

## The Museum of Russian Icons Executive Director

*The Board seeks an arts professional to lead all museum exhibition, programming, curatorial and collections management functions; maximize fundraising and museum & online attendance; and develop relationships with collectors, curators, gallerists, educators, researchers and museum professionals internationally.*

### **BACKGROUND**

Located in Clinton, MA, the [Museum of Russian Icons](#) was created by collector and business leader Gordon Lankton in 2004, opened to the public in 2006, and today hosts a distinctive, world-class, thematically-based art [collection](#) of more than 1,000 objects. In 2008 the Museum added a research library and its South Gallery, and in 2010 Lankton purchased and renovated a neighboring building to create its West Gallery, an expanded museum shop, a Tea Room and auditorium. The Museum was accredited in 2016 and reaccredited for ten years in 2021. Gordon Lankton reduced his involvement with the museum five years ago and passed away in 2021.

[Lankton](#) started collecting Russian icons in 1989, the same year the Berlin Wall fell, and with the advice of experts shaped a collection of outstanding quality that is one of the largest private collections of Russian icons and related artifacts outside of Russia. Works range in date from 1450 to the present day and are installed in thematic groupings rather than chronological order. The Museum organizes its own exhibitions from the permanent collection and also hosts visiting exhibitions from other museums and collections. In 2008 and 2010 respectively, the Museum co-organized exhibitions of icons from the Tretyakov Gallery and the Andrei Rublev Museum of Early Russian Art and Culture. Since 2011 there has been an embargo of art loans from Russia to the U.S., and so over the last decade the Museum has relied on exhibitions originating in the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe. Exhibitions have largely focused on art related to the collection, with themes of spiritual art expressed in different forms by different cultures, explorations of Slavic culture, surveys of Byzantine art, and the impact of icons on modern and contemporary art movements.

The Museum houses the [Center for Icon Studies](#), the research arm of the Museum that also publishes the online [Journal of Icon Studies](#). The journal is the only peer-reviewed publication exclusively devoted to Russian and related icons and related scholarship. Submissions to the journal are reviewed by members of the editorial board, which consists of twelve leading scholars in the field from the United States, Europe, and Russia.

The Museum is a 14,821 sq. ft facility (with 5,800 sq. ft of gallery space) open to the public four days a week on a ticketed basis. The Museum has an annual budget of \$1.1 million, a 10-member Board, 14 staff and 15 volunteers, about 450 members, and annual attendance of about 11,000. Assets of the Museum include the collection, an endowment amounting to about \$16 million in invested assets, and the building, which today is conservatively valued between \$10 and \$20 million. Over the last several years the budget has remained stable.

In discussing the Museum's future with Board, staff and community members, a consensus has emerged that the Museum should continue its exploration of spiritual art as embodied by icons. Particular emphasis will be given to the art of Russia and Slavic cultures, Byzantine iconography, the icons of diverse cultures that have informed or been informed by the art of Russian icons, as well as icons in art of diverse traditions throughout history and to the present day. The Museum will continue to function as an online and in-person center for the study of such works.

***The new Executive Director will work closely with the Board and staff to evolve the mission, with the objective of shaping an institution, collections, programs and international partnerships that position the Museum as a crossroads for dialogue on icons and their place in world culture.***

### **BASIC FUNCTION**

The Executive Director will lead and coordinate all curatorial, preservation, external relations, exhibitions and programs of the Museum of Russian Icons. The Executive Director will foster public support for the collection and relations with other museums, educational institutions and scholars that might use the collection as a resource.

An active exhibition schedule that leverages the collections and attracts complementary works to the Museum will be key to success. Exhibitions must be enthusiastically embraced by the public, and also provide scholars and community members with enriching, intellectually meaningful experiences. The Executive Director will develop and implement a strategy for actively traveling works from the Museum of Russian Icons, and for attracting contemporary and historical visual art exhibitions to the Museum.

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, and through carefully considered deaccessioning decisions. The public, visual arts influencers, collectors and museum curators will be made aware of the Museum's exhibitions, collections and programs, with the objective of enhancing its reputation nationally and internationally.

Fundraising and friend-raising will be key to the Executive Director's success. The former will be measured in terms of revenue and works of art that are contributed by individuals, businesses and through grants; and the latter in terms of online and in-person attendance at exhibitions and programs.

### **IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES**

The Executive Director's immediate priorities will be to:

- Understand all facets of the Museum of Russian Icons, including the Museum's history, culture, staff, collections, exhibits, finances, exhibitions, education and programs, facilities, online resources, infrastructure and operations;
- Review the current status of the Museum's exhibitions and education programming, and take charge of in-process work related to the permanent collection, current and planned special exhibitions, events, publications, tours, and school programming; in conjunction with the curatorial team, develop exhibitions and programs that can be administered within appropriate budgetary constraints; understand and update the Strategic Plan; work with the Board and staff to evolve the plan, adjusting annual operating plans to include new priorities;
- Build and diversify earned and contributed income; personally engage in donor targeting and solicitation; understand local and regional constituencies in central Massachusetts;
- Build on the Museum's strong reputation by continuing to cultivate relationships with existing and new key stakeholders in the community and other museums in order to enhance and develop support for programs, including partnership opportunities with other museums and arts, educational and cultural institutions locally, nationally and internationally, and with collectors and local community and business leaders;

- Work with the staff to understand their contributions, strengths and concerns; instill a strong sense of partnership and cohesion across the organization; reinforce a culture of excellence toward achieving the highest standards of museum practice.

## **ONGOING RESPONSIBILITIES**

### LEADERSHIP & GENERAL MANAGEMENT

- Manage the business affairs of the Museum of Russian Icons with the intent of supporting its mission and goals while achieving greater financial growth, funding diversity and supporting permanent sustainability;
- With the Board, interpret the mission of the Museum, articulate its place among cultural institutions, and evolve the strategic plan of the Museum; develop the staff, Board and partnerships with other institutions; deepen the Museum's connection with the community to build a strong, broad foundation for future support;
- Hire, supervise, motivate, develop and evaluate staff, ensuring that staffing is appropriate to meet the organization's goals; ensure that approved policies are consistently implemented;
- Oversee the preservation and maintenance of the Museum's physical assets (the collections, the building and its infrastructure).

### EXHIBITIONS, PROGRAMS, COLLECTIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

- Provide direction for the development of new exhibitions, outreach and education programs that are experienced in-person and online; ensure that best museum practices are employed; leverage the collections in ways that are locally relevant and are recognized globally;
- Continue to develop the Center for Icon Studies and the online Journal of Icon Studies as unique resources for scholars, collectors, curators, museums and university-level programs nationally and internationally; assure access via online and in-person programs;
- Work collaboratively and appropriately manage various relationships with other museums, collections, schools, universities, patrons, volunteers and other community members; serve as an advocate for the organization's collections, exhibitions and programs, assuring that the interests of the Museum are advanced and fully understood;
- Work with staff, the Board's Collections Committee and experts in the field to develop a comprehensive plan to preserve, strengthen and enrich the Museum's collections; develop relationships with collectors and artists that may lead to appropriate gifts of art works and other objects to the Museum of Russian Icons.

### REVENUE, DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

- Serve as the chief fundraiser for the Museum; work closely with the staff, the Board, and advisors to expand and diversify revenue streams; solicit financial support from foundations, corporations, individuals, governments and other philanthropic sources for the Museum's programs, exhibitions and capital projects;
- Solidify the Museum of Russian Icons' reputation as an exceptional museum for the world's diverse art and culture based in icons and other spiritual works, and continue to raise awareness among regional, national and international audiences;
- Serve as an articulate and persuasive spokesperson for the Museum; represent the Museum of Russian Icons to all its constituencies, including funders, the arts and collector communities, and current and prospective visitors; cultivate strong and supportive relationships with other institutions in the region and in the arts community.

GOVERNANCE

- With the Board's direction, implement Board policies, goals, priorities and objectives; keep the Board informed of all relevant issues; attend Board meetings;
- Identify and suggest new Board members whose talents, interests and commitment will help to further the Museum of Russian Icons' mission and collection, and will help to expand funding opportunities.

**IDEAL EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS**

The ideal candidate has the following experience and qualifications:

- Management experience in a museum or associated institution known for innovative programming, curatorial excellence, and strong ties with the community; a background or passion for areas of strength in the collection and educational & public programming would be an advantage;
- The ability to work successfully with donors, collectors, community leaders, curators, educators, scholars and the museum's Board to strengthen the Museum; measurable and successful results in raising funds and in identifying, cultivating and soliciting donors and other sources of revenue; a detailed understanding of operations and financial management (inc. revenue and expense models) in a museum or similar environment;
- Demonstrated ability to forge mutually respectful and effective relationships with a diverse group of personalities; an individual with a passion for connecting the public with art, who will enjoy connecting members of surrounding communities, as well as visitors to the region, to the Museum of Russian Icons;
- Outstanding oral and written communication skills, including the means to address issues in engaging and inclusive ways; a track record as an effective advocate for their organization in-person and online;
- A leader adept at planning, prioritizing, organizing and following through; a hard worker with a high energy level who welcomes accountability; a good listener and strategist who is comfortable receiving input from many sources;
- Someone who imparts trust, integrity and solidity and guides others in a similar vein; an ability to disagree without being disagreeable; a team player and team builder; someone who enjoys working in close collaboration with staff, Board and community members; able to connect with a broad spectrum of community members and partners; a person with a sense of humor and perspective.

For more information please contact:

Steve Oppenheim  
(202) 803-6673 or [steveno@moppenheim.com](mailto:steveno@moppenheim.com)

Dennis Hanthorn  
(404) 806-8200 or [dennish@moppenheim.com](mailto:dennish@moppenheim.com)

Mark Oppenheim  
(415) 762-2640 or [marko@moppenheim.com](mailto:marko@moppenheim.com)

**m/Oppenheim Executive Search**  
San Francisco, CA