

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **SEATTLE ART MUSEUM ANNOUNCES RETURN OF KIMERLY RORSCHACH AS INTERIM DIRECTOR AND CEO**



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SEATTLE, WA - The Seattle Art Museum (SAM) has announced that Kimerly Rorschach will return to SAM to serve as interim director and CEO. Rorschach retired as the Illsley Ball Nordstrom Director and CEO in September 2019 after seven years leading the institution. Rorschach will succeed Amada Cruz, who recently announced that she would step down as the director and CEO in early October after four years with the institution to join the Santa Barbara Museum of Art (SBMA) as its Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Director and CEO. Cruz's and Rorschach's time will overlap for a month to ensure a seamless transition, and a national search by the museum's Board, led by Chair Constance Rice and President Carla Lewis, will begin for a permanent director.

"We are delighted to welcome Kim back to SAM, a place she loves and led with great vision and care," said Constance Rice, Chair of the Board. "The museum flourished under her leadership, and we are grateful that she is able to come out of retirement and step into this interim role. She brings deep knowledge of SAM and has strong existing relationships with many trustees, donors, staff, and the larger arts community. Kim and Amada have a close professional relationship, and we are confident the transition will go smoothly."

"It was my great privilege to lead SAM, and I'm excited to return for this important period of transition," say Rorschach. "I'm grateful to Amada, who, along with the board and staff, deftly guided the museum's three complex sites during an enormously challenging time. The museum is in an excellent place, with many exciting exhibitions coming up including *Calder: In Motion, The*



*Shirley Family Collection*, which opens in November and launches the multi-year initiative generously supported by Jon and Kim Shirley that explores the lasting influence of Alexander Calder. I'm looking forward to leading the museum through this time as it charts its future course."

Kimerly Rorschach is a highly regarded museum professional on the national scene, with 25 years' experience as a museum director. During her tenure at SAM from 2012-2019, Rorschach planned and oversaw an extensive renovation and expansion of the Seattle Asian Art Museum, a project that brought SAM's 1933 historic Volunteer Park building up to 21st-century structural and environmental standards and reimagined the presentation of its celebrated Asian art collection. She led a successful \$150m fundraising campaign for SAM, which included \$50m for the Seattle Asian Art Museum project. She also launched DEI initiatives at the museum and diversified the exhibition and acquisition programs. Exhibitions devoted to Kehinde Wiley and Yayoi Kusama, among others, attracted broad new audiences to the museum.

Rorschach currently serves as President of the Board of Trustees for the American Federation of Arts in New York. She is a board member of the Center for Curatorial Leadership, NY, and also serves on the board of Independent Colleges of Washington. She is a member of the Board of Advisors for the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, and a former President of the Association of Art Museum Directors. Before her time at the Seattle Art Museum, Rorschach was the founding director of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, which she established as one of the most dynamic museum presenting contemporary art in the region, with a significant national profile. She previously served as the director of the University of Chicago's Smart Museum of Art and held curatorial positions at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia. A former Fulbright scholar, she holds a BA from Brandeis and a PhD in art history from Yale University.

**Photo credit:** Courtesy Kimerly Rorschach.

## **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.