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# NBMAA's Min Jung Kim to lead St. Louis Art Museum

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Min Jung Kim, who is leaving her position as CEO of New Britain Museum of American Art, will become director of the St. Louis Art Museum in Missouri. (Lauren Schneiderman / Hartford Courant)

Min Jung Kim, who announced her resignation last week after six years as CEO of the New Britain Museum of American Art, will become director of the St. Louis Art Museum.

On Tuesday on Twitter, the Missouri museum announced Kim's hiring as the Barbara B. Taylor Director of the museum. She will become the 11th director, as well as its first female director, the first person of color and the first immigrant to head the museum. The Hartford resident will leave NBMAA in July.

With Kim's departure, two Hartford-area art museums are looking for new leadership. In April, Thomas Loughman left the directorship of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford. Loughman's next career move has not been announced. A historic museum, the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center in Hartford, also is looking for a new leader, as Briann Greenfield departed in May to work at the National Endowment for the Humanities. Kim said the St. Louis museum's prestige, and its commitment to diversity, inclusion and equity, attracted her to the job.

“Last year the St. Louis Art Museum issued a diversity report, incredibly comprehensive in nature, looking at not only how diversity is represented at the St. Louis Art Museum in terms of art and its collection and exhibition and education and visitor services, but looked at everything, including how it would commit to doing business with underrepresented minority and business

enterprises and how endowment investments align with diversity and inclusion goals,” Kim said. “St. Louis Art Museum not only values and listens to its community, but has a commitment to diversity.”

Diversity and inclusion has been a talking point at the Wadsworth Atheneum also. After Loughman left his post in April, former board chairman William Peelle gave an interview to The Courant, in which he said the Atheneum needed to try to be more relatable to Hartford’s predominantly nonwhite community.

“I don’t think we as trustees were being cognizant of what we needed to do regarding the emerging role a museum would play in a city like Hartford. That discussion was not really happening,” Peelle said in that interview. “We have some of the most sought-after art in the world. Museums all over the world keep asking to borrow it. We are highly regarded on that end. But what is our responsibility to our own citizens?”

A few days after giving that interview, Peelle stepped down as chairman of the Atheneum’s board.

Kim said of her term at NBMAA, her proudest accomplishment was dedicating the year 2020 — the 100th anniversary of women getting the right to vote — to exhibits by women artists and acquisition of pieces by female artists. The yearlong celebration of women’s art was stalled as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and is still ongoing. Among the female artists added to NBMAA’s collection are Betye Saar, Faith Ringgold, Carrie Mae Weems, Ana Mendieta, Cauleen Smith and Stephanie Syjuco.

The St. Louis museum's approximately 34,000-piece collection has particularly strong representation of 20th-century German paintings, Chinese bronzes, artifacts from the ancient Americas, works by George Caleb Bingham and the James F. Ballard Collection of Oriental Rugs.

Dona Cassella, chair of the NBMAA's board of trustees, is serving as interim director of the museum until Kim's successor is chosen. In addition to her post at NBMAA, Kim is chairwoman of Connecticut Arts Council and a board member at Hartford HealthCare, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and New England Foundation for the Arts.

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