and public engagement and who can share their vision and secure widespread support for it both inside and outside the institution, as well as effectively lead and manage teams to develop exhibitions, installations, and special projects. This individual must have a full working knowledge of all aspects of exhibition organization and collection care and building. They must be familiar with generating exhibition budgets and production schedules and bringing these in on time and within budget, all in consultation with the Curator in Charge. Additionally, they must be familiar with expenses associated with special installation requirements, honoraria, and artist fees.

The Curator will also serve as an active and visible member of the local, national, and international arts community, and as an outward-facing presence in the art world. Finally, the Curator will bring a spirit of openness and collaboration to their work at MAG and embrace the interdisciplinary scope of the Museum's exhibitions.

Primary Responsibilities

As directed by and in coordination with the Curator in Charge:

- Develops, manages, and stewards permanent collection of modern and contemporary art. Conducts original research, selects objects, collaborates with outside scholars, presents and makes recommendations for acquisitions, deaccessions, and gifts to the Art Committee, prioritizes and provides oversight for conservation treatments. Couriers works of art to national and international loan exhibitions, as needed; cultivates and maintains relationships with national and

international colleagues through correspondence and professional meetings. Involvement in emergency on-call on rotation and emergency planning.

- Presents and interprets permanent collection in galleries and publications. Originates, develops, and presents temporary exhibitions, and organizes and coordinates temporary loan exhibitions as related to areas of expertise and responsibility. Originates concepts, conducts original research, selects objects, collaborates with team consisting of curatorial colleagues, educators, exhibition designer, and facilities on interpretation, display, presentation, and installation. When appropriate, works with educators and IT staff (or outside digital interactive designers) to develop in-gallery engagement tools. Obtains loans from other institutions and private individuals. Produces and contributes to publications supporting the collection and exhibitions, including scholarly essays and texts in addition to gallery text.
- Develops programs to support and enhance the permanent collection, as related to areas of expertise and responsibility. Collaborates closely with Academic Programs and Marketing and Engagement departments to create and support programming to enhance community engagement with the contemporary art collection and exhibitions. Gives public lectures on exhibitions and permanent collection displays as well as lectures to community groups, docents, and provisional docents. Provides access to and lectures on MAG's collections and exhibitions to University of Rochester and area faculty and students.
- Engages in advancement efforts to support curatorial priorities, such as, actively seeking and cultivating collectors and donors for both funding and gifts of art, by visiting private collections and creating development reports, and leading trips with collectors and patrons to art fairs, art galleries, museums, and private collections nationally and internationally. Represents the museum at national and international art fairs, biennials, exhibition openings, and other contemporary art world events. Identifies and writes grant proposals to support MAG's exhibitions, permanent gallery installations, and collections stewardship initiatives. Participate in donor and UR alumni events, as well as museum membership activities and events.

Education and Training

M.A. in Art History (Ph.D. preferred) or equivalent experience as evidenced by a track record of significant exhibitions and substantive publications. A minimum of 5 years of experience in research or museum environment with knowledge of conservation, installation, and interpretive techniques; or an equivalent combination of education and experience.

Skills

- Demonstrated knowledge of and passion for contemporary art and artists, including local and regional artists, and for exploring new directions in the fields of contemporary art and museums
- Strong interpersonal skills; ability to interact respectfully, collegially, and professionally with colleagues, other employees, donors, and lenders
- Commitment to promoting the diversification of artists and audiences and to considering acquisitions and programs through the museum's DEAI strategic initiative.
- Demonstrated ability to work closely with artists to realize exhibitions and publications
- Superb written and verbal communication skills
- Highly organized working style and ability to juggle a variety of deadlines and commitments simultaneously
- Commitment to best practices; curatorial ethics and confidentiality

ArtHist.net

Reference:

JOB: Curator of Contemporary Art position, Rochester. In: ArtHist.net, Jun 17, 2022 (accessed Apr 6, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/36970>>.