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City of Riverside Hires Robyn Peterson to Lead Metropolitan Museum

Museum professional has three decades of experience, accreditation skills

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Robyn Peterson, a museum professional who has curated dozens of exhibitions and major projects during her three decades in the field, most recently as executive director of the Yellowstone Art Museum in Billings, Montana, has been named Director of the Riverside Metropolitan Museum.

Peterson initiated and led a successful \$7.5 million capital and endowment campaign at the Yellowstone Art Museum, where she oversaw a staff of 18 and led the museum in achieving accreditation in 2016 from the American Alliance of Museums. Her first day in Riverside will be Dec. 20.

“Riverside is fortunate that a museum executive with Ms. Peterson’s experience and demonstrated track record of success will lead our Metropolitan Museum into the future,” City Manager John Russo said. “Robyn will work with all sectors of the Riverside community to create a Metropolitan Museum that will serve the region as a cultural hub and repository of our history.”

Peterson has led the Yellowstone Art Museum since 2006. She previously served in leadership positions at the Turtle Bay Exploration Park in Redding, California, for seven years, starting as curator of art and advancing into positions as director of collections and research, and then senior director of exhibitions and programs.

Before that, Peterson worked 11 years as curator of collections and exhibitions at The Rockwell Museum in Corning, New York. While there, she oversaw all aspects of collection development, collection management, administration, research, publication and more, including grant writing

“The Riverside Metropolitan Museum has tremendous collections and a deep history that both deserve to be better known,” Peterson said. “I look forward to working with the community to create a vibrant and exciting new center celebrating the city’s cultural life.”

Peterson earned her Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where she also earned her Master's Degree. Her Bachelor of Arts degree is from UCLA and included a year of study abroad at the University of Bergen in Norway.

Peterson has furthered her training through attendance at more than a dozen major conferences, symposia, leadership institutes and seminars.

“The Metropolitan Museum is uniquely poised to become a pillar of Riverside’s cultural growth,” Mayor Rusty Bailey said. “We look forward to working with Ms. Peterson as she helps Riverside reach the Museum’s potential.”

In addition to curating and working with others to curate projects and exhibitions during the past 25 years, Peterson is the author, editor and/or contributor to more than 30 publications and exhibitions. She has lectured on topics as diverse as ecological art, Burning Man, printmaking history and technology, Golden Age Illustration, photography and nineteenth-century painting.

“A thriving Metropolitan Museum will help downtown Riverside continue to become the downtown of Inland Southern California,” said City Councilmember Mike Gardner, who represents the area. “Our local museum community is looking forward to a renewed Metropolitan Museum, and I am eager to hear Ms. Peterson’s ideas.”

In addition to her academic pursuits, Peterson has served as a grant review panelist from the National Endowment for the Humanities since 2012; has been a peer reviewer for the American Alliance of Museums Accreditation Commission since 1999; and has been a field reviewer for the Institute of Museum and Library Services since 1997.

Peterson comes to a museum that was established in 1924, but closed earlier this year to facilitate a major overhaul of the institution, including cataloguing a 200,000-item collection, most of which is in storage. The City Council made that decision after city management advised that museum staff must focus on fixing several major issues at the Museum. The three-year closure started on Labor Day; Heritage House and Ameal Moore Nature Center remain open.

“Ms. Peterson is certainly in a unique position,” Mayor Pro Tem Jim Perry said. “She will have an opportunity to lead the successful rebirth of the Metropolitan Museum, which is something we all would very much like to see.”