

# MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS ST. PETE

**The Museum of Fine Arts, St Petersburg Embarks on a New Era with Strong Leadership, Dynamic Programming, and a Mission-Driven Mindset.**

***Anne-Marie Russell, named Executive Director & CEO effective immediately, brings entrepreneurial experience and a wealth of knowledge, expertise, and passion to the MFA and St. Petersburg community.***



ST. PETERSBURG, FL (March 17, 2023) – [The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg](#) (MFA) today announces Anne-Marie Russell as Executive Director and CEO. Russell joined the MFA in September 2022 as Interim Executive Director.

As Executive Director and CEO, Russell will be responsible for continuing the successful momentum of the MFA, providing leadership and support to the accomplished staff to ensure the museum maintains the high-quality experience for which it's celebrated, from curating exciting exhibitions to delivering engaging community programs to preserving works of art for generations to come. In her first six months at the MFA, Russell has been pivotal in reshaping the museum's structure, processes, and focus to support the core mission. Her keen leadership and experience as a museum director have proven invaluable during her short time with the MFA.

"Anne-Marie brings a highly informed understanding of professional art museum practice, an inclusive, community engagement approach, and a deep and abiding passion for art," said Dimity Carlson, Chair of the Board of Trustees. "Always mission-oriented, she has compelling ideas about how the MFA can further engage, educate and excite our community. Such thoughts led to the recent creation of the Museum Studies Institute, which provides the opportunity to re-examine the role of the encyclopedic museum in society, re-animate the MFA with thoughtful yet entertaining programs, and involve our community in the conversation along the way. Anne-Marie is the ideal person to lead us into our next chapter."

Over the past several months, Russell has worked alongside museum staff and the Board of Trustees to harmoniously bring together the wide range of extraordinary offerings at the MFA—great exhibitions, dynamic programming, mission-driven retail opportunities, delicious culinary sensations, fun social events, and community engagement collaborations—and activating them to create innovative and holistic art experiences. This momentum carries forward as the museum prepares for the opening of *Gio Swaby: Fresh Up* at the Art Institute of Chicago and the announcement of the EXPO CHICAGO Northern Trust Purchase Prize in April.

"I'm honored and inspired to be stepping into the Executive Director and CEO role at the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg," states Russell. "I look forward to working with the museum's dedicated board and incredible staff, our members, constituents, colleagues, and supporters to continue bringing excellent exhibitions and dynamic programming to our St. Petersburg and greater Tampa Bay communities. I am especially inspired by our community's commitment to art and ideas. The overwhelming response we've had to our current programming season is a testament to the remarkable people who make up this community, and their interest in topical content. Our guest speakers have been equally impressed by our enthusiastic and involved audiences. We look forward to continually expanding and inspiring engagement in the community as we embrace the freedom to re-imagine how art museums can better serve our society."

Russell brings more than 25 years of expertise in cultural production leadership, both institutional and entrepreneurial, to the MFA. She received a BA in cultural anthropology from the University of Colorado at Boulder and an MA in art history from the University of Arizona. She was the inaugural Executive Director of the Sarasota Art Museum and previously the Executive Director and Chief Curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tucson. Before joining the MFA, she was the founding Executive Director for Architecture Sarasota. In addition to her vast museum and nonprofit leadership roles, Russell is a

respected and award-winning documentary film director and entrepreneurial business leader who has utilized new technologies to make art accessible to wider audiences. Her educational leadership is demonstrated through her role in co-designing, leading, and teaching a unique MA program at Christie's auction house, in addition to her teaching positions at the University of Arizona. Russell joined the MFA as Interim Executive Director in September 2022 and is the seventh director in the MFA's history.

## **MFA Unveils New Opportunities to Engage Audiences with Dynamic Winter-Spring Programming Season**



Russell has placed a reignited focus on reengaging the community with exciting, entertaining, and mission-driven educational programming. Announced in February, the Winter-Spring Programming Season at the MFA features prominent figures in the art world, including Jerry Saltz, Dr. Lowery Stokes Sims, Maira Kalman, and Billy Collins, as well as MFA Curators. Much of the programming ties directly back to Russell's dedication to revisiting the vision of Founder Margaret Acheson Stuart, a commitment to making art from around the world, and throughout time, available to all in our community.

The new programming season includes several new series, including ***Museum Studies Institute***, ***Art Now***, ***The Story of Art***, ***In Conversation***, and ***By Design***. Each program allows audiences to delve deeper into the MFA Collection, garner different perspectives from experts, and reflect on how current issues impact the art museum space and our lives.

### ***The Museum Studies Institute***

The *Museum Studies Institute* is the MFA St. Pete's internal "think tank" that encompasses all of the intellectual and creative imaginings generated from, and orbiting around, an encyclopedic art museum. Art museums preserve things—art objects that represent the highest aspirations of humankind—in perpetuity. Yet we do so amid the reality of a complex and ever-changing world. Lectures by renowned experts on the history of art museums, conversations on engaging topics, and symposia examining current challenges—from climate change to inclusivity to new media—allow us to open up our internal discussions to engage our community in the conversation. We are energized by the opportunity to engage all generations to become powerful advocates within museums, the art world, and other institutions. The Museum Studies Institute provides a platform for the MFA to educate and inspire both our internal and external ambassadors, including offering specialized internships and fellowships for students passionate about museum studies.



On March 2, Anne-Marie Russell welcomed renowned art historian and curator **Dr. Lowery Stokes Sims** to the MFA for our inaugural program in this series. Dr. Sims recounted her life in art museums, beginning with her nearly three-decade tenure at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Dr. Sims is a specialist in modern and contemporary art, craft, and design and is known for her particular interest in creating a diverse and inclusive global art world. Sims served on the education and curatorial staff of The Metropolitan Museum of Art (1972-1999) and

as executive director, president, and adjunct curator at The Studio Museum in Harlem (2000-2007). She retired as Curator Emerita from the Museum of Arts and Design in 2015, and has since served as a guest curator for exhibitions at countless museums around the country. She was the 2018 Kurt Varnedoe Visiting Professor at the Institute of Fine Arts, Adjunct Professor at the IFA in 2019 and 2020, and the



2021-22 KressBeinecke Professor at The Center, National Gallery of Art. She was a founding board member of ArtTable, the organization that promotes networking for women in the art world, and was recently elected as an honorary fellow of the American Craft Council.

The remaining programs within the Museum Studies Institute series for this season include:

- ***Women Build Museums | Dr. Paul Ivey***

Sunday, April 16, 2023, 11 am–12 pm

Dr. Paul Ivey, a renowned expert on theological architecture and institutional theory, will present a fascinating talk exploring the hidden histories behind many of the most well-known art museums. At a time when women were not permitted to hold positions of power in the public sphere, they were quietly building some of the most important institutions in the country.

***Art Now***

These programs feature a wide range of people who comprise the ecosystem of the global contemporary art world—artists, thinkers, curators, writers, critics, collectors, visionaries—to inspire audiences and to connect our local community to the world, and to expose global luminaries to the cultural riches and local talents of the Tampa Bay area.



- ***Artist Talk | Christian Sampson***

Saturday, March 18, 11 am–12 pm

Christian Sampson is a multimedia artist whose practice is anchored largely by philosophies

related to the Light and Space movement that originated in California in the 1960s, particularly ideas of ephemerality and optical perception. Join artist Christian Sampson and Curator of Contemporary Art Katherine Pill to learn more about his upcoming four-part installation series at the MFA, *Tempus volat, hora fugit*, which translates from Latin to “time flies, hours flee.”

- **Art is Life | Jerry Saltz**

Saturday, April 1, 2023, 11 am–12 pm

The MFA is pleased to welcome Jerry Saltz, Pulitzer Prize winner and senior art critic at New York Magazine, for an engaging talk about art, artists, and his new book, *Art is Life*. Saltz has been one of the most influential writers about art and artists for more than a quarter of a century. In *Art is Life*, Saltz draws on two decades of work to offer a real-time survey of contemporary art as a barometer of our times.

- **Artist Talk Odili Donald Odita**

Saturday, April 22, 2023, 11 am–12 pm

Odili Donald Odita was born in Enugu, Nigeria. He now lives and works in Philadelphia, where he is a Painting, Drawing & Sculpture Professor at the Tyler School of Art at Temple University. His abstract—and often site responsive—paintings explore the power of color in an emotional, historical, and socio-political context.

### ***The Story of Art***



This series focuses on the story of art history, one that is continually being retold as we discover new things and look afresh at the familiar. Join MFA curators on a journey to learn more about our collection, contextualized with other objects from around the world, as we take a grand tour through the story of art.

This series started on February 16 with Executive Director and CEO Anne-Marie Russell presenting ***The Grand Narrative***. The story continued with Senior Curator of Ancient Art Dr. Michael Bennett exploring ***Art***

***Until Rome: 2700 B.C.–A.D. 300*** on February 23 and Senior Curator of Collections & Exhibitions Dr. Stanton Thomas presenting ***Searching for the Middle Ages: 1000-1500*** on March 9.

The remaining ***The Story of Art*** programs this season include:

- ***Crossing Boundaries: 1500–1850***

Associate Curator Erin Wilson

Thursday, April 6, 2023, 6–7 pm

- **When Modern Got Real: 1850–1950**  
Senior Curator of Collections & Exhibitions Dr. Stanton Thomas  
Thursday, April 13, 2023, 6–7 pm
- **Fixing an Image: Photography**  
Senior Curator of Photography Dr. Jane Aspinwall  
Thursday, April 20, 2023, 6–7 pm
- **Art Now 1950–Today**  
Senior Curator of Contemporary Art Katherine Pill  
Thursday, May 4, 2023, 6–7 pm

### ***In Conversation***



This lively series features various artists, thinkers, and creatives in conversation with each other, often around the debut of a new book or project. These casual conversations will surprise and delight the community and offer an opportunity to delve into current issues, best-selling books, and other topics of interest.

Our special guest host for In Conversation programs this season is **Bob Morris**. Bob is a frequent *New York Times* and *Town and Country* contributor and the author of several books, including *Assisted Loving: True Tales of Double Dating With My Dad* and *Bobby Wonderful*.

The series kicked off on February 9, with best-selling illustrator, humorist, and author **Maira Kalman** and *New York Times* journalist **Bob Morris** in conversation, with a sold-out audience. After the program, there was a book signing for Kalman's newest book, *Women Holding Things*, and hard-to-find copies of

her perennial favorites like her illustrated version of *Strunk & White's The Elements of Style* in the MFA shop.

Bob Morris returns to the MFA for another *In Conversation* program in March:

- ***Billy Collins & Bob Morris In Conversation***

Thursday, March 23, 2023, 6–7 pm

The next talk in our In Conversation series is an engaging discussion between former United States Poet Laureate and *New York Times* best-selling author Billy Collins and *New York Times* journalist and author Bob Morris. The two will discuss Collins's latest book, *Musical Tables*, and his distinct ability to connect with readers.

### ***Picture of Health***

*Picture of Health* is a multifaceted program examining various concepts of health across space and time, using the MFA Collection as a point of departure. The program cultivates an integrated exploration of health—cognitive, physical, physiological, emotional, civic, intellectual, and spiritual to foster well-being in our community.

- ***Why We Sing | Bob Morris & Jon Arterton***

Saturday, March 25, 2023, 1–2 pm

Why do we sing? To comfort ourselves and our loved ones? To seduce? To heal? To unite groups and inspire revolutions? Join author and *New York Times* journalist Bob Morris and One City Chorus Director Jon Arterton as they discuss collaboration, community, personal expression, the fear of singing, and why it's okay to sing even when you can't always hit the right notes. Chorus members will sing, audience participation will be encouraged, and voices and spirits will be lifted.

- ***Still Striking: Creativity & Aging | Dr. Doug Dreishpoon***

Saturday, April 29, 2023, 11 am–12 pm

How does creativity accommodate the changes that come as we age? For artists (painters, sculptors, musicians, poets, dancers), what are the benefits of growing old, when your body and mind begin to occupy alternate spaces? How does one adapt to these changes by adjusting methods and expectations? How does one's place in the cycle of life affect what one can do and how one does it? How does a creative individual—in a word—persist? Dreishpoon's series on Creativity & Aging is another opportunity to revisit what has become an expanding interdisciplinary study.

### ***By Design***

We sometimes take for granted that everything around us, if not part of nature, has been “designed,” from the phone in your hand to the road you drive on to the workspace you may spend a third of your life in. The By Design series will look at the world around us and the impact design has on the way we live.



- **Office Space | Florian Idenburg and Aaron Betsky**

Sunday, March 26, 2023, 2–3 pm

Most people today spend a third of their lives sleeping, a third of their lives living, and a third of their lives working. Our work environments significantly impact our lives. For centuries, designers, philosophers, and management experts have debated how best to design our workspaces. In his new book, *The Office of Good Intentions: Human(s) Work*, internationally recognized Dutch architect Florian Idenburg examines this history and offers some design thoughts of his own. A critic of art, architecture, and design, Aaron Betsky is the author of over 20 books on those subjects, including *Fifty Lessons to Learn from Frank Lloyd Wright* (2021) and the forthcoming books *The Monster Leviathan: Anarchitecture*, *Re-Imagining Buildings* and *Re:Assemble*. Betsky recently reviewed Idenburg's book, and the two will continue the conversation in this captivating program at the MFA.

## **MFA Prepares for Opening of *Gio Swaby: Fresh Up* at the Art Institute of Chicago Aligned with EXPO CHICAGO and the Northern Trust Purchase Prize**



Gio Swaby, *Pretty Pretty 8* (detail), 2021, Thread and cotton fabric on Muslin, Museum purchase in honor of James G. Sweeney

On the heels of the successful [debut solo museum exhibition](#) of multidisciplinary artist Gio Swaby (b. 1991, Nassau, Bahamas) at the MFA, the Art Institute of Chicago will open [Gio Swaby: Fresh Up](#) on April 8, 2023. This exhibition, co-organized between the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg and the Art Institute of Chicago, features bodies of work by Gio Swaby spanning 2017 through 2021. Employing the portrait genre and a range of textile-based techniques, Swaby explores the intersections of Blackness and womanhood. A fully illustrated catalogue, published by Rizzoli Electa, accompanies the exhibition and features an interview between Swaby and Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Nikole Hannah-Jones, as well

as series introductions by the artist and essays by Melinda Watt, the Art Institute of Chicago's Chair and Christa C. Mayer Thurman Curator of Textiles, and Katherine Pill, Curator of Contemporary Art, Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg.

The opening of *Gio Swaby: Fresh Up* at the AIC coincides with **EXPO CHICAGO**, the International Exposition of Contemporary and Modern Art, taking place April 13–16 at Navy Pier's Festival Hall in Chicago. EXPO CHICAGO features leading international galleries alongside a premier platform for contemporary art and cultural programming. In December 2022, EXPO CHICAGO and Northern Trust announced the annual **Northern Trust Purchase Prize**, awarded to three institutions for the tenth-anniversary edition of the fair. The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg was named one of three museums to win the 2023 Northern Trust Purchase Prize, alongside the Seattle Art Museum and the Saint Louis Art Museum.

During EXPO CHICAGO, Senior Curator of Contemporary Art Katherine Pill will select an artwork from the fair's EXPOSURE Section, which features an international selection from emerging galleries ten years and younger. As a Presenting Sponsor of EXPO CHICAGO, Northern Trust will purchase the selected artwork for the MFA Collection, with the work to be unveiled at EXPO CHICAGO on April 14 at 12 pm on the Northern Trust Exchange Stage. The 2023 EXPOSURE section, curated by Aimé Iglesias Lukin, Director and Chief Curator of Visual Arts at Americas Society, features solo and two-artist presentations, elevates the profile of young international galleries, and supports the careers of emerging artists.



“The entire MFA community is deeply honored to be invited to participate in EXPO CHICAGO’s Northern Trust Purchase Prize. We have strong ties to the Chicago art and culture arena, have benefitted from Northern Trust’s great support for the arts in Florida, and are thrilled to be connected with our colleagues across the country through this project,” said Anne-Marie Russell. “The Northern Trust Purchase Prize for EXPO CHICAGO perfectly represents the collective ability of a healthy art ecosystem—artists, galleries, institutions, art fairs, media, business, collectors, and audience—all working together to amplify the artist’s voice through their work.”

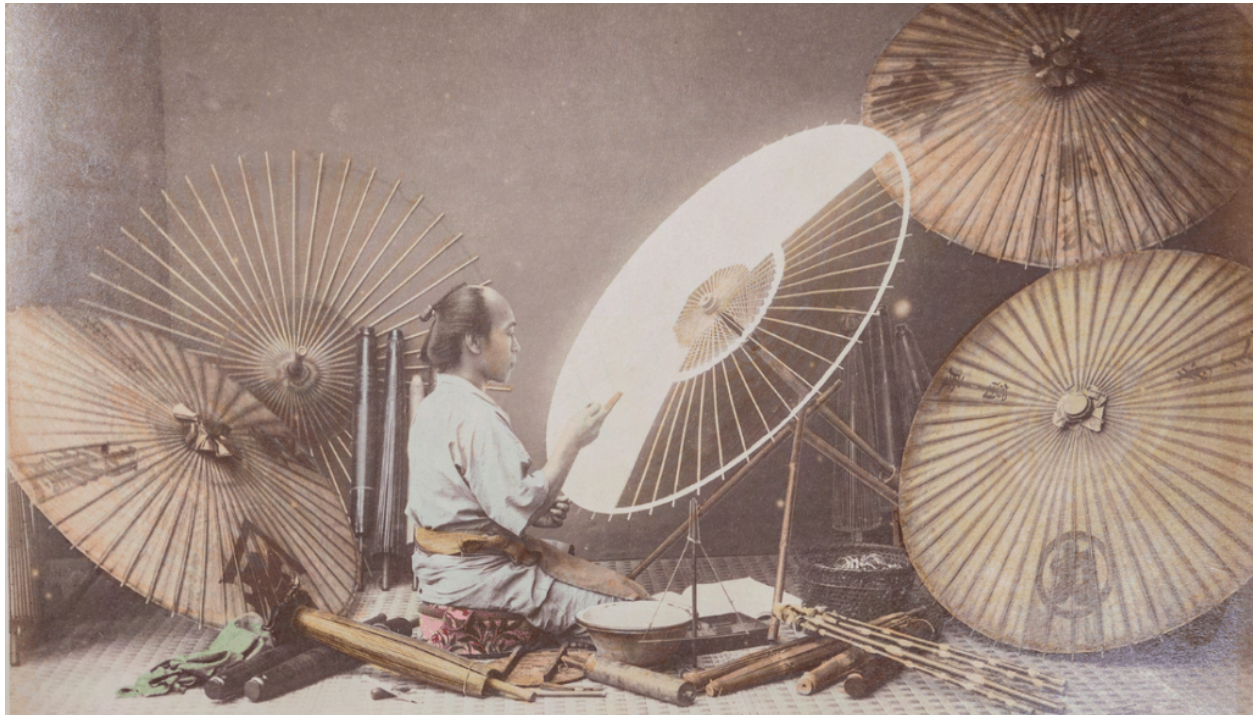
The MFA will officially announce the artwork chosen for the Northern Trust Purchase Prize in a release on April 14.

## **New Exhibitions Highlight & Complement the Vast MFA Collection**

The Museum of Fine Arts, St Petersburg is pleased to announce Spring-Summer Exhibition plans that showcase works in the MFA Collection and exquisite traveling exhibitions.

***Shashin: Japanese Photographs from the Meiji era, 1870–1900***

**March 11 through July 23, 2023**



Kusakabe Kimbei, *Umbrella Maker* (detail), c.1880, Albumen print, Gift of Ludmila and Bruce Dandrew from The Ludmila Dandrew and Chitranee Drapkin Collection

Although photography was invented in 1839 in France, *shashin*—the Japanese word for photograph—was not fully introduced in Japan until the mid-1860s. Learning the craft from European photographers, Japanese photographers were quick to embrace the ambrotype, albumen, and carte-de-visite processes. Most opened studios in the 1870s amid stiff European competition, but by the 1890s, Japanese photographers dominated the market.

This exquisite exhibition was curated by MFA Senior Curator of Photography Dr. Jane Aspinwall. Beautiful and superbly crafted, this selection of photographs showcases the skill and innovation of Japanese photographers working in Japan from 1870–1900. Comprised of almost 50 works from the MFA Collection—most of which have never been on view to the public—early Japanese photography served a multitude of functions including mementos for remembrance, collectibles for tourists, and furthered the notion of photography as an art.

“Because many early Japanese photographs were purchased by tourists, some historians have dismissed them as kitsch, leading to an understudied area in the history of photography,” said Dr. Jane Aspinwall. “But Japanese photographer Kusakabe Kimbei drew upon an understanding of visual and cultural references that point to deeper meanings.”



[Lasting Impressions: Japanese Prints from the Read-Simms Collection](#)

April 22 through August 13, 2023



*South Wind, Clear Dawn (Gaifu kaisei)* from the series *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji (Fugaku sanjūrokkei)* (detail), c. 1831–33, by Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849). Color woodblock print, Gibbes Museum of Art, Read-Simms Collection

Perhaps the best-known Japanese art form outside of the country since its doors reopened to the world in the 1850s, Japanese woodblock prints immediately captivated European and American audiences. The bold bright color schemes, novel vantage points, and audacious compositions with off-center subjects were a revelation to Westerners who were struck by the supreme artistry of these everyday objects.

Curated by Associate Curator Erin Wilson, *Lasting Impressions* presents 60 of the finest Japanese prints from the Read-Simms Collection at the Gibbes Museum of Art. From famous Kabuki theater actors portrayed by Suzuki Harunobu and Tōshūsai Sharaku in the eighteenth century, to vibrant landscapes by Utagawa Hiroshige and Katsushika Hokusai in the nineteenth century, the collection demonstrates the remarkable precision in print production long admired by collectors and artists alike. This exhibition allows visitors a unique opportunity to explore a wide range of print subjects and to better understand the nuanced culture of the Edo period through the particular genius of individual artists.

“Ranging from prints of celebrated actors and famed beauties to scenes of the natural world, this exhibition explores the depth and complexity of Japanese ukiyo-e printmaking,” said Erin Wilson. “Woodblock prints, which could be produced in multiples, were extremely popular and widely collected throughout Japan and later Europe and America. The Read-Simms Collection is one of the finest in the



United States with artists such as Tōshūsai Sharaku, Katsushika Hokusai, and Utagawa Hiroshige represented.”

***Best in Show: Dogs in Art at the MFA***  
**Coming Spring 2023**

Companion to *The Story of Art* series, the MFA curators (and resident dog-lovers) have collaborated on an exhibition linking their disparate areas of expertise and media across time and space with a unifying theme—in this case, our beloved canine partners. Humans and canines have been co-evolving for over 30,000 years, developing a rich and complex set of relationships that is revealed through works of art. Working exclusively from our collection, they have chosen their favorite works that memorialize this special relationship.

From ancient times through contemporary times, dogs have been constant companions. They have assisted by hunting and guiding, supported through their steadfast loyalty, and amused with their energy and antics. This small focus show—drawn entirely from the MFA Collection—highlights the ways dogs have been represented throughout the history of art.

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**ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA**

The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg (MFA) at 255 Beach Drive NE is one of the largest encyclopedic art museums in Florida. The collection includes works of art from ancient times to the present day and from around the world, including ancient Greek and Roman, Egyptian, Asian, African, pre-Columbian, Native American, European, American, and contemporary art. The photography collection is one of the largest and finest in the Southeast. For more information, please visit [mfastpete.org](https://mfastpete.org) and follow @mfastpete on social media.

[PRESS IMAGES](#)

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