

WEISMAN ART MUSEUM

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Weisman Art Museum Director Lyndel King Stepping Down After Forty Years

MINNEAPOLIS – After a forty-year tenure Lyndel King of the Weisman Art Museum at the University of Minnesota will step down from her post as director and chief curator in June 2020.

“I am planning my departure from the museum because WAM is in a great place,” King announced. “We have a fabulous team that faces the future with energy, creativity, sensitivity, and intelligence. I am proud of what WAM has become and want to make sure that it continues to thrive. That’s why I am announcing my retirement two years ahead of time—to coincide with the public phase of our capital campaign at the University and to endow the position of the director. It is my final gift to WAM.”

King joined the organization in 1978 and assumed the directorship in 1981. Her pivotal role has taken the museum, then the University Art Museum, from the narrow halls on the fourth floor of Northrop Auditorium to the striking stainless steel and brick building designed by Frank Gehry on the University’s East Bank Campus. Under her leadership the Weisman Art Museum has emerged as one of the top teaching university museums in the country creating innovative exhibitions, programs, and partnerships with artists, the University, and the community. King has overseen more than 200 exhibitions since 1981 and brought over 1.7 million visitors through the doors of the Weisman since it opened in 1993 alone.

“Through Lyndel's leadership, the University of Minnesota has one of the top teaching museums in the country,” said Executive Vice President and Provost Karen Hanson. “The Weisman Art Museum serves a vital role in the education of our students, in the curricular development opportunities available to our faculty, and in the engagement of our community. The Weisman is a crucially important portal to our campus, and a portal to the artworld for our students. Lyndel has been alert to every opportunity to enhance the standing and the effectiveness of the Weisman, and she has been creative in responding to these opportunities. We are deeply grateful for her work, for her commitment to the University, and for her development and stewardship of a wonderful museum. It is a superb legacy.”

King was instrumental in fundraising for the building that is now WAM. King's visionary leadership for the museum, attracted major funder Frederick R. Weisman as well as premier architects to bid for the opportunity to design the museum. Gehry was chosen and King not only worked with him to build the initial building in 1993 (raising \$18 million in funds), she worked with him a second time for the 8,100 square-foot expansion in 2011 (raising \$14 million in funds) and considers it one of the most exceptional highlights of her career.

"From the very beginning, Lyndel promoted the need for a world-class university to have a world-class art museum on its campus," said architect Frank Gehry. "She understood that the arts were a critical part of students' education, and she dedicated herself to making this dream into a reality. She has left a mark on the University of Minnesota's campus that few others can claim. I got to be part of that process with her, and I can tell you that the Weisman Art Museum exists because of her indomitable spirit, her intelligence, and her perseverance."

In her time, 16,223 artworks have been accessioned into the museum's collection bringing the total to 25,225 artworks. The collection features American art, traditional Korean furniture, a large holding of works on paper, and a ceramic collection influenced by master potter Warren MacKenzie. With the expansion of the building in 2011, King was able to add a ceramics gallery to showcase this collection and the long relationship she and MacKenzie have enjoyed as colleagues and friends.

"The Weisman would not be what it is today without Lyndel's leadership, vision, and dedication," reflect Colleagues Advisory Board Chairs Robin Torgerson and Phil Rosenbloom. "Lyndel's vast knowledge and eloquent charm combined with her fierce devotion to art, its creation and creators, make her the engine that drives the Weisman Art Museum. Through high energy, innovation, and collaboration she has built bridges between the museum and the University, its students and faculty, and the broader Twin Cities community. Although we will miss working with her on the Colleagues Advisory Board, we are extremely grateful for the strong place she has brought the museum."

A pioneer in her field, King was one of the first women to be elected to membership in the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) in 1980, later chairing two committees and serving on its board. She also served on the board and as Vice President of American Alliance of Museums (AAM), the largest museum organization in the United States. Her dedication to museums and artists is demonstrated in her service on numerous review panels for the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museums and Library Services. King has been active in the international museum community through service on the boards of the International Council of Museums (ICOM)—US and the international University Museums and Collections (UMAC) organization, as well as inviting international interns to WAM.

Most recently, King received the 2018 President's Award for Outstanding Service from the University and has been awarded an Affiliated Fellowship with the American Academy in Rome through AAMD and the Kress Foundation. King will conduct research for a forthcoming book on the history and development of university museums, galleries, and collections in Europe and the United States.

King's retirement is in tandem with the capital campaign of the University. The museum's campaign focus will be on endowing the position of the director, solidifying her legacy of creating one of the top university art museums in the country.

The Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost will appoint a search committee to conduct a national search for the next director beginning in the fall of 2019. The search will conclude with the new director starting in July of 2020.



ABOUT WAM

Since its origin in 1934, the 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 Art Museum is located at 333 East River Road, Minneapolis, on the University of Minnesota campus. Admission to exhibition galleries is always free.

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