

# For Immediate Release

## A Track Record of Success: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Belonging at Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia)

MINNEAPOLIS—(Feb. 21, 2024) — Since 2020 and the arrival of Katie Luber as Mia's Nivin and Duncan MacMillan Director and President, the museum has methodically reshaped, expanded, and significantly increased its investment and activities in diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging (DEIAB).

A partial list of these investments and activities includes an array of management and staffing changes across the institution, including:

- Creating the new position of Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer (CDIO), and fundraising to endow this position, ensuring it will be an enduring role at Mia;
- Hiring Virajita Singh as the first CDIO;
- Creating the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, under Singh's leadership;
- Moving the museum's Human Resources department to the office of the CDIO, within the DEI Division, so that Mia's CDIO—working with the museum's head of HR—has insight and visibility into this work across the institution, including addressing hiring practices;
- Continuing to hire with an eye on diversity, resulting in a staff of 250 people, of whom (as of December 2023): 27.9% identify as BIPOC, 5.7% identify as Gender Non-conforming/Non Binary/Genderqueer/Transgender, 15.6 % identify as LGBTQ, 8% as having Disabilities, and 0.8% identify as Veterans. (For comparison, [Minnesota Compass](#) reports the Twin Cities BIPOC population is 29.8% and the state's BIPOC population is 22.4%);
- Investing in the diversification of the museum's management team, of whom (as of December 2023), 26.8% identify as BIPOC, 7 % identify as LGBTQ, 8.8% as having Disabilities, and 3.5% identify as Veterans;
- Maintaining a staff tenure of more than 9 years on average—even in an environment where more than 20% of the employees have been newly hired since the end of the pandemic;
- Establishing clearer performance expectations, goal-setting, and evaluation processes, to ensure that staff performance is both more fairly evaluated and more clearly understood across the museum. DEI goals are now integrated into the performance evaluation of every Mia employee;
- Providing trainings on DEIAB topics including religious diversity in a museum context, ageism and age friendly museums, supplier diversity, anti-weight bias, de-escalation training, and a dedicated respite space for staff;
- Offering regular Employee Wellbeing Sessions each year in partnership with the UMN Center for Spirituality and Healing;
- Language accessibility work, including expanding translation considerations in museum exhibitions and community outreach, and offering language classes for staff;
- Partnering with Mia's librarian and curators in expanding Mia's library collection in the areas of Art & Disabilities, Native American Art, Indigenous Futurism, African American Art, Japanese Art and Latin American Art;
- Reorganizing key departments, such as the museum's Learning department, to ensure that the DEIAB work is both more clearly aligned with Mia's mission and role as an art museum and that the strategies and tactics for addressing DEIAB needs are integrated into systems across the museum rather than siloed in selected departments;
- Negotiating new contracts with the museum's two unions, SEIU and OPEIU, which included wage increases of nearly 20% over 2.5 years for those employees at the lower end of the museum's pay scale.
- Strengthening relationships and partnerships with neighborhood partners including Whittier Alliance, MCAD, Somali Resettlement Services and other organizations;
- Updating Mia's vendor list to highlight BIPOC, LGBTQ, women, and sustainably owned businesses on our rental information, and sourcing diverse providers for events related products and services, as well as sourcing products from diverse makers and companies owned by diverse individuals, understanding their wholesale and retail processes, and providing onboarding and training when applicable;
- A programming partnership with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, now in its third year, inviting BIPOC youth to the museum for artmaking and conversation about racism as a public health crisis, and culminating in an exhibition of the students' work displayed at the museum;

# For Immediate Release

- Launching a series of Vitality Arts programs for adults aged 55 and better, with local philanthropic support, designed art-making experiences and opportunities for social connection, partnering with organizations including Catholic Charities, Centro Tyrone Guzman, Phyllis Wheatley Community Center, and Rainbow Health, among others;
- Diversifying Mia's audiences: according to museum survey data from 2023, 30% of visitors self-identified as BIPOC, which is in line with Mia's staff (27.9% self-identified as BIPOC as of December 2023) and the Twin Cities Metro (29.8% according to [Minnesota Compass](#));
- Increasing internal communications on DEI initiatives and activities, including a DEI newsletter for staff to share progress across projects and departments;
- Hosting and support of Mia's Cross Functional Teams such as Accessibility Team and Employee Resource Groups (BIPOC ERG, 2SLGBTQIA+, Employees Who Care for Children (EWCC));
- Establishing a new Visual Resources DEI Fellowship and continuing the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC) Native American Fellowship;

Virajita Singh, Mia's Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer (CDIO) says, "Mia has long had a reputation for its engagement with these issues. The phase of the equity and inclusion work before my arrival played a very important role in Mia's history with its passion, national visibility, and momentum, particularly in challenging time of between 2020 and 2022. My goal—our goal—since my arrival in 2022 is to honor the call for systemic transformation from the previous phase and to do so by addressing Mia's systems, processes, and procedures. Our new approach engages and includes every division, department, and individual staff in an empowered cultural transformation that is aligned with the museum's mission as well as our strategic goals of inclusion, excellence and sustainability. This approach works and explains why, in the short period of just two years, Mia has made—and plan to continue to make—tremendous progress on its DEIAB goals in all areas of the museum, and which benefits our staff, our audiences, and the community as a whole."

In addition to the management and staffing changes at Mia, the museum's team has pursued DEIAB work in its core functions of collecting and presenting art. This includes a roster of exhibitions and installations presenting art from diverse communities or engaging with these topics, as well as a remarkable number of additions to Mia's collections. Among these highlights are:

- Creating a new department of Art of The Americas;
- Hiring a curator of Latin American art and securing endowed funding to support this position over the long-term;
- Bringing into the collection literally hundreds of new works from diverse communities, such as:
  - Works by both well-known and underappreciated Black artists like Winfred Rembert, Melvin Edwards, Charles Alston, James Philips, Leslie Barlow, Deana Lawson, Sonya Clark, Renee Stout, Bisa Butler, Clarence Heyward, Lamar Peterson, Delita Martin, have been added to the collection, as well as many others.
  - Works by other artists of color, including a large-format piece by Nigerian artist Otobong Nkanga, as well as objects by Venezuelan artists Carlos Cruz Diaz and Elsa Gramcko, Japanese artist Ken Matsubara, Iraqi-American-Swedish artist Hayv Kahraman, Brazilian artist Rubem Valentim, Mexican-born Enrique Chagoya, Ecuador-born Ronny Quevedo, South African artist Zanele Muholi, and Ghanaian artist James Barnor to name just a few.
  - Mia has long been committed to collecting and displaying works by Native American artists. In recent years works by the following artists have been added to the collection: Jeffrey Gibson, George Morrison, Fritz Scholder, Rose B. Simpson, Jim Denomie, Mary Sully, Marilou Schultz, Imogene Big Medicine, Truman Lowe and Rabbett Strickland.
  - Some 21 works from the recent exhibition *In Our Hands: Native Photography, 1890 to Now* are being added to the museum permanent holdings.
- And presenting a wide array of exhibitions and installations exploring art from diverse artists and communities, such as:
  - The current exhibitions [American Gothic: Gordon Parks and Ella Watson](#) and [The Lyrical Artwork of Jim Denomie](#)
  - The recently closed exhibition [In Our Hands: Native Photography, 1890 to Now](#) and the Carmen Winant installation [The last safe abortion](#)
  - Other exhibitions including:
    - [Tia Keobounpheng: Revealing Threads](#);
    - [ReVisión: Art in the Americas](#);
    - [Teen Perspectives on Racism and Health Equity](#), a show of work by local high school students;
    - [Fragments of Epic Memory](#);
    - [Night Life: Nocturnal Worlds in African Art](#);
    - [Paintings from South America: The Thoma Collection \(1600-1800\)](#);
    - [Teo Nguyen: Việt Nam Peace Project](#)
    - [Racism as a Public Health Crisis: Youth and Professional Artists Respond](#), a show of work by local high school students;

# For Immediate Release

- [\*In the Presence of our Ancestors: Southern Perspectives in African American Art\*](#);
  - [\*Unexpected Turns: Women Artists and the Making of American Basket-Weaving Traditions\*](#); and
  - [\*Vision 2020: Jess T. Dugan\*](#)
- And for the second year in a row, Mia organized a [\*Staff Art Show\*](#), providing opportunities for our community to see the work of our very talented staff. In 2023, artists that chose to submit their work came from all Divisions of the museum, with significant participation by staff from the Security Department.

"I am incredibly proud of and gratified by the DEIAB commitments and actions that the Mia team has taken since I arrived in 2020, which has affected every part of the museum, supporting the successes of our employees and the remarkable work they do every day to create meaningful experiences with art for our many audiences," said Katie Luber, the Nivin and Duncan MacMillan Director and President of Mia. "In this moment, it is essential to acknowledge the importance of the public funding the museum receives. Among other things, this ensures that the museum is free and open to everyone and supports our work on a daily basis, including our important DEIAB work. The private support the museum receives from trustees and other donors enhances this public support and also contributes to the museum's daily operations, key initiatives and staff support."

Approximately 70% of Mia's employees are represented by one of two unions (OPEIU represents roughly 52% of employees and SEIU represents roughly 18%). Another area of the museum's DEIAB work involves its negotiations with these unions for the Collective Bargaining Agreements that govern the terms for union members' employment at Mia. In 2023, the museum concluded new contracts with both unions, which included wage increases of nearly 20% over 2.5 years for those employees at the lower ends of the museum's pay scale. In their separate negotiations, both unions chose to focus on wages and benefits as priorities for a contract renewal—which also resulted in additional paid holidays, flexible use of such holidays, and other clarifications to the scheduling and overtime provisions that benefits the hourly employees—elements that continue to make the museum an attractive employer within the Twin Cities. While both OPEIU and SEIU also have stated commitments to DEIAB initiatives, neither union identified or introduced contract proposals related to these topics as part of their negotiations, a clear endorsement of the museum's commitments and actions already underway.

Added Katie Luber, "The last four years have posed challenges for Mia, as for most art museums across the country, but this time has also been filled with many accomplishments, whether that's rebuilding our staff from a pandemic low of 185 employees to our current team of 250, to looking holistically at our approach to collecting and presenting art, and ensuring that we continue to bring together a commitment to artistic excellence with a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion."

---

## Press Contact

Minneapolis Institute of Art  
Molly Lax  
[mlax@artsmia.org](mailto:mlax@artsmia.org)  
+1 612 870 3013

## About the Minneapolis Institute of Art

Home to more than 100,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest art collections in the country—from all corners of the globe, and from ancient to contemporary—Mia links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration.

General admission to Mia is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee.

For more information, call + 1 612 870 3000 or visit [artsmia.org](http://artsmia.org)

