

Phoenix Art Museum

OFFICIAL STATEMENT

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Phoenix Art Museum announces CEO transition

Amada Cruz, the Sybil Harrington Director and CEO, appointed director of Seattle Art Museum

PHOENIX (June 10, 2019) – Amada Cruz, the Sybil Harrington Director and CEO of Phoenix Art Museum, has been appointed as the Illsley Ball Nordstrom Director and CEO of the Seattle Art Museum following an extensive international search. Cruz will conclude her service with Phoenix Art Museum on July 10, 2019.

Cruz has served as the Sybil Harrington Director and CEO of Phoenix Art Museum since February 2015. Prior to her time with the Museum, she served as the executive director of ArtPace in San Antonio, Texas.

During her tenure with the Museum, Cruz prioritized increasing access for individuals of all ages and backgrounds in the diverse Valley community. As a result, the Museum embarked on a bilingual-communications initiative, which will include the Museum's forthcoming fully bilingual website scheduled to launch in early fall 2019, made possible through the support of the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust, with additional support from The Steele Foundation. In addition, Cruz worked with the Valley's corporate community to increase free-access opportunities, including Discount Tire Free Family Sundays; the Military Access Program (MAP@PAM), which provides free admission for veterans and active-duty military and their families and is made possible through the support of APS; and in 2018, a free-under-18 admission program made possible through the support of The Steele Foundation.

Cruz also sought to increase national exposure for the Museum, part of a strategic initiative to bring the world to Phoenix, and Phoenix to the world. Through her efforts, the Museum earned funding from various national foundations, some for the first time in the Museum's history, including the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ford Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation, and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, among others. Through a robust publications program, the Museum released a number of acclaimed exhibition catalogues published by major art publishing houses, including Rizzoli New York and Prestel Publishing. Additionally, Cruz initiated a focus on developing original scholarship, resulting in a number of groundbreaking exhibitions that have traveled or will travel nationally, including *Sheila Pepe: Hot Mess Formalism*; *Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist*, which will be exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City; and the forthcoming *Teresita Fernández: Elemental*, curated by Cruz, which was co-organized with and will premiere at Pérez Art Museum Miami this fall.

Cruz also worked closely with Museum donors and the Board of Trustees to prioritize the long-term financial health of the organization as part of a strategic, ongoing, multi-year effort to reduce debt, streamline Museum processes, and create new efficiencies. Additionally, Cruz developed partnerships that enabled the Museum to embark on vital infrastructure improvements, including securing a low-interest loan from the Arizona Community Foundation that enabled the Museum to make immediate, significant, and transformational improvements to its vault storage, increasing the safety and security of the Museum's collection.

During her tenure, Cruz prioritized increased diversity in the art and exhibitions the Museum presented to its community. As a result, the Museum presented numerous exhibitions that featured artwork by women artists, artists of color, and LGBTQI+ artists, representing groups who have historically been underrepresented in museum collections on a national scale. Those efforts highlighted works by Kehinde Wiley, Sheila Pepe, Valeska Soares, Horacio Zabala, Kent Monkman, and The Propeller Group, and included exhibitions such as *Wondrous Worlds: Art and Islam Through Time and Place*, *In the Company of Women*, *Teotihuacan: City of Water, City of Fire*, and a new program of exhibitions featuring the work of Sikh artists. In addition, the Museum strengthened relationships with local artists through exhibitions and public programming.

“We have been exceptionally fortunate to have a director with the kind of experience and extraordinary vision that Amada brought to this institution,” said Jon Hulburd, chair of the Museum’s Board of Trustees. “Through her efforts, the Museum was able to elevate and professionalize a number of key Museum functions that will serve the institution for decades to come. Amada dedicated herself to elevating the Museum, its collection, and its scholarship on a national and international scale and empowered her staff to do the same, all while creating new opportunities for local artists and working to increase access so that every person in our community knows that they are welcomed here, that they belong here.”

Cruz is working closely with the Museum’s Board of Trustees and senior executive team in the development of a comprehensive transition plan that will ensure both the Museum’s success and continuity of services and access in the coming months.

The Museum will conduct a national search for the Sybil Harrington Director and CEO position, guided by the Board of Trustees working in concert with staff and community leaders. Information on that search will be available in the near future.

About Phoenix Art Museum

Phoenix Art Museum has provided access to visual arts and educational programs in Arizona for nearly 60 years and is the largest art museum in the southwestern United States. Critically acclaimed national and international exhibitions are shown alongside the Museum’s permanent collection of more than 19,000 works of American, Asian, European, Latin American, modern and contemporary art, and fashion design. The Museum also presents festivals, a comprehensive film program, live performances, and educational programs designed to enlighten, entertain, and stimulate visitors of all ages. Visitors also enjoy vibrant photography exhibitions through the Museum’s landmark partnership with the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona. To learn more about Phoenix Art Museum, visit phxart.org, or call 602.257.1880.

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