

# PRESS RELEASE

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## SEATTLE ART MUSEUM APPOINTS DR. THERESA PAPANIKOLAS AS CURATOR OF AMERICAN ART



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SEATTLE, WA - The Seattle Art Museum (SAM) announced today the appointment of Dr. Theresa Papanikolas as its Ann M. Barwick Curator of American Art. Papanikolas, an expert in 20th-century American art, will begin her tenure at SAM in January 2019. She will oversee the development, research, presentation, and care of SAM's collection of American art. She will also organize exhibitions that explore new and challenging narratives of American art and connect to the contemporary moment.

"We're thrilled that Theresa will be joining us here at SAM," says Kimerly Rorschach, Illsley Ball Nordstrom Director and CEO. "She's an inspired curator who will continue to build on the wonderful American art program started in 2004 by Patricia Junker. She has broad expertise in European as well as American art and brings an exciting vision of deepening the connections between American art and other areas of SAM's incredibly diverse collection. Her work will be essential to furthering our curatorial mission to initiate conversations that connect art to our visitors' own experiences."

Theresa Papanikolas comes to SAM from the Honolulu Museum of Art, where she currently serves as Deputy Director of Art and Programs. She joined the museum in 2008 as Curator of European and American Art, where she led an innovative exhibition program, added breadth and depth to the permanent collection, and helped position the museum as the cultural hub of one of the country's most diverse metropolitan areas. Her major exhibition projects include *From Whistler to Warhol: Modernism on Paper* (2010), *Georgia O'Keeffe and Ansel Adams: The Hawai'i Pictures* (2013), *Art Deco Hawai'i* (2014), *Abstract Expressionism: Looking East from the Far West* (2017), and a comprehensive reinstallation of the museum's European and American collections. Earlier this year, she collaborated with the New York Botanical Garden on *Georgia O'Keeffe: Visions of Hawaii*, a groundbreaking project that told the story of O'Keeffe's visit to Hawaii through the lens of the landscape and flora she discovered there.

From 2006 to 2008, Dr. Papanikolas was Wallis Annenberg Curatorial Fellow at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. She has also held positions at the



National Gallery of Art; Rice University; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. She has expertise in 19th- and 20th-century art, and has published widely on Dada and Surrealism. She holds degrees in Art History from the University of the Southern California (BA) and the University of Delaware (MA, Ph.D.), and was a 2016 fellow at the Center for Curatorial Leadership.

Dr. Papanikolas replaces Patricia Junker, who retired in spring 2018 after 13 years at SAM. Junker established the department in 2004 and transformed the collection through the addition of significant new works and organized exhibitions that gained broad critical acclaim and won American art a devoted following at SAM. An endowment in support of the American art curator position was established by Thomas Barwick and the late Ann M. Barwick, tireless supporters of the Seattle Art Museum and major collectors of American art.

“After many years of admiring its exemplary programs, I am thrilled and honored to be joining SAM as its Ann M. Barwick Curator of American Art. American art at SAM is rich with potential, and I look forward to building on Patricia Junker’s legacy and collaborating with the museum’s many stakeholders to shape a collection and exhibition program that is truly exceptional. What attracts me most about SAM is the spirit of diversity and excellence that not only drives the museum in all of its aspects, but also mirrors Seattle itself. On a personal note, my husband and I visit Seattle often—we cannot wait to call it home!”

**Photo credit:** Honolulu Museum of Art

#### **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 reopened as the Asian Art Museum in 1994. 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.