

Grace Kook-Anderson assumes role as PAM's curator of Northwest Art

Grace Kook-Anderson assumed her new role in January as the Arlene and Harold Schnitzer curator of Northwest Art at the Portland Art Museum (PAM) and is now responsible for the care, research, exhibition, and growth of the Northwest art collection, including the organization of the biennial Contemporary Northwest Art Awards. She filled the position left vacant by Bonnie Laing-Malcolmson, who retired in 2016.

Kook-Anderson was most recently the curator of contemporary art at the Laguna Art Museum in Laguna Beach, California, and had spent the last year as an independent curator and freelance writer in Portland. Previously she was curator and exhibition organizer on a number of projects, including "Amateurs" (CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco) and "The Land Mark Show" (Center for Contemporary Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico), among others, and served as assistant to the chief curator at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. She holds undergraduate degrees in art history and art practice from the University of California, Berkeley, and a master's degree in curatorial practice from the California College of the Arts in San Francisco.

The Northwest art collection — housed primarily in the Arlene and Harold Schnitzer Center for Northwest Art — brings PAM's regional collection to the forefront, tracing the history of Northwest art from the late 19th century to today. The two-floor center is home to works from the collection as well as historic and contemporary exhibitions that celebrate the Northwest's history and culture.

Its vast collection of Northwest art distinguishes the Portland Art Museum from other cultural institutions in the region. The collection is rich in a variety of works by past and present artists living and working in Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Washington, and Wyoming. Together, the historical and contemporary objects depict a visual narrative of the Northwest while providing insight to significant works by artists. Thanks to a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, the entire Northwest art collection is available for viewing online.

"I am thrilled by the appointment of Grace Kook-Anderson ...," said Brian Ferriso, PAM's director and chief curator. "Grace's highly regarded tenure as the curator of contemporary art at the Laguna Art Museum, coupled with her recent work in Portland as an arts writer and critic make her an ideal candidate to lead our important mission of evaluating and celebrating our region's historical and burgeoning visual arts scene."

During her six years at the Laguna Art Museum, Kook-Anderson organized nearly 30 exhibitions, including the creation and curation of the ex.pose contemporary art program, a space dedicated to a single artist that has strong parallels to the Portland Art Museum's APEX gallery, which she now manages. She expanded the exhibition calendar from one year to three years, served as

interim education curator, developed public programs, engaged in fundraising, authored and contributed to multiple publications, and acquired many important pieces for the collection.

Since moving to Portland, Kook-Anderson has immersed herself in the local arts community, working as a curator, a writer, and an instructor at Portland State University participating in portfolio reviews and serving as a committee member for Converge 45.

"Having closely followed the Portland Art Museum for the last several years, I am very excited to be part of the talented staff of the museum," Kook-Anderson said. "I look forward to collaborating with fellow curatorial and educational staff, deepening my knowledge of the collection, expanding the scholarship of historical Northwest art up to the present time, and actively engaging with regional artists in the context of a broader art scene."

To learn more, visit <www.portlandartmuseum.org>.



Photo courtesy of the Portland Art Museum



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