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**Alejandra Peña-Gutiérrez is Named the New Director of University of
Minnesota's Weisman Art Museum**



September 15, 2021, Minneapolis, MN — Executive Vice President and Provost Rachel T. A. Croson has announced that **Alejandra Peña-Gutiérrez** will be the next director of the University of Minnesota's Weisman Art Museum (WAM). Peña will begin her new role at WAM on November 29, 2021. An internationally accomplished museum leader and arts professional, Peña currently serves as executive director of Museo de Arte de Ponce in Puerto Rico. In her new leadership role at the University of Minnesota, Peña will provide strategic vision, artistic direction, and executive and administrative leadership for the Weisman to build on its rich legacy, collections, and unique strengths—further advancing its excellence and impact as a teaching museum integrally linked with

the University's mission of education, discovery, and public engagement.

Peña brings to the Weisman an educational background in architecture and art history, along with nearly three decades of experience as an innovative and collaborative leader, curator, and educator in internationally prominent museums, cultural institutions, and arts professional organizations. Since 2013, she has led the Museo de Arte de Ponce, one of the largest art museums in the Caribbean and an institution renowned for its expansive collection of European and Puerto Rican Art. Collaborating broadly to reinvigorate the museum as a vital hub for the local community as well as a globally engaged museum, she has strengthened the Museo de Arte de Ponce financially, operationally, and programmatically, even in the face of extraordinary challenges including a devastating hurricane and earthquake. In 2021, the museum was

awarded the U.S. National Medal for Museum and Library Service, the nation's highest honor for museums and libraries which make exceptional contributions to their communities.

WAM's Interim Director and emerita Executive Vice President and Provost, Karen Hanson, says, "Peña is a dynamic and imaginative museum professional with decades of successful leadership experience in a variety of cultural institutions. She brings a strong international lens to the Weisman, but her work in Mexico and in Puerto Rico, particularly after Hurricane Maria, also makes plain that she will be intensely sensitive to the interests and needs of our various local communities and the many ways in which an art museum can serve both the campus and the broader public."

Peña has an architecture degree as well as a master's degree in art history from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, where she has also taught. Before moving to Puerto Rico to lead the Museo de Arte de Ponce, she was Deputy Director-General of Artistic Heritage in Mexico City's Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, an umbrella entity for 18 notable museums. She has been a thought leader in the arts sphere, both in the U.S. and globally, leading webinars on the future of museums and other topics for the International Council of Museums (ICOM). She serves on the ICOM U.S. board, co-chairs its Programming Committee, and is also a member of the Association of Art Museum Directors.

As director of the Weisman, Peña will oversee WAM's collaborative staff and all operations and activities of the museum, within and beyond the Weisman's iconic Frank Gehry building on the Mississippi River. She will lead high-priority work to develop innovative academic collaborations across the University, working with colleges and centers to respond to teaching, research, and engagement priorities, while also working to deepen engagement with diverse voices and communities beyond the campus, particularly those that have been historically underrepresented in museums.

Provost Croson says, "Her appointment is important for the University of Minnesota and important for WAM, as a dynamically engaged teaching museum that is one of the University's and the region's greatest cultural and educational assets. I am confident that Alejandra's exceptional experience and strengths will further advance the excellence of the Weisman."

"Trained as both an architect and an art historian, she will bring a wealth of administrative, curatorial, and educational experience to her new role as director of WAM," says Interim Director Hanson. "We are excited by the prospect of her leadership, and we look forward to her arrival and to welcoming her warmly to the University and to the broader community."

Peña's appointment is the culmination of the University's national search for an experienced, visionary, and collaborative leader to succeed Lyndel King. King retired in 2020 after serving as director for four decades, during which she oversaw the growth of the Weisman into a world-class teaching museum and vital cultural institution for the University and Twin Cities. The search for her successor began in early 2020, before being briefly paused due to the pandemic.

[Read more about WAM's new director, Alejandra Peña-Gutiérrez, in her C.V. >>](#)

About the Weisman Art Museum

Since its origin in 1934, Weisman Art Museum has been a teaching museum for the University of Minnesota. Today, education remains central to the museum's mission to create art experiences that spark discovery, critical thinking, and transformation, linking the University and the community. The Weisman is located at 333 East River Road, Minneapolis, on the University of Minnesota campus. Gallery admission and membership are always free. Note: The interior spaces of the Weisman Art Museum building are currently [closed to the public for maintenance](#), with plans to reopen to visitors in late fall 2021. For more information, visit www.wam.umn.edu.

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