

SAN JOSE MUSEUM OF ART

THE SAN JOSE MUSEUM OF ART EXPANDS ITS LEADERSHIP TEAM



For Immediate Release

San José, California (March 23, 2023) — The San José Museum of Art (SJMA) is pleased to announce the recent appointment of three staff members to the Museum’s senior management team: **Jennifer Sime as chief philanthropy officer**, **Niamh Pommerenke as chief people and culture officer**, and the promotion of **Lauren Schell Dickens to chief curator**. These leadership positions will oversee their respective departments and work collaboratively with internal and external shareholders to shepherd the Museum’s strategic plan and commitment to equity.

“We are thrilled to have Jennifer joining our staff during an exciting and pivotal time for SJMA,” says S. Sayre Batton, Oshman Executive Director. “Together with Niamh and Lauren, they all deeply align with the Museum’s mission and values, and the belief that art can play a crucial role in bringing communities and people together.”

Lauren Schell Dickens serves as chief curator and oversees the Museum’s exhibition programming and curatorial projects, and liaises with the Acquisitions Committee. She co-organized exhibitions accompanied by scholarly publications such as *Jay DeFeo: Undersoul*, *Rina Banerjee: Make Me a Summary of the World*, and the recently published, *Kelly Akashi: Formations*. Dickens first joined SJMA in April 2016 as curator and was promoted to senior curator in September 2019. Prior to SJMA, Dickens was curatorial consultant at the National Gallery of Art and assistant curator of contemporary art at Corcoran Gallery. Dickens holds a BA in American Studies from Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, and an MA in Modern Art: Critical Studies from Columbia University, New York. Her public project with The Propeller Group and El Mac was awarded the 2018 Creative Impact Award by the city of San José. She is a

2019 Warhol Curatorial Research Fellow and recipient of the Fellows of Contemporary Art 2022 Curators Award.

Niamh Pommerenke (SHRM-SCP/SPHR/MCIPD) is SJMA's first chief people and culture officer. Pommerenke established SJMA's human resources department in 2017 and is returning as a thought partner and collaborative catalyst for the positive changes already underway at SJMA, blending the foundation of Human Resources with the evolution of its internal culture, supported in our new 2023-2027 Strategic Plan. Pommerenke has over 20 years of experience in the field and directs SeaBright HR, Inc.; previously, she directed human resources at Encompass, SugarCRM, and Easter Seals Central California.

Jennifer Sime started March 27 as chief philanthropy officer after a national search. She brings a demonstrated fluency across a diverse range of fundraising principles, along with arts administration and management skills. She comes to the San José Museum of Art from UC Berkeley, where she worked in development since 2018, first at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, then at Cal Performances as Director of Individual Giving and Special Events. Jennifer studied art history at Barnard College and Johns Hopkins University and has worked in curatorial positions at the Baltimore Museum of Art and in the photography department at SFMOMA. She also has worked as an editor and publisher of art, architecture, and design publications and held leadership roles at several Bay Area nonprofit organizations focused on the arts.

These newly appointed senior leaders reflect the strategic growth of the Museum's leadership team in the last six months. Previous promotions include **Karen Rapp to deputy director** in late 2021 and **Brian Spang to chief financial officer** in 2022.

Karen Rapp is SJMA's deputy director and oversees the Museum's strategic planning, developing internships and college partnerships, and cross-department collaborations. She strategizes SJMA's programming and community partnerships in relation to foundation and government grants and funding and oversees education. Rapp first joined SJMA in 2013 as the Grants Officer and was promoted to SJMA's assistant director, strategic initiatives in 2018. Prior to working at SJMA, she taught Modern and Contemporary Art History at numerous Bay Area universities and held curatorial positions at SFMOMA and Rice University Art Gallery. She holds a PhD in Art History from Stanford University and a BA in American Studies from Northwestern University.

Brian Spang is SJMA's chief financial officer and oversees the Museum's financial planning and reporting, treasury, and budget management. Spang first joined SJMA as the finance director in 2009. Spang has over 30 years of experience in finance and accounting in the tech industry prior to joining the Museum.

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The San José Museum of Art (SJMA) is a contemporary art museum dedicated to inclusivity, new thinking, and visionary ideas. Founded in 1969 by artists and community leaders, its dynamic exhibitions, collection, and programs resonate with defining characteristics of San José and the Silicon Valley—from its rich diversity to its hallmark innovative ethos. The Museum offers lifelong learning for school children and their educators, multigenerational families, creative adults, university students and faculty, and community groups. SJMA is committed to being a borderless museum, essential to creative life throughout the diverse communities of San José and beyond.

SJMA is located at 110 South Market Street in downtown San José, California. The Museum is open Thursday 4–9pm; Friday 11am–9pm; and Saturday–Sunday 11am–6pm. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors, and free to members, college students, youth and children ages 17 and under, and school teachers (with valid ID). Admission is free from 6–9pm on the first Friday of every month. For up-to-date information, call 408.271.6840 or visit SanJoseMuseumofArt.org.

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Lauren Schell Dickens, chief curator. Photo by Nico Henderson for Drew Altizer Photography.
Niamh Pommerenke, chief people and culture officer.
Jennifer Sime, chief philanthropy officer.