



Tacoma Art Museum Announces Departure of Rock Hushka

March 17, 2020

Tacoma Art Museum (TAM) announces the resignation of Rock Hushka effective May 1, 2020. The Museum acknowledges with gratitude that Hushka served for 19 years as associate curator, and later as chief curator, deputy director, and finally director of Northwest Special Projects.

TAM's executive director David Setford offered, "Rock's great expertise in and love for Northwest and contemporary art helped to set TAM on its present course and mission. Artists, dealers, and collectors across the region mention frequently that his single-minded espousal of their vision helped them at a critical time, and is the reason they in turn chose to be TAM stakeholders. We shall miss his deep knowledge and his ability to make connections for us very deeply. I personally enjoyed working with him immensely."

During his tenure, the Museum raised its regional and national profile a leading champion and supporter of Northwest artists. Hushka acknowledges the deep support from TAM, "I am grateful for the extraordinary opportunity to serve Tacoma Art Museum and the artists of this region for nearly twenty years. I am deeply indebted to the Board of Trustees, my colleagues in the curatorial department, and my predecessors without whom I would not have been encouraged, challenged, and thrived. I hope my work clearly shows how art makes our communities better."

Impact on TAM Collections

With Hushka's leadership TAM's permanent collection more than double to 5,100 works. TAM's respect of regional artists and its vision to be a national model of a regional museum attracted numerous gifts. Highlights include collections from Rebecca and Jack Benaroya and glass artist Paul Marioni, and the Sharon Campbell jewelry collection. He also secured significant gifts of photography from Michael Kenna, Mary Randlett, and the estate of Arthur S. Aubry. Hushka also assembled important gifts of fiber art and TAM's first acquisitions of conceptual art, video, and installations. He led the commission projects for the monumental sculptures by Marie Watt, Julie Speidel, and Scott Fife during the expansion of the Haub Family Galleries in 2014.

Connecting Local to National

Hushka innovated by pairing national travelling shows with Northwest companion projects such as *Illuminating the Word: The Saint John's Bible* with the sound installation *The Forty Part Motet (A reworking of "Spem in Alium," by Thomas Tallis 1556)* by Janet Cardiff and the back-to-back exhibitions of *Gee's Bend: The Architecture of the Quilt* and *Threads That Bind: Works by Pacific Northwest African American Quilters*.

Major Exhibitions

Since 2001, Hushka curated more than 75 exhibitions, many that championed art of the Pacific Northwest, including five regional biennial projects and the *Northwest Perspectives* series. Hushka curated three significant exhibitions that drew national attention: the nationally touring *Art AIDS America* (2015—17), *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture* (2012) and *30 Americans* (2017). All three have had lasting impact in elevating TAM's image and reputation coast-to-coast. During TAM's presentation of *Hide/Seek*, Hushka organized *David Wojnarowicz: I will not be silent about this*, which included a full presentation of the provocative and often censored video *A First in My Belly*.

Scholarship and Awards

Hushka's scholarship has been recognized nationally. He collaborated with nationally renowned scholars for many of the museum's catalogue projects, most notably for *Art AIDS America*, *Sun, Shadow, Stone: The Photography of Terry Toedtemeier*, and *Metaphor into Form: The Rebecca and Jack Benaroya Collection*. In 2017, he participated as a fellow in the Getty Leadership Institute. The National Endowment for the Arts awarded grants for the catalogue *Zhi Lin: In Search of the Lost History of Chinese Migrants and the Transcontinental Railroads* in 2016 and for the collection handbook *Best of the Northwest* with colleague Margaret Bullock in 2009. Hushka shared a Curatorial Research Fellowship from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts with Dr. Jonathan D. Katz in 2010 for their work on *Art AIDS America*.

Hushka leaves TAM to pursue social entrepreneurship as a means of expanding pathways to prosperous careers in the visual and graphic arts for young adults.