

DIRECTOR

HIRSHHORN MUSEUM AND SCULPTURE GARDEN

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

BACKGROUND

In 1966, with the donation of Joseph H. Hirshhorn's highly coveted collections of modern and contemporary art, the United States Congress passed legislation establishing the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden as a new organization within the Smithsonian Institution. The building and garden on the National Mall were undertaken immediately thereafter and the museum opened to the public on October 1, 1974. Designed by the late Pritzker-prize winning architect Gordon Bunshaft of the firm Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, the Hirshhorn Museum offers 60,000 square feet of dynamic exhibition space and maintains a four-acre sculpture garden situated on the National Mall. The Hirshhorn welcomes 750,000 visitors annually and provides free admission and extensive public programming to its audiences.

The museum collects, preserves, studies, exhibits and interprets modern and contemporary works of international fine art to further its one constant purpose: to develop a greater public understanding and appreciation of modern and contemporary art. The art that the Hirshhorn exhibits and acquires is often by less established artists and more experimental in nature, and frequently is more concerned with contemporary cultural issues and therefore markedly different from the art of earlier historical times typically found in more traditional art museums.

The current operating budget is \$14 million (including services centrally supplied by the Smithsonian), with an endowment of \$46 million mostly restricted for new acquisitions. The staff numbers about 60. The permanent collection includes nearly 12,000 works of art, dating from the 1830s to the present. The mandate of the Hirshhorn's collection and program is an international one, and its collecting focus since its founding has been on art produced in all media since the 1960s. The Hirshhorn's collection is distinguished by depth in the works of individual artists. It maintains the largest public collection of the art of Willem De Kooning and has strong concentrations of works by Francis Bacon, Alexander Calder, Tony Cragg, Alberto Giacometti, Arshile Gorky, Henry Moore, Clyfford Still and others. The staff has recently built depth in the works of John Baldessari, Robert Gober, Olafur Eliasson, Ana Mendieta, Gerhard Richter and Hiroshi Sugimoto and in the areas of Minimal and Conceptual Art.

Under the leadership of its last two directors and support of the Board of Trustees, the Hirshhorn has shifted its programming and identity to a more forward-looking and contemporary posture. It has positioned artists visibly in the program by inviting them to work in an ongoing way with the Museum's curators, collections, facility and its audiences. The Hirshhorn actively commissions new art and strives to present meaningful art experiences and engagement for its visitors throughout its campus and beyond. In 2007 the Hirshhorn staff and Board adopted a five-year strategic initiative built around a deep and sustaining commitment to artists and audiences. Also central to this initiative is the enhancement of the Museum's collections management expertise and capacity, particularly in the areas of presentation and conservation of contemporary art produced in new and alternative media.

The Museum's four major priorities, as outlined in the five-year strategic plan (2007-2011) are as follows:

1. To demonstrate leadership among international contemporary art museums by providing audiences with an exceptional and approachable visitor experience informed by the voices and visions of artists and distinguished by regard for each visitor's personal experience of art.
2. To define the Hirshhorn as a museum in the vanguard of researching, collecting, preserving, interpreting and advancing the art of our time that values highly the creative contributions of a committed professional staff.
3. To enhance the Hirshhorn's institutional capacities by improving facilities, technology, systems and staffing as needed to solidify the Museum's position at the forefront of the international contemporary art arena. This will be achieved by integrating artists into the Museum's practice to inspire a culture of greater creativity within the Hirshhorn and among its audiences.
4. To build the foundation for long-term financial health and prepare for the future operating, endowment and capital needs by developing a committed fundraising leadership base, broadening the constituency of support, and enhancing financial management and procurement systems.

THE SMITHSONIAN AND THE HIRSHHORN

The Museum is one of the 19 museums and numerous research centers and educational programs that comprise the Smithsonian Institution. The Director is responsible for realizing the mission of the Museum as part of the Smithsonian. The Smithsonian, a unique public trust establishment, is governed by a Board of Regents, which appoints the Secretary. The Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution appoints the directors of all museums, including the Hirshhorn, who serve at his pleasure. The Director of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden reports to the Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture who oversees the operations of various museums and Smithsonian organizations. Among the other arts organizations are the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the Freer and Sackler Galleries of Asian Art, the National Museum of African Art, the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, the Archives of American Art, and the Smithsonian Photography Initiative. Other museums in the history and culture portfolio include, among others, the National Museum of American History, the American Indian Museum, and the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

In addition to the Smithsonian administrative infrastructure, the Hirshhorn is fortunate to have a fine and extremely supportive Board of Trustees, perhaps the most impressive of any contemporary art museum in the world. There are a maximum of thirty trustees, who are elected to four-year terms and may be re-elected to serve three consecutive terms before rotating off the Board for a minimum of one year. The Board of Trustees convenes three times per annum and has an executive committee comprised of all officers and no more than three additional members of the Board of Trustees. They also meet three times per year, always in advance of the next impending meeting of the Full Board.

THE INDIVIDUAL

The Hirshhorn seeks an individual who demonstrates a passion for – and deep knowledge of – the field of modern and contemporary international art balanced with a sophisticated and experienced grasp of strategic thinking, planning and implementation, and institutional fundraising. With the recent transitions in leadership at the Smithsonian and the Hirshhorn, there is a strong need to stabilize and secure the support of the Museum's national Board of Trustees and forge a deeper, sustaining partnership between this group of key advocates and advisors, other Smithsonian museums and programs, and the Smithsonian's management and administration, including the Board of Regents.

DIRECTOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Secure the financial future of the Hirshhorn by energizing fundraising and donor cultivation.
- Continue to raise the visibility of the Hirshhorn and increase and diversify audiences.
- Work closely with both staff and Board to engage their best ideas, skills and support; continue to raise the bar through an ongoing emphasis on professional pride and high standards.
- Accelerate the Hirshhorn's current momentum, intelligently and strategically; engage both existing and new audiences alike.
- Evaluate the organization chart and staffing needs in order to create a more responsive institution; update and refine internal operations, as well as closely monitor physical facilities.
- Collaborate effectively with the Smithsonian management and administration, as well as other Smithsonian museums and programs; proactively seek opportunities for partnership and cross pollination of ideas and programs. Hirshhorn Board of Trustees, museum staff and various public constituencies.

SKILL SETS/EXPERIENCE

- Respected in the fields of modern and contemporary art.
- Ability to inspire, develop and build a Board and staff.
- Accomplished in acquiring, caring for and building a superb collection arising from a deep passion for and knowledge of art and art objects; ability to take full advantage of the opportunities a strong modern collection presents in combination with contemporary programming.
- Experience in conceiving, organizing and selecting great temporary exhibitions.
- Acquisitions experience; possessing a strong network with contemporary artists and dealers and respected in the art museum sector, nationally and globally.
- A proven fundraiser with major gifts experience and, ideally, experience working on a capital campaign.
- Success honing and implementing a strategic plan.
- A team player with experience collaborating on projects or among institutions.
- A connoisseur who is a tireless advocate for art, for art museums, the public that visits them and the staff that serves both.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Visionary – the ability to conceptualize and communicate the Hirshhorn of the future, while grounding that vision in the present
- High energy – a strong work ethic coupled with a focus on the priority tasks to be achieved; indefatigable in the face of bureaucratic challenges
- Charismatic – possessing the unique élan of a leader who is confident without being arrogant, humble, unpretentious, and clear without being categorical or imperious; possessing the ability to be seen and be impressive almost effortlessly
- Politically savvy – having a firm grasp of how Washington, D.C. works, the complexities of the Smithsonian's internal dynamics, and how the world of contemporary art functions, both in its most public manifestations as well as behind-the-scenes.

- Command of subject – the Director will naturally be considered an expert and a quotable source on matters pertaining to the field of modern and contemporary international art.
- Effective communicator – displaying a desire to listen to others for their useful and insightful ideas, and to be able to speak effectively, both in meetings and in public, to the nuances as well as the central issues of mission and vision for the organization, as well as the aspects of art that are critical to advancing the reputation of the organization.
- Team builder – Valuing all of the component people that are required to make the organization work, from junior staff members to dedicated Trustees. To establish a leadership team from the senior executive group that interfaces with those of the Board of Trustees as well as the administrative staff of the Smithsonian. To establish a strong ethos of collaboration with peer institutions within the Smithsonian and beyond.

TO APPLY :

Please E-mail your resume and a cover letter describing the qualities and experience you would bring to the position to:

Thomas Lawrence
Smithsonian Institution
Executive Resources Office
lawrencet@si.edu

please indicate announcement number EX-09-08

For questions or nominations contact Mr. Lawrence at 202-633-6319

Applications submitted prior to December 15, 2008 will receive immediate consideration by the search committee prior to the holidays.