



10
YEARS

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 10, 2020

Bechtler Museum of Modern Art Announces New Executive Director

- Todd DeShields Smith Joins Charlotte's Arts Community -

(Charlotte, N.C.) — The Board of Directors for the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art announced today the appointment of Todd DeShields Smith as Executive Director of the Southeast's only dedicated Modern Art Museum. Smith comes to Charlotte from Orange County, California, where he has served as the Director and CEO at the Orange County Museum of Art (OCMA) for the past six years.

Under his leadership, OCMA experienced the most transformative period in its six-decade history. Smith led the design and approval process for a new museum building as part of the Segerstrom Center for the Arts and successfully secured over \$52 million towards the project, which broke ground in September 2019.

Smith, who will begin September 8, joins the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art during its tenth anniversary. As the new Executive Director, Smith will oversee the development of a new strategic plan and all aspects of the museum, from curatorial and education programs to fundraising and marketing, as well as overall facility operations.

"I am thrilled to be joining the Bechtler at this very important moment. Since its opening, the Bechtler has set a standard for top-notch exhibitions dedicated to the rich history of modernism, with its world-class collection as a source," said Smith. "The Bechtler has developed innovative on-site and outreach educational and public programs that add to the cultural and civic life of one of the great cities of the 21st century. I look forward to bringing my experience in museum management and exhibition and program development to build upon a track record of an organization poised for a dynamic second decade."

A twenty-year art museum executive, Smith has served as executive director or president of the Tampa Museum of Art in Tampa, Florida, the Gibbes Museum of Art in Charleston, South Carolina, and the Knoxville Museum of Art in Knoxville, Tennessee. In Tampa, he oversaw exhibitions dedicated to such modern masters as Henri Matisse, Edgar Degas and Henri Cartier-Bresson and the pathbreaking *My Generation: Young Chinese Artists* exhibition in 2014. He also served as curator of American and contemporary art at the Mint Museum of Art in Charlotte early in his museum career. He received his bachelor's degree in art history and political science from Duke University and a master's degree in the history of art from Indiana University.

Smith is also active in volunteer leadership positions with the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) and currently serves as Commissioner on the AAM's Accreditation Commission. The Commission's attention has focused most recently on the importance of diverse and inclusive organizations and ensuring that member museums recognize the primacy of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion across operations and governance. The Bechtler is one of twenty-seven Accredited museums in North Carolina.

"Todd's proven track record as a seasoned CEO and Executive Director at several of the nation's leading art museums was key to our decision. Todd brings not only strong credentials as a scholar in the field of art but has also demonstrated success as a strategic and consensus-driven leader," said Ted Garner, Chair of the Board of Trustees. "Todd has led his

former organizations through a variety of unique development and growth initiatives. We are confident that he will bring the full array of skills to lead the Bechtler during its next level of growth as one of Charlotte's premier cultural and visual arts institutions."

Under the leadership of Board of Trustee member Shannon Smith, an executive search for a new Executive Director has been underway since October 2019. In December, the Bechtler hired Bruce LaRowe as Interim Director to succeed founding director John Boyer. LaRowe served previously for twenty years as Executive Director of Children's Theatre of Charlotte, as well as the Interim Director of the Mint Museum.

Over the past ten years, the Bechtler has hosted more than thirty exhibitions, and championed the development of a variety of community outreach programs including Jail Arts in the Mecklenburg County Jail system; a Low-to-No-Vision program with the Metrolina Association for the Blind; a program with InReach, a group dedicated to adults with a variety of intellectual and cognitive challenges; Museum Memories, designed to engage individuals who have early-onset dementia; Art for Life, a long-standing program working with health care providers to increase their visual acuity/diagnostic skills and reduce the risk of physician burnout; and Title 1 School classroom outreach programs. In addition, a wide array of performance-based programming, including Jazz at the Bechtler, Modernism + Film, Bechtler By Night, Music and Museum, and Family Days, has become part of the museum's identity within the community.

ABOUT THE BECHTLER MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Home to Charlotte's iconic *Firebird* sculpture by Niki de Saint Phalle, the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art is filled with works by Miro, Giacometti, Calder, Warhol, Klee, and a wealth of other 20th-century notables. The Bechtler collection juxtaposes whimsy with work of significant intellectual depth and historical significance. Cosmopolitan in nature yet intimate in scale, the museum, designed by Mario Botta, provides an experience that is inspiring and approachable. The artworks were committed to the city of Charlotte by Andreas Bechtler, who, along with his family, built the collection over 70 years. Located in the heart of Uptown, the Bechtler is a light-filled community space created to engage audiences of all ages through exhibitions, jazz and film series, interactive art activities, and family days throughout the year. Visit bechtler.org for more information.

MUSEUM INFORMATION

Bechtler Museum of Modern Art
at Levine Center for the Arts
420 South Tryon Street
Charlotte, NC 28202

Website | bechtler.org
Phone | 704.353.9209

MEDIA CONTACT

Hillary Hardwick, Vice President of Marketing and Communications
E-mail | hillary.hardwick@bechtler.org
Phone | 404.512.7082

