



MISSISSIPPI  
MUSEUM *of* ART

For Immediate Release  
March 10, 2020

**MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Jane Marie Young, Mississippi Museum of Art

[jyoung@msmuseumart.org](mailto:jyoung@msmuseumart.org), 601-965-9924

Libby Mark or Heather Meltzer, Bow Bridge Communications

[info@bow-bridge.com](mailto:info@bow-bridge.com), 347-460-5566

**MISSISSIPPI MUSEUM OF ART ANNOUNCES CURATORIAL APPOINTMENTS**

**Ryan N. Dennis, Chief Curator and Artistic Director of Center for Art & Public Exchange,  
and  
Holly R. Harrison, Deputy Director for Art and Programs, Join Museum Staff**



Ryan N. Dennis.  
Photo: Naima Green



Holly R. Harrison.  
Photo: Mary Emily Brink

*Jackson, MS...* Betsy Bradley, Director of the Mississippi Museum of Art (MMA/the Museum), today announced two new curatorial appointments following a national search: Ryan N. Dennis, Chief Curator and Artistic Director of the Museum's Center for Art & Public Exchange (CAPE), and Holly R. Harrison, Deputy Director for Art and Programs. Each has deep experience in the arts, civic and visitor engagement, fostering dialogue among a diversity of communities, and commitment to accessibility, inclusion, and equity—pillars of MMA's institutional values.

Betsy Bradley said, "On behalf of the Museum's Board of Trustees and staff, we are delighted to welcome Ryan and Holly to MMA. Each has exceptional professional experience and track records

developing innovative ideas and implementing creative solutions. We are excited to further strengthen the Museum's program and forge new paths together—connecting art, artists, and visitors with a goal of giving voice to and generating opportunities for the critical work of reckoning with the past, engaging with one another in the present, and envisioning a future without division. Together with our colleagues, the Museum will continue to reveal and illuminate new narratives about Mississippi. We eagerly look forward to having them share their passion for the arts with our visitors, the Jackson and regional community, and the art world globally.”

Dennis (she/her) and Harrison (she/her) will begin their positions in June and April respectively.

Dennis said, “I am thrilled to be joining the Mississippi Museum of Art at this moment in time. The MMA is doing important work around restitution, engagement, and visioning new futures for the local and national community. I look forward to bringing my experiences from Project Row Houses into a museum setting because it allows me to push the boundaries of what museums traditionally have done. Having the opportunity to expand the collection, elevate the histories of the South, and invest in Black optimism as a way to approach exhibition making and intersectional dialogue is of utmost importance. I look forward to working collaboratively with Betsy, Holly, and my MMA colleagues. The South is the belly of America's troubled past, a region wherein so much beauty resides, and a site for cultural production that reverberates out – I am honored to be here and be a voice that amplifies artists of our time, the goals of the MMA, and the Jackson community.”

Harrison stated, “I am honored to be joining the Mississippi Museum of Art as it expands its mission and reach under the visionary leadership of Director Betsy Bradley. I am drawn to MMA because of its dedication to lifting up marginalized histories, centering artists' voices, making room for new narratives, and growing with its communities. After several years with The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, I am particularly excited to return to an art museum—this art museum—and I look forward to working with the talented staff and board, spectacular collection, and the extraordinary community of Jackson. I have long admired Ryan's work at Project Row Houses, so I am even more excited to begin this journey with her as a teammate and collaborator.”

### **Ryan N. Dennis**

As Chief Curator and Artistic Director of CAPE, Dennis will lead the curatorial team in further developing the Museum's exhibitions and related programming, growing the collection, initiating new partnerships and collaborations, and fostering community involvement and participation. She will also explore strategies for taking art and art experiences beyond the MMA's walls.

Since 2017, Dennis has been Curator and Programs Director for Project Row Houses (PRH), in Houston, TX, where she started as Public Art Director and Curator in 2012. While at this community-based non-profit arts organization, Dennis and her colleagues used art to amplify community networks, develop and apply creative solutions to local issues, and highlight art, culture, history, and preservation in the city's Third Ward and beyond. She oversaw and conceived PRH's site-specific artists projects and exhibitions and summer residencies for local undergraduate art students and resultant exhibitions; conceived and organized public programming; established new

initiatives and institutional partnerships locally and nationally; and supported fundraising and PRH's profile-raising efforts. Among the programs she created and implemented is PRH's Strategic Art Plan, a neighborhood-wide initiative of public work and community engagement activities.

Dennis was Traveling Exhibition and Artists-in-Residence Manager at the Museum for African Art (now The Africa Center) in New York City from 2010–2012. She coordinated and managed all aspects of the traveling exhibition program, from communications and marketing to related publications and installation planning. She served as a curatorial assistant at The Menil Collection in Houston from 2007–2009. Dennis has contributed to a range of publications and served as a juror, panelist, lecturer, and moderator at institutions across the country. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Alliance of Artist Communities and the National Advisory Board of The Laundromat Project. Among her current civic engagements are serving on the Advisory Committee of the Gulf Coast Literary and Fine Arts Journal; System-Wide Art Acquisition Committee, University of Houston; Professional Development Committee of the Association of American Museum Curators; and, Civic Art Committee, Houston Arts Alliance.

She received her B.A. from University of Houston in 2007, and M.A. in Arts and Cultural Management from Pratt Institute, New York City, in 2011.

### **Holly R. Harrison**

As Deputy Director of Art and Programs, Harrison will be building and nurturing innovative partnerships, expanding creative capacity, strengthening connections between the Museum and communities of Jackson, and supporting the implementation of MMA's newly formulated strategic plan under the leadership of Director Bradley.

Harrison brings nearly fifteen years of experience working in leading art museums and foundations across the country. She joins MMA after serving for five years as Program Associate for Arts and Cultural Heritage at The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York where she developed and executed a diversity of initiatives and career pathway programs in museums, universities, and cultural institutions. Harrison brings to MMA her deep commitment to accelerating diversity and inclusion across all strategic and programmatic areas of the Museum. At the Mellon Foundation she established multiple professional training programs for emerging Native American professionals and supported curatorial research projects and exhibition development of Native American art. Reviewing not only programmatic proposals, but also detailed financial information and strategic planning initiatives, Harrison has built an extensive knowledge of organizational models across the cultural community.

In addition to her work at the Mellon Foundation, Harrison held positions in the curatorial departments at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and the Dallas Museum of Art. At LACMA, Harrison worked collaboratively with staff, curators, and artists providing project and research assistance. She was an inaugural member of the Time Based Media Focus Group, a cross-departmental task force focused on curating and conserving Film and Media including the development of new models for acquisition, registration, storage, exhibition, and conservation.

Among the exhibitions with which she was involved: *Christine Corday: Protoist Series, Selected Forms*; *Agnes Varda in Californialand*; *Asco: Elite of the Obscure*; and *Blinky Palermo: Retrospective (1964-77)*. Harrison is the curator for Corday's U.S. team at the Venice Architecture Biennial, 2020. *Sans Titre/Elemental Architecture/Material Phases of Suns* will be on view May 21–November 29, 2020. She served on Board of the Friends of the Gamble House, Pasadena, CA, and held a three-year appointment on the Museum Committee of the College Art Association.

Harrison received her MBA from Pepperdine University, and completed her M.A. coursework in the history of art at the University of Oklahoma, Norman, where she focused on Modern art. She received her B.A. from the University of Kansas.

### **About the Mississippi Museum of Art**

The Mississippi Museum of Art, in Jackson, is the largest art museum in the state. The Mississippi Art Association, established in 1911, was the precursor to the current Museum, founded in 1978 as a community-supported institution. The Museum's permanent collection includes paintings, photography, multimedia works, and sculpture by Mississippi, American, and international artists. The Museum offers year-round educational programs for both children and adults. The Museum has 31 affiliate sites across the state that benefit from the loan of artworks and traveling exhibitions organized by the Museum, ensuring that those who cannot visit Jackson can still enjoy the state's rich cultural history. The Mississippi Museum of Art and its programs are sponsored in part by the City of Jackson and Visit Jackson. Support is also provided in part by funding from the Mississippi Arts Commission, a state agency, and in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. The Museum is located at 380 South Lamar Street in Jackson. [msmuseumart.org](http://msmuseumart.org)

###