

MUSEUM OF ART

RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN

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JOHN W. SMITH APPOINTED NEW DIRECTOR OF MUSEUM OF ART RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — John W. Smith has been appointed director of the Museum of Art Rhode Island School of Design, effective fall 2011.

Smith comes to the Museum with a distinguished background in visual arts institutions. He currently serves as director of the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art, the world's leading research center devoted to the study of the visual arts of America. During Smith's tenure (2006 to present), he has worked successfully with the Board of Trustees and staff to greatly increase the visibility of the Archives. He has expanded the exhibitions and publications program, integrated the vital contributions of contemporary artists into the Archives programming, and raised nearly \$15 million in private and foundation philanthropic support—including a recent \$3 million grant from the Terra Foundation for American Art. In 2007, Smith oversaw the landmark acquisition of the Leo Castelli Gallery archive, which provides a detailed portrait of the dealer who championed the careers of such major artists as Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg, and Andy Warhol. He also led a major project to digitize the Archives' collections and re-design its website, which offers access to over 1.5 million objects from their vast holdings.



John W. Smith
Newly appointed director, RISD Museum

photo by Tony Powell

"John is an admired leader, a skilled fundraiser, and passionate about connecting people with art in meaningful ways. We're thrilled to bring him to Providence this fall," says William Tsiaras, incoming chair of the Museum Board of Governors.

"I am deeply honored to be entrusted with the leadership of this remarkable museum," says Smith. "The breadth and quality of its collections, gifted staff, and connection to one of the world's leading schools of art and design provide limitless opportunities for fresh and innovative programming. I look forward to working with the Board of Governors, the staff, the faculty and students of the School, and the greater Providence community to create an exciting new chapter in the Museum's long and distinguished history."

Prior to the Archives of American Art, Smith served for 11 years at The Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, Pa. As assistant director for collections, exhibitions, and research (2000 to 2006), Smith raised funds, organized exhibitions, published books, and oversaw all aspects of the permanent collection. As curator of archives and

director of the Archives Research Center at The Andy Warhol Museum (1994 to 2000), Smith established the founding policies and guidelines of the center and raised money to support its programs. He also served as interim director of the museum from 1995 to 1996.

In addition, Smith served as chief archivist at the Art Institute of Chicago (1990 to 1994), visiting archivist at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, London (1991), and as founding curator of special collections and archives at the Chicago Park District (1988 to 1990).

Smith's exhibitions and publications include *Strange Messenger: The Work of Patti Smith* (2002); *Andy Warhol: His Work, Ideas, and Process* (2003); *The American Supermarket* (2003); *Flowers Observed, Flowers Transformed* (2004); *Andy Warhol's Time Capsules* (2004), a collaboration with the Museum for Modern Art, Frankfurt, Germany; *Seeing Double: Encounters with Warhol* (2005); *Andy Warhol: Artist of Modern Life*, the first major exhibition of Warhol's work to travel to three major museums in Russia; and *Grayson Perry*, the first U.S. museum exhibition of the work of Great Britain's prestigious Turner prize winner. His exhibition *Possession Obsession: Andy Warhol and Collecting* traveled to the RISD Museum in 2002.

Smith received his bachelor's degree in English from Southern Illinois University in 1980; he did graduate work at the University of Illinois.

"We are delighted to welcome John Smith as the new director of the RISD Museum. This appointment signals a new era at the Museum. John Smith's contemporary flair and his sensitivity to the past are sure to thrive here," says Merrill Sherman, chair of the Board of Trustees at the Rhode Island School of Design.

Smith joins the RISD Museum at a time of increased attendance, the addition of popular new programs for adults, families, and young people, and an ambitious exhibition program that includes the upcoming show *Made in the UK: Contemporary Art from the Richard Brown Baker Collection*, opening fall 2011. New funding has been secured to increase access to the collection on the Museum's website, risdmuseum.org, and a pilot mobile site has been launched. This year, the Museum opened beautifully restored galleries showcasing important collections of ancient art, and medieval and early Renaissance art. As reported last spring, the Museum adopted a new management structure, in which the director reports to the Chair of the Museum's Board of Governors. In the previous structure, the Museum director reported to the President of RISD.

Smith officially begins his new position in mid September. Ann Woolsey has served as interim director of the RISD Museum of Art since August 2009.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ART RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN

Southeastern New England's only comprehensive art museum, the Museum of Art Rhode Island School of Design—also known as the RISD Museum—was established in 1877. Its permanent collection of more than 86,000 objects includes paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, costume, furniture, and other works of art from every part of the world—including objects from ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, and art of all periods from Asia, Europe, and the Americas, up to the latest in contemporary art. The Museum also offers a wide array of educational and public programs to more than 100,000 visitors annually.

The RISD Museum, located at 20 North Main Street in Providence, RI, is open Tuesday through Sunday, 10 am to 5 pm, and until 9 pm every Thursday beginning in September. Free admission 5 to 9 pm on third Thursdays and all day the last Saturday of each month, and "pay what you wish" every Sunday from 10 am to 1 pm. Closed January 1, July 4, the month of August, Thanksgiving Day, and December 25. Admission is \$10 adults; \$7 seniors (age 62+); \$3 college students with valid ID and youths (ages 5 to 18); and free for Museum members, RISD and Brown University students and staff, and children under 5. For more information, call 401 454-6500 or visit risdmuseum.org.

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