

# Biggs Museum of American Art

## SEWELL C. BIGGS ENDOWED CURATOR OF AMERICAN ART

The Biggs Museum of American Art is seeking an individual to join the Biggs Museum as its Curator of American Art, an endowed curatorship, the Sewell C. Biggs Curator of American Art.

The Curator is responsible for the care, expansion, research, registration and cataloging of the permanent collection, as well as for all objects on loan to the Museum as well as a modest library and archival collection. The Curator works in concert with the Curator of Community and Academic Programs and the Director to maintain a solid commitment to the educational mission of the institution. The position, through collections, acquisitions, exhibitions planning and interpretation maintains and assures a commitment to diversity that reflects the interest of Delaware and the surrounding regions' diverse communities. This position works in concert with the Director to assure facility standards including upgrades in building design and technology. In addition, the Curator supports the Museum's fundraising efforts. The Curator supervises a full-time Registrar and Collections Manager and a part-time Preparator, as well as interns, volunteers, and contractors relating to curatorial projects. The Curator serves as staff liaison to the Delaware By Hand artist membership and the Curator plays a vital role with the Board, Collections Committee, DEAI (Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion) Committee and ongoing strategic planning initiatives.

### ABOUT THE MUSEUM:

The Biggs Museum is a 50,000 sq. ft. state of the art public museum located in Dover, Delaware - the State capital. The permanent collection includes over 3,000 exceptional examples of fine and decorative American arts from the 1700's to the present. The Museum mounts permanent and temporary exhibitions of its collection, collections on loans, and the works of living artists, and offers a robust educational program designed to attract a vibrant and diverse community.

## **DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES:**

The Sewell C. Biggs Curator of American art is responsible for the following;

- The stewardship, display, exhibitions, interpretation and growth of the permanent collection including objects not accessioned into the collection, with an emphasis on quality and diversity
- The support of the Collections Committee, including preparation of board reports, draft agendas, and recommendations for accession, de-accessions, and loans
- Determining, in consultation with the Director, the exhibition schedule and content, and collaborates with the entire staff to facilitate all related educational and program support functions
- Leading and actively participating in the exhibition planning and installation process working collaboratively with the Registrar, interns, volunteers and exhibition preparator(s)
- Works with the Curator of Community & Academic Programs to develop an education plan for exhibitions, including speakers, workshop topics and facilitators
- Presents public programs in the form of lectures, tours, classes and other public speaking events
- Collaborates with other arts, historical, and heritage-institutions, schools, colleges, community groups and governmental agencies to assist in programming and public relations
- Develops and maintains exhibitions, acquisitions and conservation budgets
- updates Collections Policy and collection priority lists with an emphasis on diversity of underrepresented artists
- Expands the knowledge of collection objects and potential collection objects through research and other pedagogical pursuits including docent training, lectures, outreach, articles, object labels, catalogs and publications
- Oversees all stages of collections- and exhibitions-related publications including research, writing, editing, design, registration (LOC and ISBN) and printing including contracting, coordinating and monitoring contributors and vendors
- Develops community support for collections growth, catalogs, exhibitions and capital projects
- Works closely with the Development Department to raise funds to support exhibitions, collections, publications, etc. by providing project content, implementing projects according to funding guidelines, and meeting defined goals and objectives.
- Organizes a 1-day outdoor art fair and sale in Lewes, Delaware in conjunction with Delaware By Hand Artist members
- Interviews, hires and trains collections- and exhibitions-related staff, and manages volunteers and interns
- Participates in a facilities master planning process, contributing to an expanded facility project.
- Must be able to lift/carry 40 lbs.

## **QUALIFICATIONS:**

A minimum of a Master's degree in American Art with at least five years' curatorial experience in an art museum is required. A PhD in American Art is preferred. The successful candidate should be well versed in and have a passion for historic American fine and decorative arts as well as modern and contemporary art and craft. The ideal candidate must possess an inclusive vision of American art as well as solid connoisseurship skills.

The candidate must be able to demonstrate a high level of both written and verbal communication skills, and be comfortable presenting in public settings (lectures, symposia) as well as in personal conversation with visitors, members, collectors and donors. They must demonstrate written scholarship, as well as the ability to write in a manner accessible to the general public. They must foster and communicate in an easy and collegial style with staff, Board, and constituents alike.

The successful candidate must demonstrate the ability to curate innovative exhibitions from the permanent collection in their entirety, and to develop exhibition concepts that are engaging to a diverse public. The curator will demonstrate the skills to obtain engaging temporary exhibitions from a variety of outside collections and sources. Finally, the curator must have the experience and desire to lead the installation process and to participate in the installation of exhibitions.

The successful candidate must be personable, organized, detail-oriented, efficient, technologically-proficient and experienced in working with a small staff (9 full time employees) in a collegial environment.

The Biggs Museum is an equal opportunity employer with a diverse staff and board, committed to DEAI (Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion) in all of its goals and interactions with the full spectrum of our community. The successful candidate must embrace the concepts of DEAI in all Museum programming and relationships.

## **SALARY RANGE:**

\$71,000 – \$81,000

## **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

- Cover letter
- Professional Resume
- Two writing samples:
  - 1) Example of a scholarly paper or article (3 pages max)
  - 2) Example of writing for a public audience (interpretive panel, newsletter, press release, etc.)
- Three professional references to be reached by phone (at least one must be a former supervisor)
- A list of technology proficiencies
- A list of 5 artists with photographs of their work which the candidate would consider collecting or exhibiting if the opportunity presented itself.

**Submission Instructions:** Please submit **all** required documents to Natalie Osorio at [nosorio@biggsmuseum.org](mailto:nosorio@biggsmuseum.org). Submission materials will begin to be reviewed on October 15<sup>th</sup>. The position is open until filled. Once a hire has been made, all other applicants will receive a notification via email.

## **INSTITUTIONAL MISSION**

The Biggs Museum of American Art preserves, celebrates and advances the fine and decorative arts and encourages greater public engagement with the cultural heritage of Delaware and the Mid-Atlantic region.

To fulfill its mission, the Museum:

- reaches out to its community, listening and learning from diverse voices
- endeavors to make the Museum accessible to all
- develops exhibitions and programs of the highest quality to share with visitors, teachers, students, families and other stakeholders
- provokes a deeper understanding of objects in the collection through scholarship and by presenting their full histories
- forms partnerships with local and regional organizations to serve a broader range of stakeholders
- collaborates with artists to support their individual creativity and to inspire creativity in others

- makes a forceful case for the value of art and culture to a flourishing nation
- commits to caring for its collection, conducting research on it and adding to it for future generations

## **BIGGS MUSEUM HISTORY:**

Through its mission and location, the Biggs Museum of American Art (BMAA) is the preeminent art museum on the Delmarva Peninsula south of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal and is a cultural anchor of Kent and Sussex counties. It is a cultural beacon in downtown Dover as it presents over 15 dynamic exhibitions annually and numerous performances, school tours, art-making classes, lectures, symposia, special needs camps, social gatherings and unique services. It serves a dynamic community that is 65% White, 23% African American, 10% Hispanic, 4% Asian American and 2% other. In a normal year, the institution welcomes over 25,000 visitors annually. Active military personnel and dependents are free. The Biggs Museum of American Art is looking to the future, while cherishing its rich and venerable heritage to reaffirm its commitment to community service.

The BMAA is the cultural centerpiece of Delaware's capital city, Dover. It was founded by visionary collector Sewell C. Biggs, a passionate art lover, philanthropist and art collector with a particular interest in the fine and decorative arts of Delaware and the surrounding Mid-Atlantic region. He supported many charitable causes during his lifetime, but his legacy is his art museum - the Biggs Museum of American Art. This legacy allowed him to share his extensive art collection and his knowledge of art with the general public in the dramatic setting of the Delaware State capital grounds.

In 1993, through the intervention and advocacy of Mrs. Elise du Pont, wife of former Governor Pete du Pont, the idea of an art museum to house the Biggs collection took shape. She impressed upon the sitting governor, Michael Castle, the potential of a joint partnership where the State of Delaware might build a building and lease it to a stand-alone 501(c)(3) nonprofit governing board to create a privately operated public art museum. Through her efforts and those of many others, the State agreed to build a building at 406 Federal Street in Dover to house the Biggs collection and a newly created State Visitor Center.

The BMAA exhibited on the upper two floors of the new three story building for 20 years while the State Visitor Center operated on the ground floor. In 2012, the Visitor

Center moved to the newly constructed Delaware Public Archives building, and the Biggs Museum was given full control of its entire structure. At that time, the Museum mounted a successful \$2,000,000 capital campaign and redesigned and fully renovated the entire facility to make it a state-of-the-art, stand-alone art museum. Finally, the full scope of

Biggs' collection could be displayed, changing exhibitions could be mounted, and educational programs could be presented in a dedicated educational space. For the first time, the BMAA had a fully dedicated museum facility, marked by a dramatic three story entry atrium with a dynamic sculpture on the exterior that announced to the public that this was truly a first class art institution worthy of their curiosity, visitation and patronage.

The BMAA's collections are recognized throughout the Northeastern United States for their unique nature and their extraordinary quality. The Museum houses one of the finest collections of regional and American fine and decorative arts from the 1700's to the present; furniture, silver, ceramics, textiles, glass, sculpture, paintings and works on paper comprise a comprehensive art collection. Continuing in Mr. Biggs' collecting tradition, the Museum's collections have doubled in size from Mr. Biggs' original gifts. Special features of the expanded permanent collection include: painting collections by the Peale family, Albert Bierstadt, Gilbert Stuart and Childe Hassam; sculptures by Nancy du Pont Reynolds Cooch, Charles Allmond and Hiram Powers; images by Brandywine School illustrator Frank E. Schoonover; and examples of furniture by early-American cabinetmakers such as the Janvier family of Odessa, William Savery of Philadelphia and dozens of others. In addition, the Museum's Delaware Silver Study Center holds one of the finest collections of regional silver in the Country. The Museum also presents a full array of contemporary and traveling exhibitions such as the art of Salvador Dali, Ansel Adams, Rembrandt and Audubon as well as invitational and solo exhibitions of contemporary artists. It features a broad range of educational programs and it is proud of its ongoing relationships with Title 1 schools.

The Museum presents openings, events and performances around each exhibition that are geared towards children, classroom field trips and adults from a diverse community. A broad offering of virtual programming emerged during the COVID-19 Pandemic and will continue as a regular effort in the future. Many Museum programs feature Delaware artists, chosen by Museum curators and by the Delaware Division of the Arts in their fellowship program. The Museum's focus demonstrates an ongoing commitment to artists of color, women artists, and other traditionally underserved artist populations in group exhibitions and with solo exhibition opportunities. Museum programs embrace diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion within its community, and allows visitors to engage with the arts in unique ways, often for the first time in their lives.

As an organization, the Biggs Museum has matured over its 27-year history. It has established sound leadership through an exceptional Board of Trustees that is recognized throughout the State as a model. Its board members and staff have been asked to attend and present at American Alliance of Museum conferences and at national Museum Trustee Association meetings. It has secured a professional staff with advanced degrees in their fields, with the knowledge and experience to execute the mission of the institution with vision, creativity and sound management practices. It has interpreted the collection in ways that make it engaging to scholars and collectors while making it interesting and accessible to the general public. The Biggs has published its scholarship frequently through exhibition catalogs and produced thought-provoking and interesting special exhibitions inspired by the collection and by major trends in the art world. It has achieved the highest professional standards, and is awaiting accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums, pending the final review of its Strategic Plan in the Fall of 2021.

The Biggs Museum of American Art seeks a dynamic and visionary Curator of American Art to lead its programmatic initiatives consistent with the Museum's commitment to excellence, innovation, scholarship and diversity.