

# PRESS RELEASE

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## SEATTLE ART MUSEUM DIRECTOR AND CEO AMADA CRUZ ANNOUNCES DEPARTURE



SEATTLE, WA – Amada Cruz has announced her plan to step down as the Illsley Ball Nordstrom Director and CEO of the Seattle Art Museum (SAM) after four years with the institution, effective October 2023.

Cruz joined SAM in September 2019 and led the museum through what may be one of the most challenging periods in its history: the global COVID-19 pandemic and closure of its three sites. Under her leadership alongside the board, throughout 2020 and 2021, the museum prioritized supporting its staff, creating online experiences for the communities it serves, and strategically reopening its sites to the public with a focus on maximizing the safety of both staff and visitors. The external circumstances necessitated ongoing operational pivots, led by Cruz, which resulted in steady financial recovery, the return of audiences to SAM's galleries and programs, and a renewed commitment to its mission to connect art to life.

"It has been a privilege to lead SAM for the last four years," says Cruz. "I arrived in Seattle at a time when the museum faced increased excitement with the reopening of the Seattle Asian Art Museum only to have that momentum quickly tempered by the onset of the global pandemic. It's been an incredible journey to work alongside SAM board and staff to navigate through uncertain times, and I deeply appreciate their partnership and support. The museum is in good hands with a fantastic senior leadership team and board, and I looked forward to visiting Seattle and SAM's robust global art collection and exciting exhibitions in the future."

This fall, she joins the Santa Barbara Museum of Art (SBMA) as its Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Director and CEO. The role offers Cruz the exciting

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opportunity to align personal and professional aspirations. It's an area that Cruz visits often and where she has many long-standing friendships. In addition, Cruz has previously worked with SBMA and is thrilled to explore new opportunities there in this leadership role.

"The Board of Trustees wants to express its sincere gratitude to Amada for her leadership at SAM," says Constance Rice, Chair of the Board of Trustees at SAM. "In addition to steering the museum successfully through the many challenges of COVID, she helped the museum emerge even stronger with spectacular exhibitions, three landmark gifts of art and funding, and an expanded commitment to equity. SAM is thriving, and that is a legacy to be proud of. Amada's commitment to stay with us until October shows the depth of her care for this institution and community. SAM has a bright future thanks to her leadership."

Cruz will continue in her role at SAM through the first week of October. The museum's Board, led by Chair Constance Rice and President Carla Lewis, is committed to ensuring stability for museum staff, supporters, and visitors during the transition to new leadership. The specifics of a recruitment plan will be developed and shared in the coming weeks.

Image credit: Alborz Kamalizad

## **ABOUT SEATTLE ART MUSEUM**

As the leading visual art institution in the Pacific Northwest, SAM draws on its global collections, powerful exhibitions, and dynamic programs to provide unique educational resources benefiting the Seattle region, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond. SAM was founded in 1933 with a focus on Asian art. By the late 1980s the museum had outgrown its original home, and in 1991 a new 155,000-square-foot downtown building, designed by Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates, opened to the public. The 1933 building was renovated and rededicated as the Asian Art Museum in 1994, and it reopened on February 8, 2020, following an extensive renovation and expansion. SAM's desire to further serve its community was realized in 2007 with the opening of two stunning new facilities: the nine-acre Olympic Sculpture Park (designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architects)—a "museum without walls," free and open to all—and the Allied Works Architecture designed 118,000-square-foot expansion of its main, downtown location, including 232,000 square feet of additional space built for future expansion. The Olympic Sculpture Park and SAM's downtown expansion celebrated their tenth anniversary in 2017.

From a strong foundation of Asian art to noteworthy collections of African and Oceanic art, Northwest Coast Native American art, European and American art, and modern and contemporary art, the strength of SAM's collection of approximately 25,000 objects lies in its diversity of media, cultures, and time periods.