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Kris Lewis announced as new director of the Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington



Kris Lewis. Photo: Todd Westphal

SEATTLE, WA — The Henry Art Gallery and the UW College of Arts & Sciences are thrilled to announce **Kris Lewis** as the museum's incoming John S. Behnke director. Kris will bring her vision, leadership, and commitment to equity and inclusion to the Henry and advance the museum's dedication to contemporary art and ideas.

Kris has 28 years of experience working in visual arts organizations, 17 of them in strategic fundraising and high-level donor relations with world-class museums in New York and Los Angeles. She comes to the Henry from the Fowler Museum at UCLA, where she was director of development and also served in an interim executive director role with a senior cohort.

“I have always loved my work because I get to connect people to ideas and lead projects that educate, inspire, foster understanding and diverse perspectives, and even transform lives,” Kris said. “I am excited to bring this experience and passion to the Henry team and look forward to taking this cherished museum to new heights together.”

Among her many achievements at the Fowler, Kris established a thriving Contemporary Council that raised the profile of the museum. The council brought a substantial new audience to the museum, added revenue and support for local emerging artists, and influenced the museum’s contemporary exhibition program. She also built an advancement team that increased grant funding by 1000%, securing two of the largest grants in the museum’s history.

“The College is delighted to welcome Kris into her new role,” said Dianne Harris, dean of UW Arts & Sciences. “Her vision and extensive expertise in museum leadership positions the Henry for a continued dynamic and robust future. I look forward to watching the museum evolve into its next chapter under Kris’s direction.”

Before her tenure at the Fowler, Kris was director of government and foundation relations at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and was previously associate director of development at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. She held fundraising positions at Otis College of Art and Design and The Whitney Museum of American Art, been an international fundraising consultant, and managed high profile public art projects. Kris recently established and oversees The Martha Alf Foundation, which honors the legacy of the late artist and awards scholarships to MFA students in Los Angeles. She holds a BA in Art History from Denison University and an MA in Visual Arts Administration from New York University, where she has been a visiting lecturer and student mentor since 2015.

“I am thrilled to welcome Kris to the museum,” said Steve Hoedemaker, chair of the Henry’s board of trustees. “Her leadership skills will be instrumental in building on the museum’s almost 100-year history as a laboratory for artists and a place where people of all ages can have life-changing experiences with contemporary art. I look forward to our partnership as we seek new and exciting ways to expand our commitment to amplifying diverse voices and to continue to be at the forefront of contemporary art and culture.”

“The Henry is a special place on our campus and in our community with impacts all over campus and well beyond,” said Gabriel Solis, divisional dean of arts. “It is a vibrant place where people who are hungry for meaning in our world can come together to have soul-filling experiences. There is truly something for everyone here. We are deeply proud of the Henry’s legacy—and its future—as an internationally significant art museum and a contributor to the research mission of the arts at a top-tier university.”

Kris will begin work at the Henry on August 8, 2023. Kris succeeds Sylvia Wolf, who [retired as the Henry’s director](#) earlier this month.

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About the Henry Art Gallery

The Henry Art Gallery engages all people in the transformative power of contemporary art and ideas, envisioning a world where art leads everyone to discover new possibilities in themselves, others, and the world around them. Since its founding in 1926 as Washington state's first art museum, the Henry's collection has grown to more than 28,000 works of art. The museum is internationally recognized for its groundbreaking exhibitions, for being on the cutting edge of contemporary art and culture, and for championing artists at every level of creation. Located on the UW's Seattle campus, the museum partners with over 40 departments and units of the University and 35 community organizations, presenting exhibitions and programs that serve as a catalyst for discovery by visitors of all ages.

About UW College of Arts & Sciences

As the UW's largest college, Arts & Sciences is the heart of the University, producing more than half of all bachelor's degrees on the Seattle campus. In addition to its academic programs and research centers, Arts & Sciences is home to cherished public-facing institutions including the Henry Art Gallery, the Burke Museum of Natural History & Culture, and the Meany Center for the Performing Arts. One-third of Arts & Sciences' 24,000+ students are the first in their families to attend college. Faculty in 39 academic departments are dedicated to helping students think critically, communicate clearly, and engage diverse perspectives respectfully. In Arts & Sciences, discoveries in learning, teaching, and research engage people with issues that matter in their local, national, and global communities —and with each other.

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