Position Specification

Baltimore Museum of Art
Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director
Position Specification

Our Client

The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) was founded on the belief that access to art and ideas is integral to a vibrant and healthy civic life. This belief remains at the heart of the BMA and anchors its core values today.

The Museum was founded with a single painting in 1914. Today, it is home to more than 95,000 works spanning many eras and cultures from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas, and the Pacific Islands. The BMA’s collection includes the world’s largest public holding of works by Henri Matisse; one of the nation’s finest collections of prints, drawings, and photographs; and a rapidly growing number of works by contemporary artists of diverse backgrounds. The BMA has a history of collecting art that responds to the present moment, and the Museum embraces new ways to interpret art history and acquire artworks that tell an expansive story of art—challenging long-held narratives and centering new voices.

Since 2006, the BMA has provided free general admission so that everyone can enjoy the power of art. The Museum is distinguished by a grand historic building designed in the 1920s by renowned American architect John Russell Pope. A major cultural destination, the sprawling 210,000-square-foot building includes two tranquil and beautifully landscaped gardens featuring an array of 20th-century sculpture.

In recent years, the BMA has achieved international recognition for its groundbreaking exhibitions and initiatives that place social equity on par with artistic excellence in a highly diverse and culturally complex city. At the same time, the Museum is deeply committed to its local community. It is the unwavering vision of the BMA to be the most relevant, publicly engaged museum in the United States. The BMA reaches thousands of students and teachers each year through teacher workshops; Art-to-Go, a monthly activity allowing students to learn about important ideas through art; a bi-weekly series of virtual family tours; school visits; Literacy Through Art, an early learning program that encourages creative conversations about art; and more.

On the first floor of the museum, The Nancy Dorman and Stanley Mazaroff Center for the Study of Prints, Drawings and Photographs houses the BMA’s expansive collection of 67,000 works on paper spanning from the 15th century to the present day. An adjacent new space dedicated to the study of French artist Henri Matisse shines a spotlight on the largest and most comprehensive collection of works by the artist in a public museum. The Ruth R. Marder Center for Matisse Studies serves as a major resource for scholars and visitors interested in learning more about the French master’s practice. At BMA Lexington Market, a branch of the Museum in the nation’s oldest public market, visitors can create, converse, and participate in programming that connects the Museum’s core creative work with the Market space.

In the past few years, the Museum’s public programs have included BMA Violet Hour, which connects visitors directly with artists through presentations, performances, and other interactive experiences; BMA x NWMA, a monthly talk hosted with the National Women of the Arts to promote the works of women artists; and Necessity of Tomorrow(s), a conversation series on art, race, social justice, and imagining the future. The BMA has also supported JJC talks, a monthly artist conversation hosted by the Joshua Johnson Council (JJC), one of the oldest African American museum support groups in the U.S. In 2020, the BMA fulfilled a pledge to only purchase works of art by women artists, acquiring 65 works by 49 women artists, including 40 who had not previously been represented at the Museum.

Today the BMA employs approximately 180 full and part-time employees, and the annual budget is approximately $23.2 million. The Museum’s endowment currently stands at approximately $186 million. The Museum has a highly engaged and energized 40-member Board of Trustees.
The mission statement of the Museum continues to define its character. The BMA connects art to Baltimore and Baltimore to the world, embodying a commitment to artistic excellence and social equity in every decision from art presentation, interpretation, and collecting, to the composition of its Board of Trustees, staff, and volunteers—creating a museum welcoming to all.

**Strategic Plan**

The BMA has embarked on a bold mission and vision in its strategic plan that will have both regional and national impact. This includes increasing and diversifying audiences, acquiring and presenting a nationally significant post-WWII African-American art collection for a Black majority city, diversifying its exhibitions and public programs in accordance with this new collecting emphasis, as well as diversifying its board and staff to effect systemic change across the institution. The BMA intends to become a leading, replicable model for community engagement through collecting and interpreting underrepresented art and artists.

To accomplish this mission, vision, and strategy will require identifying increased revenue from all sources including endowment, annual fundraising, membership, and earned income. For this reason, challenging but realistic financial targets are projected as a key result to support new initiatives and expand existing ones. This vision, mission, and strategic plan represent an extension of the historical character of the BMA as a risk-taking, forward thinking, and bold arts institution with a deep commitment to serving its constituents.

**More About The Collection**

The Baltimore Museum of Art is home to a world-class collection, which is recognized for a number of key strengths. The renowned Cone Collection is the crown jewel of the BMA, featuring works by Matisse, Picasso, Pissarro, Courbet, and Degas. In the early 20th century, Baltimore sisters Claribel and Etta Cone visited the Paris studios of Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso and began amassing an exceptional collection of approximately 3,000 objects. The Cone Collection came to the BMA upon Etta Cone’s death in 1949, and has been on view in the BMA’s Cone Wing since 1957. Between the Cone Collection and the acquisitions work of Emeritus Senior Curator Jay Fisher, the BMA proudly maintains the largest and most comprehensive publicly held collection of Matisse works in the world.

Additional highlights include:

- One of the most significant holdings of works on paper in the country encompasses 57,000 prints, 5,000 drawings, and 5,000 photographs from the 15th century to the present with graphic works by European artists; Modernist prints and drawings; experimental photographs; and 20th-century American photographs.
- The contemporary collection has strong holdings of Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, Conceptual Art, and Pop Art and has grown substantially in recent years with more works by women, artists of color, and self-taught artists to broaden both past and present art historical narratives.
- One of the earliest and most important collections of African art in the U.S. includes more than 2,000 objects from 200 African states and societies with a range of media, from headdresses, masks, textiles, and paintings to jewelry, ceremonial weapons, works on paper, and pottery.
- More than 1,000 objects from China, Japan, India, Tibet, Southeast Asia, and the Near East with a strength in Chinese ceramics.
- Twenty-eight mosaic pavements from Antioch on view that tell the story of this ancient city prior to its destruction
- Works representing 56 artistic traditions from the Indigenous Americas, including the widely recognized Aztec and Maya of Mesoamerica, Nasca and Moche of Andean South America, and Nicoya and Atlantic Watershed of Costa Rica.
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- A collection of over 1,000 artworks from Native North America that includes highlights such as Plains beadwork, Arctic carved ivories, Navajo textiles, and world-renowned fiber arts from the Washoe, Akimel O'odham (Pima), Apache, and Pomo tribes.
- One of the finest collections of Oceanic artworks in the U.S., ranging from Hawaiian jewelry to contemporary masks from Papua New Guinea.
- American paintings, sculptures, silver, and decorative arts dating from the colonial era to the present day, including regional holdings and outstanding examples of Louis Comfort Tiffany's stained glass.
- More than 5,000 textiles spanning nearly 2,000 years, including Coptic textiles, Baltimore Album Quilts, and 18th-20th-century printed textiles. A collection of 15th-through 19th-century European art that includes masterworks of northern European and French art.
- The Woodward Collection of British Sporting Art featuring 52 paintings of horses and racing scenes, as well as silver and gold racing trophies.

Baltimore

The BMA is an integral part of Baltimore’s cultural ecosystem and is complemented by other arts institutions such as the Walters Art Museum, the Peabody Conservatory, the American Visionary Art Museum, and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

Baltimore’s economy is closely tied to the education, health, and corporate sectors. Baltimore has one of the largest concentrations of colleges and universities in the mid-Atlantic, including Johns Hopkins University, whose hospital consistently ranks as one of the top three hospitals in the country, the University of Maryland, the Maryland Institute College of Art, Morgan State University, and the University of Baltimore. Baltimore is also the headquarters of many major U.S. companies, including Under Armour, T. Rowe Price, Laureate Education and its spinoffs, Legg Mason, and CareFirst. Central to the growth of Baltimore’s economy is a rapidly growing technology and entrepreneurial ecosystem anchored by Under Armour and its founder, what some consider the nation’s leading concentration of education technology companies, Baltimore’s concentration of data science talent related to the National Security Agency, and Johns Hopkins University and related innovation around healthcare.

The Baltimore Metro area has a population of nearly 3 million people. The City itself has a population of over half a million individuals. This population is approximately 62% black, 30% white, 5% Hispanic or Latino, and 3% Asian. The BMA is fiercely committed to the diversity of the community it serves. The BMA is located three miles north of the Inner Harbor, adjacent to the main campus of Johns Hopkins University, and has a community branch at Lexington Market in downtown Baltimore.

The Role

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the Director is the chief executive of the Baltimore Museum of Art and oversees the entire institution, including collections, staff, facilities, exhibitions, education, public programs, external relations, fundraising, administrative activities, and more. The Director will work in partnership with the Board and the senior leadership team to cultivate the BMA’s strategy, achieving the institution’s goals and nurturing a culture that attracts and retains top talent.

The ideal candidate will continue to raise the Museum’s profile internationally while deeply investing in the local community. They will maintain and build new relationships with partner institutions, particularly in Baltimore, and will serve as a spokesperson for the Museum on the global stage. They will chart a course forward for continued innovation, while determining the appropriate pace of change for the institution. They will work to motivate, develop, and cultivate a high-performing, diverse team, and will continue to build alignment around vision and strategic objectives.
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The Director will serve as the BMA’s chief fundraiser. They will lead the Museum’s charge to increase and diversify funding sources, and will have a track record of approaching resource-building with significant creativity and clarity of purpose. They will work closely with the Board of Trustees and staff in this endeavor, furthering a culture of fundraising across the organization.

The Director of the BMA will approach the financial administration of the institution with resourcefulness, sound judgment, and a clear understanding of budgets. With support from a strong senior leadership team – including the Chief Operating Officer, Chief Curator, Chief Education Officer, Chief Innovation Officer, Senior Director of Advancement – they will balance risk-taking with a thoughtful analysis of all factors in their decision-making, and will surround themself with the right teams to ensure the Museum’s success. Additionally, they will embrace the realities of a digital age and will insure that the Museum’s infrastructure and internal systems support its mission and enhance the visitor experience.

Ideally, the Director will exhibit a knowledge of and passion for art, as well as a fundamental belief in art and creativity’s value in society. They will have an understanding of museums in the 21st century, including innovative strategies for audience engagement, a demonstrated passion for arts education, and a nuanced grasp of the role museums play in their communities. The Director will embrace the opportunity to live and work in Baltimore City, will be deeply thoughtful about diversity, equity, and inclusion, and will be a fierce advocate for social justice.

Candidate Profile

The ideal candidate will be an inspiring, strategic, and collaborative leader with the stature and credibility to lead one of the significant civic art museums in the country. This role requires an individual with a track record of successfully leading sustainable change as well as a demonstrated passion for visual arts and arts education. The candidate will bring a track record of success in fundraising and revenue generation, as well as demonstrated experience for managing teams and budgets of scale. They will have a deep appreciation for the unique mission of the BMA, as well as the desire and ability to advance a vision for the years ahead. A PhD or advanced degree in art history is not required for the role.

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

Strategic Acumen

- The ability to articulate an inspiring vision for the organization, not only for the areas they are directly responsible for, but the institution as a whole.
- An entrepreneurial and creative approach to developing new, innovative ideas that will stretch the organization and push the boundaries within the industry.
- The inclination to seek and 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.

Fundraising and Resource Development

- Experience in building an institution’s funding base – including from individual, corporate, and foundation funders – as well as through fresh pathways for earned income; demonstrates an ability to engage prospective funders and partners.
- Proven success forging and maintaining mutually productive relationships with peer institutions and partners to further an organization’s impact.
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Executing for Results

- The ability to set clear and challenging goals while committing the organization 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.
- Examples of strong fiscal and strategic discipline and outcomes; results-oriented, thoughtful, and detail-oriented; the business acumen necessary to take calculated risks and use resources creatively in terms of innovation while demonstrating pragmatism with respect to both expenses and revenues.
- Proven ability to carefully steward organizational assets, balance budgets, and make prudent decisions within financial resources.

Leading Teams

- The ability to attract and recruit top talent, motivate the team, delegate effectively, celebrate diversity within the team, and manage performance; widely viewed as a strong developer of others.
- 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 his/her 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.

Inclusive Leadership

- Brings deep personal commitment to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion in all aspects of the organization’s work; seeks to build an organization that is substantively diverse and reflective of the diversity of the community.
- Demonstrated personal and professional track record of inclusive leadership; displaying cultural competence while operating in an environment with a range of diverse constituents and communities.
- Experience translating an organization's diversity, equity, and inclusion values into specific strategies and actions.

Communication Skills, Building Relationships, and Using Influence

- Naturally connects and builds strong relationships with others – including key community partners – demonstrating strong emotional intelligence and an ability to communicate clearly and persuasively.
- An ability to inspire trust and followership in others through compelling influence, powerful charisma, passion in his/her beliefs, and active drive.
- 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 his/her own personality and engages others to the greater purpose for the organization as a whole.

Passion for the Mission

- Exhibits knowledge of and passion for art and art history, as well as a fundamental belief in the value of art and creativity in our society; creates an emotional connection to arts and culture.
- Brings a vision for future of museums and the role that museums can play in their communities; thinks creatively about audience, inclusion, and community engagement.
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Contact
Russell Reynolds Associates has been exclusively retained for this search. Given the need for confidentiality throughout this process, prospective candidates are invited to reach out directly to our search consultants at BaltimoreMuseumofArt@russellreynolds.com with a CV and brief explanation of interest.

Michael Singleton  
Russell Reynolds Associates  
277 Park Avenue, Suite 3800  
New York, NY 10172  
Direct: +1-212-351-2551

Shana Schneider  
Russell Reynolds Associates  
One Federal Street, 26th Floor  
Boston, MA 02110-2003  
Direct: +1-617-722-6242

Jamie A. Hechinger  
Russell Reynolds Associates  
1700 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20006-5208  
Direct: +1-202-654-7839

Olivia Stam  
Russell Reynolds Associates  
1700 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20006-5208  
Direct: +1-202-654-7862