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## Virginia Shearer to Take Helm at Sarasota Art Museum as Executive Director

Sarasota, FL – July 22, 2021 – [Ringling College of Art and Design](https://www.ringling.edu/) is pleased to announce that Virginia Shearer, currently Director of Education at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, will be joining the [Sarasota Art Museum of Ringling College of Art and Design](https://www.sarasotaartmuseum.org/) as Executive Director beginning August 30, 2021.

“After a comprehensive and extensive search, we are honored to have Virginia join us as the new Executive Director for the Sarasota Art Museum,” said Ringling College of Art and Design President Dr. Larry R. Thompson. “Virginia has over two decades of museum education experience at the highest levels. She has built her excellent reputation as a leader in the museum field by developing a solid track record in creating experimental, collaborative, and research-based platforms for engagement that will serve the Museum and our community well. We are especially excited to work with her and explore expanding even further the reach and excellence of the Museum through partnerships, inclusivity, and access. As a result, the Museum will be able to continue to meet its mission of “providing appreciation and understanding of the art of our time through the education and cultivation of discerning visual thinkers and ethical citizens.”

“I’m very excited to return to a community that is near and dear to my heart and for the opportunity to lead the Sarasota Art Museum into the future,” states Virginia Shearer, Sarasota Art Museum incoming Executive Director. “The museum’s foundation is strong, thanks to the bold vision of our founders and the Museum Advisory Committee, our integration with Ringling College of Art and Design, and our



*Virginia Shearer, Incoming Executive Director, Sarasota Art Museum of Ringling College of Art and Design*  
CatMax Photography <https://bit.ly/VSphoto>

talented and dedicated museum staff. I am inspired by the Sarasota Art Museum’s commitment to serving as a platform for education, exposure and experimentation and welcome the opportunity to take the Museum through this moment and to ascend to even greater heights. Together we will find new ways to enliven and inspire the Sarasota community through the art of our time.”

“Virginia has been such an instrumental part of the High’s success that her presence will be greatly missed,” said Rand Suffolk, Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr. Director, High Museum of Art. “Nonetheless, we’re thrilled for her. We’re also excited to watch her impact the field more broadly in her new role as director.”

“During this period of transition, I want to express on behalf of the Board of Trustees of Ringling College, the Board’s Museum Advisory Committee, the Museum Founders, the staff of the Museum, and our community our gratitude to Stacey Corley and David Samec for their tireless efforts in leading the Museum as interim co-Executive Directors through this past spring and summer. We appreciate the time, dedication, and resourcefulness with which they’ve managed the Museum through this interim period,” Dr. Thompson continued. “We also express our sincere gratitude to Anne-Marie Russell, the Museum’s inaugural executive director, whose expertise and vision opened the Museum and chartered a successful trajectory for the Museum and its integration into Sarasota’s community.”

Finally, Dr. Thompson gave his thanks to the members of the Search Committee for the Executive Director and its Chair, Dean Eisner, for their dedication and diligent efforts to find such outstanding candidates resulting in this excellent appointment.

Virginia currently serves the world-renowned High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Georgia as the Eleanor McDonald Storza Director of Education, where she oversees all areas of the High's Department of Education. She serves as one of six members of the Executive Team who join High Museum Director Rand Suffolk in setting the strategic priorities for the Museum.

Since joining the High Museum in 2005, she has initiated, led, and participated in cross-institutional initiatives that have proven integral to the Museum's future, including projects such as the High's summer piazza activation commission series, the Greene Family Learning Gallery, and a series of popular exhibitions. From 2005 to 2012, Ms. Shearer served as the High's Associate Director of Education, leading the public programs team during a period of significant growth that included opening the Greene Family Education Center, the Louvre Atlanta partnership, and development of successful young audience initiatives. She previously served as Tampa Museum of Art's Deputy Director for Education and Public Programs and as the Director of Education at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art.

Ms. Shearer holds a Bachelor of Arts in humanities from Florida State University and a Master of Arts in Teaching in museum education from The George Washington University. She was selected as a participant in the Getty Leadership Institute program "Museum Leaders: The Next Generation" in 2012 as well as the Getty's Executive Education Program for Museum Leaders in 2014, and returned to the program as a mentor in 2016. Ms. Shearer served as the Southeastern Regional Director for the Museum Education Division of National Arts Education Association from 2004 - 2006.

### ***Current Exhibitions at Sarasota Art Museum of Ringling College of Art and Design***

[\*Art and Race Matters: The Career of Robert Colescott\*](#) is the first comprehensive museum retrospective presenting the works of one of America's most compelling and controversial artists and will reveal over 50 works from 53 years of his career that both bring to the surface and challenge diversity and racial stereotypes. *Art and Race Matters* invites a renewed examination of the artist, whose work is still as challenging, provocative, and relevant now as it was when he burst onto the art scene over five decades ago.

[\*Charles McGill: In the Rough\*](#) features the work of this multidisciplinary artist, educator, and golf teaching professional celebrated for his assemblage works that re-purpose the plastic, steel, leather, vinyl, and hardware from vintage golf bags. By cutting, tearing, and re-imagining these materials into abstract sculptures, McGill transforms the accessory and game of golf from a symbol of exclusion and privilege to a cite for discussions surrounding racial and class inequities.

[\*Unraveling: Aranda\Lasch + Terrol Dew Johnson\*](#) presents the collaborative works of New York and Tucson-based design firm Aranda\Lasch and Tohono O'odham artist, educator, and activist Terrol Dew Johnson. While these artists come from seemingly unrelated worlds, Ben Aranda and Chris Lasch from cutting-edge technological design and Johnson from Native American traditions of basket-weaving, they are unified through their shared purpose in honoring and preserving culture through explorations in form and material.

[\*Xaviera Simmons: The structure the labor the foundation the escape the pause\*](#) explores the construction of landscape, language, and complex histories in the United States and its empire building globally. Simmons' trio of massive sculptures physically makes space for conversations regarding reparations, amends and repairs specifically to the descendants of American chattel slavery, a debt that is way past

due and one that has been systemically denied for centuries. The work also delves deeply into the racial caste system and the construction of whiteness that has upheld this oppression.

[Samo Davis: Happiness in ROYGBIV](#) is inspired by the relief provided from nature within our confined lives of 2020, and reflects on the artist's fascination with growth and the fantastical imaginings of a world outside. Natural forms in a manufactured material become organic through the imperfection of hand mixing colors and perfection of techniques. Samo Davis' artistic practice involves sculpting through repetitive motion to repurpose and reinspire everyday materials.

### ***Sarasota Art Museum Mission***

The Sarasota Art Museum is a catalyst for appreciation and understanding of the art of our time. As a platform for exposure, education, and experimentation, the Museum inspires new ideas and new ways of being through an endless rotation of transformative, relevant, and pioneering exhibitions and programs designed to elevate and empower all by cultivating discerning visual thinkers and ethical citizens.

### ***About Sarasota Art Museum***

A contemporary kunsthalle operating under the parent institution of Ringling College of Art and Design, the Sarasota Art Museum is located at 1001 S. Tamiami Trail. This location also houses the College's Continuing Studies program, comprised of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Ringling College and the non-credit Studio and Digital Arts program. Taking over the former Sarasota High School -- a 60,000 square-foot 1926 Collegiate Gothic structure designed by M. Leo Elliott -- and a 20,000 square-foot building by Paul Rudolph through a 99-year lease, the adaptive reuse project was led by Lawson Group Architects with Terence Riley, principal of K/R, as the Museum design architect.

The Sarasota Art Museum has 15,000 square feet of dedicated exhibition space; site-specific and site-responsive art installations; a plaza court featuring sculpture; a Great Lawn for temporary sculpture, installation, and performance programming; a 110-seat auditorium for educational events and performances; a Bistro café; and a retail store. The Sarasota Art Museum also offers stunning event spaces available for rent. <https://www.sarasotaartmuseum.org/>

### ***Sarasota Art Museum Hours and Admission:***

10 am to 5 pm Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. 11 am to 5 pm Sunday  
Galleries are closed Tuesdays, Museum Shop and Grounds are open 10 am to 5 pm.

Admission:

Museum Members Free

General Admission \$15

Free General Admission:

- Cross College Alliance Students with ID
- Veterans and Active Military with ID
- Under 17 accompanied by adult
- Ringling College Students, Faculty, and Staff

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