

SAN JOSE MUSEUM OF ART

San José Museum of Art Appoints Karen Rapp and Lauren Schell Dickens as Interim Co-Directors During Executive Transition

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA (May 15, 2025)— The San José Museum of Art (SJMA) announces the appointment of two members of its senior leadership team to serve as interim Executive Co-Directors. Karen Rapp, deputy director, and Lauren Schell Dickens, chief curator, will lead SJMA beginning June 1, 2025, as it undertakes a national search for a new executive director following the departure of S. Sayre Batton, Oshman Executive Director. Rapp and Dickens will work together to oversee daily operations, continue to advance the Museum's mission, and support staff and programming through this period of transition.

"We are fortunate to have both Karen and Lauren stepping in to guide the Museum during this important transition," said Wanda Kownacki, Co-President of the Museum's Board of Trustees. "Their deep experience, demonstrated leadership, and strong working relationship give the Board full confidence in their ability to lead the institution alongside the Senior Staff while we conduct our executive search."

Rapp is deputy director at SJMA, where she leads the Museum's institutional giving and strategy and oversees the education department, college partnerships, cross-department collaborations, and strategic planning. She plays a key role in strategizing SJMA's public programming and community engagement. Rapp joined SJMA in 2013 as the grants officer and was promoted to SJMA's assistant director, strategic initiatives in 2018. Prior to working at SJMA, she taught Modern and Contemporary Art History at numerous Bay Area universities and held curatorial positions at the SFMoMA and Rice University Art Gallery. She holds a PhD in Art History from Stanford University and a BA in American Studies from Northwestern University.

Dickens currently serves as chief curator at SJMA, where she leads the Museum's exhibition programming and curatorial projects and serves as a liaison to the Collection Committee of the Board of Trustees. She co-organized exhibitions accompanied by scholarly publications such as *Jay DeFeo: Undersoul*, *Rina Banerjee: Make Me a Summary of the World*, and *Kelly Akashi: Formations*. Dickens first joined SJMA in April 2016 as curator and was promoted to senior curator in September 2019. Prior to SJMA, Dickens was curatorial consultant at the National Gallery of Art and assistant curator of contemporary art at Corcoran Gallery of Art. Dickens holds a BA in American Studies from Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, and an MA in Modern Art: Critical Studies from Columbia University, New York. Her public project with The Propeller Group and El Mac was awarded the 2018 Creative Impact Award by the city of San José. She is a 2019 Warhol Curatorial Research Fellow and recipient of the Fellows of Contemporary Art 2022 Curators Award.

SUPPORT

Operations and programs at the San José Museum of Art are made possible by principal support from SJMA's Board of Trustees, a Cultural Affairs Grant from the City of San José, and the Lipman Family Foundation; by lead support from the Adobe Foundation, the California Arts Council, Toby and Barry Fernald, Brook Hartzell and Tad Freese, the Richard A. Karp Charitable Foundation, Tammy and Tom Kiely, the Knight Foundation, Evelyn and Rick Neely, Yvonne and Mike Nevens, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Skyline Foundation, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and the SJMA Director's Council and Council of 100; and with significant endowment support from the William Randolph Hearst Foundation and the San José Museum of Art Endowment Fund established by the Knight Foundation at the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

ABOUT SAN JOSE MUSEUM OF ART

The San José Museum of Art (SJMA) is a modern and contemporary art museum dedicated to inclusivity, new thinking, and visionary ideas. Founded in 1969 by artists and community leaders, its dynamic exhibitions, collection, and programs resonate with defining characteristics of San José and the Silicon Valley—from its rich diversity to its hallmark innovative ethos. The Museum offers lifelong learning for school children and their educators, multigenerational families, creative adults, university students and faculty, and community groups. SJMA is committed to being a borderless museum, essential to creative life throughout the diverse communities of San José and beyond.

SJMA is located on Plaza de César Chávez at 110 South Market Street in downtown San José, California. The Museum is open Thursday 4–9pm; Friday 11am–9pm; Saturday–Sunday 11am–6pm. Admission is \$20 for adults, \$15 for seniors, and free to members, college students, youth and children ages 17 and under, and schoolteachers (with valid ID). Admission is free from 6–9pm on the first Friday of every month. For up-to-date information, call 408.271.6840 or visit SanJoseMuseumofArt.org.

Press Contact

Melanie Samay, director of marketing and communications, msamay@sjmusart.org 415.722.0555
Frederick Liang, marketing and communications coordinator, fliang@sjmusart.org

Press Images

[flickr.com/photos/sjma/1447090607/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/sjma/1447090607/)