

Minnesota Museum of American Art (the M) Applicant Description

History. The Minnesota Museum of American Art is one of the oldest visual arts organizations in Minnesota, with roots stretching back to the 19th century. Founded in 1894 as the St. Paul School of Fine Arts, the Museum was formally incorporated in 1927, when it began collecting works of art for instructional purposes. In the 1940s, the Museum began assembling an esteemed collection of paintings, work on paper, sculpture, and craft. Beginning in the 1950s, under the name Saint Paul Art Center, the organization pursued a robust program of exhibitions—including biennials of drawings, craft, and contemporary art. Renamed the Minnesota Museum of Art in 1969, it became a leading presence on the Twin Cities art scene through educational programs and nationally regarded exhibitions. In 1992, the Museum added “American” to its name to reflect its increasing focus on national and regional art and the changing nature of the American experience as seen through the visual arts. The M has been housed in a variety of St. Paul locations throughout its history, including the Jemne Building, Landmark Center, West Publishing Company on Kellogg Boulevard, and now the historic Pioneer Endicott building.

Today, the Minnesota Museum of American Art holds more than 4,500 artworks that showcase the unique voice of American artists. Guided by the belief that art should reflect the constantly shifting landscape that defines the American experience. Our responsive exhibitions connect diverse audiences with subjects and issues that are relevant and engaging. We listen intently to the diversity of voices in our community, learning from our exchanges with those we work alongside. The M is led by Dr. Kristin Makhholm, a respected curator and art historian with deep roots in Minnesota whom the trustees hired in 2009. Under her leadership, we opened the Project Space in 2013. We continue to organize “on the road” exhibitions and art engagements that bring the collection and programs to audiences throughout the Midwest. In addition, we offer interdisciplinary programs, classes, and community partnerships for all ages that invite direct access to artists, art, and making.

Mission. The mission of the M is to inspire people to discover themselves and their communities through American art. Our vision is to be a national model for a responsive and relevant art museum that is integral to a vibrant city and state. Our values are:

- Accessible — we strive to make our work available to all.
- Responsive — we listen intently to the diversity of voices in our community.
- Learning — we seek to learn from our work and exchange knowledge with others.
- Stewardship — we act thoughtfully and transparently with the resources in our care.

Current Programs. Having a museum and visual arts cultural center in downtown St. Paul is a significant addition to the life and momentum of the cultural resurgence happening in St. Paul, and has already made a substantial contribution to life and culture in downtown St. Paul.

Exhibitions. The M organizes and presents free and accessible exhibitions and activities that feature artists from across the country, Minnesota and the region, at all stages of their careers, from amateur to professional, and programs in a variety of media. Since its opening in 2012, the Project Space has welcomed more and more people to its exhibitions and events growing from just a few thousand in 2012 to over 10,000 this last year. In addition, the M organizes exhibitions that travel

to other parts of the state and country, so that we can be a catalyst to issues of American art throughout the region.

Community Engagement and Arts Access. The M develops and initiates programs that meld various art forms and brings together a diverse audience around the arts. We have an ongoing program with McNally Smith College of Music called Art + Music, which ties new student music directly to the themes and images in our exhibitions. In 2016, the M received an Arts Access grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board to continue our work to bring diversity and inclusion into our programming, which will be a main theme in 2017. In addition, we connect with communities throughout the region and state to bring in more diverse voices and engage with new audiences to enhance equity and inclusion in our practices.

Arts Education. Since 2012, we have undertaken an annual program in the St. Paul Public Schools known as CreatorKids (formerly CuratorKids), which employs art from the M's permanent collection as a catalyst to art-making and art understanding in elementary school kids. We also work annually with the St. Paul Public Schools on the St. Paul Honors exhibition. Arts education and learning will gain a big boost when we open our new Center for Creativity in 2018 and launch an arts education platform with new art-making classes for all ages, after school initiatives with local schools, and lifelong learning programs with older adults.

Membership, staff, and board. We currently have just under 600 members, a number which incrementally grows every year. The M is governed by a 21-member board of trustees, not including ex-officio members St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman and Executive Director Kristin Makholm. Ten full-time and four part-time staff positions are currently supported by 40 volunteers, five interns, and five consultants.