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## OPPORTUNITY RESOURCES INC.

Freda Mindlin  
President

196 East 75<sup>th</sup> Street  
Suite 14H  
New York, NY 10021  
TEL: 212-744-4409  
FAX: 212-744-5004  
[search@opportunityresources.net](mailto:search@opportunityresources.net)

### POSITION DESCRIPTION AND IDEAL CANDIDATE PROFILE

**POSITION:** Chief Curator

**CLIENT:** Kalamazoo Institute of Arts

**LOCATION:** Kalamazoo, MI

### BACKGROUND

The Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, one of the largest museums in the state of Michigan, is seeking a collaborative curatorial leader who will assume a critical role in shaping and implementing the Institute's curatorial program. Kalamazoo is a collecting institution and has a collection numbering approximately 5,000 works of art.

KIA's exhibition and collecting emphasis is on American art and the art of Japan, China and Korea. The American art holdings are extensive, representing painting and sculpture from the 19th century to present day. The sizable works on paper collection holdings embrace American and European artists from the 17th century to contemporary. The collection includes artists as aesthetically and stylistically varied as Eastman Johnson, Andy Warhol, Henry O. Tanner, Alexander Calder and Robert Maplethorpe. A well-respected Pre-Columbian collection, the core of which is gold objects, is a gift from one of the Institute's generous benefactors. American photography is an important and growing part of the collection.

The Institute encompasses over 70,000 square feet and includes both a museum and the Art School, which provides classes for 3,000 students ages 4 through adult in state-of-the-art classrooms and studios. The school's more than 50 part-time instructors teach courses and workshops in 8 major disciplines from painting and photography to ceramics and fibers.

The Museum maintains a busy schedule of approximately 13 exhibitions a year with related public and educational programs. Presently on view in the galleries are *My Hero: Contemporary Art and Superhero Action*, over 50 international art works that draw on superhero imagery; and *Dawoud Bey: Harlem, USA and Harlem Redux*, an overview of this Chicago-based artist's

commitment to portraiture in the vibrant and historic Harlem neighborhood. Upcoming in the spring, the exhibition schedule includes *Vibrant Bounty: Chinese Folk Art from the Shaanxi Region*; and *Global Glass: A Survey of Form and Function*. The Institute maintains a strong commitment to regional, community and school exhibitions.

Executive Director Belinda Tate envisions the future of KIA as a thriving Institute having significant cultural impact locally, regionally and nationally. The KIA embraces diversity and inclusion that contributes to a healthy environment within the institution and also in the community which it serves.

The Kalamazoo Institute of Art operates with a budget of over \$3.5 million and a staff of 31 full- and part-time employees (exclusive of faculty members and security guards).

## **THE POSITION**

The Chief Curator reports to the Executive Director. The curatorial staff (reporting to the Chief Curator) will include the Curator, Registrar, Preparator, Curatorial Assistant, and potential Curatorial Fellow. The Chief Curator will play a pivotal role in bringing innovative thinking and curatorial leadership in support of KIA's institutional goals.

## **Essential Responsibilities**

- In partnership with the Executive Director, lead the curatorial department in presenting a dynamic program of exhibitions.
- Serve as KIA's primary scholar. Research and study the permanent collections for publication in appropriate journals, exhibition catalogues and other publications, for enrichment of the database and docent training, and in preparation for a future catalogue of the collection.
- Document and propose acquisitions for presentation to the Executive Director and Board Acquisition Committee.
- Develop innovative, engaging and accessible exhibitions, and with the Education Department, prepare materials and programs to enhance the viewing experience.
- Implement and evolve a long-term vision for the KIA curatorial program based on demographics and an understanding of audience participation concepts, which will embrace diversity and draw non-traditional art audiences to the Institute.
- Ensure that the permanent collection is properly installed, interpreted, and documented to enhance viewing experience and appreciation.
- Oversee proper storage and conservation of the permanent collection.
- In collaboration with the Development office, play an active role in the cultivation and solicitation of contributions. Cultivate gifts for the permanent collection and secure funds for exhibitions and acquisitions.

- Participate in KIA public programs. Prepare and deliver lectures and general talks both for visitors and for communities outside of KIA.
- Attend key local, regional and national conferences to stay abreast of scholarship, market trends and current professional best practices, build professional relationships and enhance professional growth.
- Supervise, inspire and mentor staff to achieve the Curatorial department's goals, foster cross departmental collaboration and adhere to best museum practices;

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

The successful candidate will have an M.A. in art history or its equivalent (Ph.D. preferred); general knowledge of the field of American art and culture from 1800 to the present and expertise in some area of American art. Solid knowledge of contemporary art is a plus. A minimum of 4 years of management-level experience and 5 years of applied curatorial experience is essential.

Also required:

- Demonstrated excellence in conceiving and organizing exhibitions
- Track record in both scholarly and general publications based on a thorough grounding in research tools and methodology
- Experience working with Board committees
- An innovative approach to exhibitions and programming
- Strong staff management and mentoring skills.
- A flair for public speaking, both to general audiences and to an audience of peers
- Flexible and non-hierarchical in working inter-departmentally
- Excellent writing and overall communication skills
- Demonstrated organizational ability and proficient computer skills
- Ability to create and maintain an annual departmental budget
- Some national and international travel

In addition, the successful candidate will:

- Be self-directed, motivated and able to work independently
- Be an out-of-the box, creative thinker.
- Thrive in an atmosphere of growth and change
- Be a good listener

- Have excellent interpersonal skills
- Have a roll-up-your-sleeves work ethic and a sense of humor

## **LOCATION**

Kalamazoo has an urban population of 75,000 (within a Metropolitan Statistical Area of 334,000) and is the economic, cultural and medical center for Southwest Michigan, which has more than one million inhabitants. Kalamazoo is just 35 miles from Lake Michigan and equal distance (150 miles) between Chicago and Detroit.

Kalamazoo's unique business and community support for its nationally-respected cultural and educational initiatives is well-known. The city is home to an engaging art community including internationally renowned annual performing arts festivals and festivals of all kinds, symphony, theater and university performing arts venues and thriving museums. The city's vibrant downtown is historic, accessible, diverse and green, and is a growing entertainment and cultural destination and residential community. Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College, both over 100 years old and nationally ranked institutions, are within walking distance of downtown Kalamazoo.

Kalamazoo experiences four distinct seasons with cold-weather sports, extensive lakes and parks and the new Kalamazoo River Valley Trail, 17 miles of pedestrian and bicycle trails that link to a regional trail system extending to Lake Michigan.

Kalamazoo is served by Amtrak and by several international and regional airports.

## **Applications and recommendations**

Kalamazoo Institute of Arts is an Equal Opportunity Employer, committed to diversity and inclusion. KIA has engaged Opportunity Resources Inc. to execute this search. Confidential inquiries, applications and recommendations are welcome. Please send cover letter and resume electronically to the search team: Freda Mindlin and Nancy Kaufman, Opportunity Resources Inc., New York, NY [search@opportunityresources.net](mailto:search@opportunityresources.net).