

## Flint Institute of Arts (FIA) Executive Director

***The Board seeks a visual arts leader to shape museum exhibitions, collections, studio art and fine arts educational programs and events, while proactively engaging with the public in ways that connect people of all ages, income levels, ethnicities, interests and backgrounds to the Flint Institute of Arts.***

### **BACKGROUND**

The [Flint Institute of Arts](#) (FIA) is a community treasure that is at once a world class art museum, a respected studio arts school, and a fine arts education center. Located in the heart of Michigan, the FIA offers adults, children and families, early career professionals, senior citizens and special needs individuals of all backgrounds and interests an amazing array of experiences and services.

The FIA annually provides art experiences to over 160,000 people, and has several features that are unusual for a museum institution located in a city of under 100,000. In the landscape of museum institutions within such regions, the 94-year-old FIA has richer and more diverse collections; a well-attended studio arts school offering classes in both classical and modern studio arts disciplines; and diverse public and fine arts educational programming. The FIA is respected regionally and nationally. Sustained local appreciation has led to passage of a 10-year millage assessment (currently in its third year) that annually contributes about \$1.7m to fund museum operations. The FIA also benefits from substantial donations from individuals and foundations.

**As an art museum**, the FIA is Michigan's second largest, with world-renowned [collections](#) of more than 9,000 objects with depth in European and American paintings and sculptures from the 15th century to the present, and holdings of decorative and applied arts that include important ethnographic study collections dating back five millennia. Works in the collection have been loaned in recent years to museums nationally, including New York's Metropolitan, Art Institute of Chicago, and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; and internationally, including the Art Gallery of Ontario, Royal Academy, Guggenheim Bilbao, and the National Museum of Stockholm, among [others](#). Over the last 25 years the FIA has placed an emphasis on its effort to diversify the FIA's collection to assure that artists of color have far greater representation. [62% of purchased acquisitions](#) over the last five years were for works by artists of color, including works by Purvis Young, Vanessa German, David Driskell, Renee Stout, Betye Saar, Romare Bearden, and Chakaia Booker. The organization has published 14 books in the last ten years, and has made significant investments in [online access](#) to collections and programs for those who want to visit remotely, and in providing extensive off-site outreach opportunities to the community.

**As a visual arts presenter**, the FIA provides its visitors with opportunities to view art in its [exhibitions of its permanent collections](#), and through 15 to 20 [temporary exhibitions](#) annually. Added to this are a broad range of [film programs](#) shown in a 330-seat theater, as well as [events](#), [lectures](#), adult programs, and meetings with a broad range of artists, curators, and educators. Across programs and exhibitions, the FIA attempts to maintain a balance that addresses the interests of people with a wide range of tastes, interests, and intellects; and deploys its collections and loaned works, its curators, educators, artists, and guest scholars to explore a wide range of topics and themes. These include the vision of the artist, issues in contemporary society, the various techniques used by artists of different disciplines, and the broad spectrum of art movements, styles, and forms created by diverse cultures and artists throughout history. The community surrounding Flint is comprised of different ethnicities – Black, East Asian, Latin/Hispanic, Middle Eastern, South Asian, White and others – and the FIA attempts to be a platform for sharing and honoring the incredible cultural diversity of our world through its exhibitions and programs.

**As a school**, the [FIA Art School](#) is the nation's fourth-largest non-accredited art museum school. The school and its [studios](#) provide a robust schedule for students of all ages (from toddlers to seniors) including art-making classes, workshops and demonstrations; curriculum-based [gallery, studio, and outreach programs](#) for PreK-12, Head Start, and [homeschool](#) students. The school also provides summer camps for youth, free family activities, and a pre-college portfolio development program for gifted high school students; and runs at full capacity seven days weekly. Studio instruction is provided in a range of disciplines, including: drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, mixed media, printmaking, ceramics, fiber, glass blowing, and flameworking. Growth has been robust. In the last five years the number of courses/workshops have grown by 45%, the faculty roster by 50%, and registrations by 69%, with annual enrollment of over 2,200. Recently expanded educational offerings include the addition of a state of the art [glass facilities](#) and partnerships with University of Michigan-Flint and other local colleges and universities.

The FIA is located in a 171,722 sq. ft facility (with 51,713 sq. ft of gallery space) open to the public 7 days a week, with galleries closed on major holidays. The building itself is situated in a park-like complex of independent cultural institutions that include the FIA, the Flint Institute of Music, The Whiting Auditorium, Flint Repertory Theatre, Flint Institute of Science and History, Longway Planetarium, Flint Public Library, and Applewood Estate and Gardens,

Admission to the museum is free for FIA members, Genesee County residents, and children under 12, and there is a modest admission fee for others. The FIA's current annual budget is \$6.6 million; the organization is governed by a 31-member Board organized with a smaller group of officers led by the Board President; there are 95 staff, 35 Art School Faculty, 200 volunteers including 19 docents; 2,300 members and an annual attendance and participation in the museum averaging 160,000. Two non-profit volunteer auxiliary groups (Founders Society and Friends of Modern Art) provide financial support for museum exhibitions, programs, and acquisitions through the creation and management of annual fundraising events. Assets of the museum include the collection, and an endowment totaling approximately \$40 million in invested assets, as of December 2020. Over the last several years the budget has remained stable. The Board and staff exercise strong financial controls over the annual budget while also planning for capital repairs and upgrades to facilities based on a long-range building systems replacement forecast.

The Flint Institute of Arts is accredited by the American Association of Museums, an honor held consistently for more than 40 years, and has maintained membership to the American Association of Museum Directors since 1989, proving its dedication to quality programming, adherence to standards of excellence, and commitment to education.

A broad range of Board, staff, community and other leaders representing diverse interests, have described the journey of the FIA in satisfied yet not complacent terms. Continued work to address issues of representation in collections, exhibitions, programs, board and staff is integrated into the organization's activities and investments at all levels. Additionally, the FIA seeks to play a constructive role in positioning Flint as an attractive magnet for business investment. To this end, the Executive Director's work includes tireless advocacy for engagement with, and support of, the FIA regionally, nationally and internationally.

***The new Executive Director will take the reins of a great institution, with the challenge of developing new, contemporary approaches to being a great art museum and education center as the Flint Institute of Arts enter the coming decade.***

## **BASIC FUNCTION**

Reporting to the Board through its Chair, the Executive Director will lead and coordinate all curatorial, collections, conservation, education, programming, external relations, fundraising, finances and management, facilities and security functions of the Flint Institute of Arts. The three primary metrics for the Executive Director will be to: maximize museum attendance by appealing to the diversity of Genesee County citizens and visitors across all FIA activities; assure the long-term financial strength and stability of the FIA; and advance the FIA's reputation regionally, nationally, and internationally as a respected visual arts institution.

The Executive Director oversees the activities of 95 staff and 35 Art School faculty and sets the highest standards of professionalism across all departments of the FIA. In addition to understanding traditional approaches to exhibitions, studio arts, and art historical education, the new Executive Director will seek to understand the potential benefit of new approaches using different forms of media, diverse communication modalities (on-site interactive, mobile, video, etc.), use of interactive technologies, and other approaches to enhance the visitor experience and facilitate learning. Together with the marketing, communications, and IT specialists, curators, and educators will shape unique and enriching experiences through gallery and classroom-based programming, digital media, and lifelong learning opportunities.

The Executive Director must be a student of, and an active contributor to, the modern museum and arts education field. She/he/they is expected to shape strategies while considering the continuing evolution of the visual arts sector and must have insight into how to reach and engage audiences with different needs and interest. Innovative practice is particularly important to the FIA given its place in the heart of a city that seeks to remake itself as a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship. The Executive Director will chart a long-term vision for the FIA, making the art museum and school central to the cultural life of Genesee County and the City of Flint and a must-visit Michigan institution.

The Executive Director will focus on enhancing the collection through aggressive pursuit of new acquisitions that are within the collecting focus and budget of the museum. The public, museum curators, educators, scholars, collectors, and visual arts influencers, also must be made aware of the Museum's exhibitions, collections, and programs, with the objective of enhancing its reputation nationally and internationally.

Fundraising and advocacy will be key to the Executive Director's success. An externally focused leader who is able to comfortably work with people from different walks of life, of different income levels, backgrounds, interests, ethnicities, ages, and ability/disability is essential. The Executive Director will function as one of this region's arts and culture leaders, and should enjoy engaging with people locally, nationally and internationally.

## **ONGOING RESPONSIBILITIES**

Particularly relevant to the Executive Director's success will be qualifications in four areas:

### MANAGEMENT & ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

- **Strategy:** An ability to continually interpret and refine the FIA's mission; update and refine the FIA's strategic plan as needed; ensure that policies are consistently implemented and that exhibitions, collections, and programs are aligned with the FIA's arts mission;
- **Team building:** Can build and sustain a high-functioning management team with a culture people enjoy and embrace; a good listener and strategist comfortable receiving input from many sources and able to formulate disparate information into a sound, well-organized plan; hires, motivates and evaluates staff, ensuring that overall staffing is appropriate to meet the

organization's goals;

- **Innovation:** Remains updated on latest developments in museum exhibitions, collections management, studio arts, and education best practices, with a strong understanding of the use of technology, media, and other tools to engage audiences, drive attendance, deliver education, and related programming;
- **Financial Strength:** Must have a strong sense of fiscal discipline and controls; an ability to connect ends with means, and an understanding of the short- and long-term financial implications of decisions related to exhibitions, collections, facilities, the school and programs;

#### ARTS LEADERSHIP: EXHIBITIONS, COLLECTIONS AND EDUCATION

- **Credibility:** A strong understanding of the art-historical significance of the permanent collection, its strengths and weaknesses, and of the collections of museums and collectors from around the world; networked and respected among experts in the field, including scholars, curators, gallerists, auction houses, artists, appraisers, and collectors; an ability to ensure that the FIA's reputation for curatorial teaching and programming excellence and innovation in the museum sector is continually strengthened;
- **Exhibitions:** A track record for exposing art to the general public in new ways while sustaining the highest scholarly standards; must have high visibility and credibility in the art world regionally, nationally, and internationally to help identify and secure important exhibitions; a track record of staging interesting, innovative activities, programs, and events that engage the public and drive attendance to the museum and its exhibitions;
- **Collections:** Able to develop a systematic plan to strengthen and enrich the FIA's collection through careful acquisitions; direct and participate in locating/selecting works of art for inclusion in the collection; develop relationships with collectors that may lead to appropriate gifts; identify funds and seek donors to support acquisitions; must be up-to-date on legal practices in the museum world, especially those affecting collections;
- **Education & Public Programs:** Knowledge of different interpretive and educational approaches for the visual arts that engage and excite the public; an understanding of studio arts teaching methods and pedagogy, of educational technologies, materials & tools, docent training & tours, school programs, use of partnerships and alliances, etc., with the objective of achieving a reputation as an education, studio arts, and programming leader;
- **People:** A track record of building and retaining strong teams of arts professionals; knowledge of the strengths of professionals across the museum field; and the ability to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of the current FIA staff.

#### FUNDRAISING & REVENUE

- **Advocating for the Museum:** Serve as an articulate, passionate, and persuasive spokesperson for the FIA; represent the FIA to all of its constituencies, funders, the public, government and private agencies, and the local, national and international art media;
- **Contributed Revenue:** Experience shaping strategies that maximize annual, in-kind, and principal gifts; a track record working with development professionals, Board members, curatorial and other staff in developing diversified foundation, individual, public, and corporate funding sources; experience with direct solicitation, and with proactive cultivation of donors, patrons, board members, and prospective board members, to inspire loyalty and support;
- **Earned Revenue:** Experience converting attendance and public profile into revenue through membership sales, general admissions, class registration and tuition, ticket sales for special

exhibitions, events, retail operations, and facilities rentals; an understanding of how intelligence on attendance, ticket sales, and such can be positively exploited to drive earned and contributed revenue.

#### MARKETING AND AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

- **Audience Development:** Is passionate about engaging both new and existing audiences and is a student of the shifting landscape of audience engagement; innovative in approach to the patron experience and can develop partnerships when needed to enhance it;
- **Branding and Marketing:** Knowledge of branding strategies that help advance an institutional vision, drive museum and school attendance, and maximize earned revenue; adopts new and bold approaches to marketing that engages audiences that do not currently consider themselves to be part of the FIA family; makes impactful marketing and branding an organizational priority;
- **Engagement:** Provides exciting experiences for a broad audience so that the FIA is top of mind as a unique, not to be missed experience; employs concrete metrics to highlight strengths and weaknesses of visitor engagement and to drive strategy.

#### **QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

The ideal candidate will have the following experience and attributes:

- Senior-level management and leadership responsibility in a museum or art school known for exhibition, curatorial, education and public programming excellence; experience with contemporary art and diverse audiences is a distinct advantage, as is experience in building and shaping collections;
- Experience enhancing the institution's reputation for outstanding exhibitions, collections and educational programs is desirable; a record of success in attracting and retaining talented museum staff;
- Experience in building relationships that is expressed in attendance, ticket sales, class enrollment, membership, and donor and government funding support; measurably successful results identifying, cultivating and soliciting major donors, and in generated earned income through events, rentals, retail sales, etc.;
- Experience with museum operations and budgets; experience working with board and staff members to implement best management practices in museums; a collaborative orientation, with an ability to work cooperatively with the leaders of other cultural institutions locally, regionally, nationally and internationally;
- A graceful communicator, orally and in writing, who has the presence and credibility to serve as an effective advocate for the FIA with a broad spectrum of people; someone that cultivates trust and engages the interest of diverse constituents; a sense of humor and perspective.

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