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PAFA names new museum director, Brooke Davis Anderson

Written by [Livingston Contributor](#) × on December 16, 2019

Brooke Davis Anderson, who has headed a triennial art extravaganza in New Orleans for the last four years and has spent much of her career focused on so-called outsider art, has been named director at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, academy officials announced Thursday.

She fills a position that has been vacant since Harry Philbrick departed PAFA a little more than a year ago. Anderson takes up her duties June 5.

In a statement, Anderson, 54, said PAFA was “deeply woven” into the fabric of this country and its art.

“PAFA is uniquely positioned to explore the ways in which artists illuminate the American experience and the inventive approaches they employ to tell our shared stories, past, present, and future,” she said. “It is such a singular opportunity.”

David Brigham, PAFA’s president and chief executive – and former museum director, who has been serving as interim director since Philbrick’s departure – said Anderson was an exciting leader who would “maintain our focus on presenting aspects of American art that have not been fully explored.”

For one thing, Brigham said in a statement, Anderson wants to further strengthen PAFA’s contemporary art program to give “greater recognition to artists from diverse backgrounds.”

He said she would also “continue to build PAFA’s outreach to the arts community, including student and alumni artists, and underserved audiences.”

Anderson has been head of Prospect New Orleans, an international exhibition first mounted in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Before that she served as deputy director of curatorial planning at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, overseeing the Watts Towers conservation and community collaboration projects. She also worked to increase diversity of museum professionals in curatorial roles.

From 1999 to 2010, she was founding director and curator of the Contemporary Center at the American Folk Art Museum in New York.

Anderson has also written widely on unschooled outsider artists, notably Martin Ramirez.

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