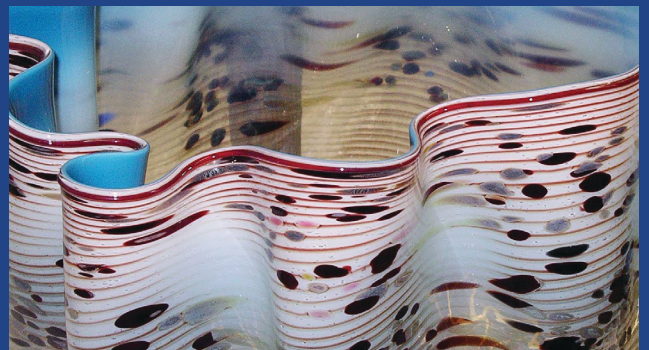


NEWPORT  
ART  
MUSEUM

# INSIGHT 2020

NEW DIRECTION FOR A NEW DECADE



*plan • align • evaluate • reflect*

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## board president's message

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The Newport Art Museum sits in the center of Newport, RI with a unique position as the city's leading art museum in a place with a rich cultural and arts history. Our Museum has made great progress in recent years, strengthening our organization, improving our physical campus and focusing on our updated mission. Our Board of Trustees is committed to supporting the organization's long-term vision and evolution as a cultural leader in Newport and the broader region.

The Museum's strategic planning process is a critical step to drive our mission and prepare for the next decade. The Board of Trustees and the Museum's leadership team began this process several years ago, seeking a framework for how we are thinking about the 2020s for all our stakeholders — visitors, donors, employees, and residents. Strategic plans are flexible instruments, allowing the Museum to respond as conditions may evolve in the coming years. INSIGHT 2020 is the culmination of our planning work to date, a forward looking, essential guide to help the Museum navigate this decade.

Given the rapidly changing arts and culture landscape, museums are facing enormous financial and strategic challenges to remaining strong and relevant to their stakeholders. In this context, focusing on our core mission is the best approach. We are pleased to share this vision with all of you and to be embarking on this journey through the 2020s together. INSIGHT 2020 will keep our Museum strong and vital, ensuring its central role in the future of Newport's cultural and arts community.

Steven A. Richter, Board President



*Art is an ascending or descending scale, the spirit of its joy reaches us in unexpected ways. It travels on slender threads but it is within the grasp of all who care enough to want to see and understand.”*

— Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney  
(1875-1942)

A young visitor poses in front of an enlarged photo of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, part of “Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney: Sculpture,” which was on view April 19 - July 21, 2019.





## executive director's foreward

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The Newport Art Museum was founded in 1912 on the belief that the arts are instrumental in creating vibrant communities and an engaged citizenry. Anyone interested in viewing a gallery or enrolling in an art class was enthusiastically welcomed. As the Museum expanded over the ensuing decades, these core values have endured.

While we continue to appreciate our founding ideals, we are acutely aware of new societal trends, shifts in philanthropic giving, technological advances, increasingly diverse audiences, and changes in visitor expectations that have effectively reshaped the cultural landscape here in Newport, and around the world.

These twenty-first century realities demand a profound rethinking of our priorities and operations. We must reconsider who we serve and how we achieve meaningful impact. Our new strategic action plan, INSIGHT 2020, takes into account the significant changes that have already occurred, strives to anticipate actions we will need to take in the near future, and creatively imagines modifications that might be required ten years from now. Our trustees and employees will share the responsibility for ensuring our plan's successful implementation.

Recognizing the accelerated pace of change, as well as the possibility of unforeseen events that can rapidly alter our way of life, our plan will be a dynamic document. Plan, align, evaluate and reflect will be the process we follow. Our leadership team will review the plan annually and be prepared to make any adjustments deemed necessary. We will commit the necessary resources to achieve our plan's goals. Community stakeholder input was a principal component of our plan's creation and will continue to inform its evolution. Lastly, as we set our sights on the future, we will be mindful of why the Newport Art Museum was established in the first place.

Norah Diedrich, Executive Director

# mission, vision, core values

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## MISSION

To share a diversity of art and experiences that spark reflection, inspiration, discovery, and connections within our Newport community and beyond.

## VISION

The Newport Art Museum will be a widely recognized destination for artists, scholars, students, innovators, arts enthusiasts, and cultural travelers from around the world. As Newport's arts campus, the Art Museum will be the nexus of artistic, intellectual, social, and culturally diverse life in the region.

## CORE VALUES

Bringing our vision to life begins with exemplifying and embodying the values that are the foundation for our work:

- Practicing careful stewardship of our precious resources, including personnel, collections, historic buildings, campus, and endowment
- Putting into action our belief that arts education and access to art are essential components of an engaged, informed public
- Committing to exemplary collections, preservation, and conservation, as well as world-class exhibitions and interpretation
- Prioritizing the broad sharing of our collections, educational materials, and public programs, increasingly via digital platforms
- Adhering to an unwavering commitment to integrity, excellence, leadership, and transparency
- Supporting and celebrating our local and regional artistic community
- Initiating and being open to collaborations with other institutions, recognizing that together we can amplify our collective impact
- Welcoming diversity of thought, opinion, and artistic expression while providing an open forum for respectful dialogue and discussion
- Achieving a level of distinctiveness that sets us apart from other arts institutions and raises our profile — we will manage the museum with the same creative mindset as the artists we serve
- Embracing change and evolving with the times

## brief history of the newport art museum

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Since its founding as the Art Association of Newport over a century ago, our Museum has placed community at the center of its mission and strived to provide equitable access to exhibitions, studio art classes, and public programs.

Pulitzer-Prize winning author, Maud Howe Elliott (1854-1948), the Art Association's most progressive leader, wrote,

“Our strength lies in the fact that we are a truly representative association, including people of every age and every sort of income, that we welcome with equal cordiality all sorts and conditions of men, women and children, asking only one thing, that they come to us in the same spirit of devotion to the cultivation of artistic endeavor that inspired our founders.”

By 1915, the organization's founders had purchased a suitable building for their art classes and exhibitions - the John N.A. Griswold House on Newport's famed Bellevue Avenue. This exceptional example of “stick-style” architecture was architect Richard Morris Hunt's first commission in Newport and was completed in 1864. The Griswold House is included on the National Register of Historic Places.

The first exhibition featured artworks from local artists, as well as those with an international reputation, including George Bellows, Mary Cassatt, and Childe Hassam.

The Art Association added another building to its campus in 1920 – the Cushing Memorial Gallery, designed by architect William Adams Delano. This jewel of a *Beaux Arts* building was dedicated to the memory of Howard Gardiner Cushing, a portrait painter and muralist of the early twentieth century who was involved with the Art Association. Cushing's close friend and member of the Art Association's Exhibition Committee, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, spearheaded the fundraising effort for this new gallery building. In 1990, the Cushing Memorial Gallery was expanded with an addition that replicates the classical detailing of the original gallery. This new wing added gallery space, as well as a collection storage area, loading dock, and climate control.

In 2005, the Art Association, which, by then, was an Art Museum, embarked on a decade-long renovation of the historic Griswold House.



Today, the Newport Art Museum's beautiful 3-acre campus includes the Griswold House, the Cushing / Morris Galleries, and a Museum School, housed in the Coleman Center for Creative Studies. Visitors from around the world enjoy the Art Museum, its public programs, and special events year round.

The permanent collection includes over 2,700 fine art objects with a focus on American artists from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present. Rotating exhibitions are installed annually and over the years have included artists as diverse as Winslow Homer, James McNeill Whistler, William Trost Richards, Edward Hopper, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Andy Warhol. Recent temporary exhibitions have featured artworks by Diane Arbus, George Condo, Lalla Essaydi, Shara Hughes, William Kentridge, Sally Mann, Rania Matar, and Tony Oursler, to mention a few.

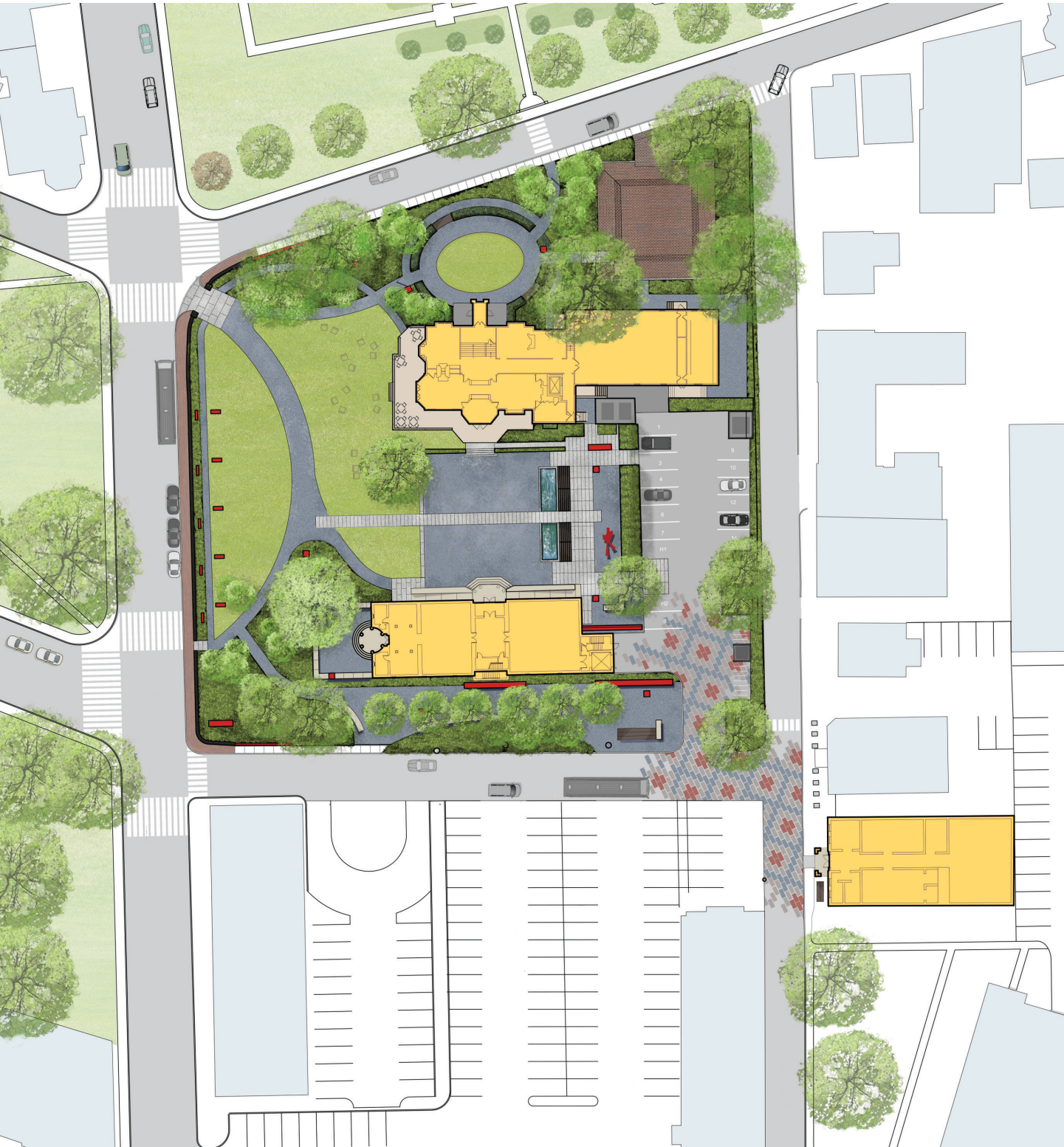
Highlights of our historical collection include paintings by Gilbert Stuart and John Smibert, George Inness, Fitz Henry Lane, Lilla Cabot Perry, and twenty-five works by William Trost Richards. In addition, the Museum owns works by Winslow Homer and George Bellows, iconic sculptures by William Morris Hunt and Paulanship, and a number of works by John La Farge. The Museum also owns photographs by Aaron Siskind and Andy Warhol, as well as prints by Philip Guston, Corita Kent, Sol LeWitt, Roy Lichtenstein, Philip Pearlstein, and Ad Reinhardt, as well as glass art by Dale Chihuly and Toots Zynsky.

The Newport Art Museum is fully accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.



Rania Matar  
*Samira, Bourj El Barajneh  
Refugee Camp, Beirut,  
Lebanon*, From the series  
"Invisible Children", 2015,  
Archival digital pigment  
print, 36.8 x 44 inches  
framed, 2019.001.003.

campus map





## where we are today



As we enter the next decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Museum is financially sound and professionally managed. The Board of Trustees includes 19 dedicated individuals who bring a wealth of knowledge from a variety of professional backgrounds. The Museum employs seven full-time and twelve part-time employees, in addition to several teaching artists who run studio art classes for all ages and arts education outreach programming throughout the State and region.

Significant milestones have been reached over the past five years. The Museum's endowment has grown from \$2.2 million to \$8 million. Several major capital improvements have been completed, including a new roof on the Cushing building, an upgraded climate-control system in the Cushing / Morris Galleries and collection storage, a new website and CRM, a Campus Master Plan, and an extensive technology upgrade to all three buildings made possible by connecting to a fiber optic network. New offerings have been introduced, such as an Artist-in-Residence program, an interactive in-gallery visitor response tool, online gallery tours, and educator learning and networking opportunities.

The Museum continues to receive substantial support from Foundations and Rhode Island State Arts and Humanities Councils as well as charitable contributions from generous individual donors and corporations to ensure a diversified mix of philanthropic support. The Museum's Planned Giving Society, *The Visionaries*, offers our most loyal supporters an opportunity to make legacy gifts.

Even though our Museum has established a base of support from which to build its future, we expect a post COVID-19 world will usher in new priorities and attitudes. Yet we are confident the deep human need for self-expression and connection will endure. And so, art museums, as places that bring people together in celebration of our innate ability to imagine and create, will also prevail.



# looking ahead

## GOALS

## STRATEGIES

## ACTIONS

## TIMELINES

## PURPOSE

The purpose of our plan is to identify the goals of the Museum and establish a path of action to achieve them. Our plan's five overarching goals provide direction and indicate specific actions for which our trustees and staff will be held accountable for achieving. The ultimate goal is to ensure the Newport Art Museum is here to serve future generations.

## NOTE

We considered big transformational initiatives alongside a host of smaller changes that can be achieved primarily, though not exclusively, through reprioritizing existing resources. The incremental and iterative steps will be timed for years one and two and used as valuable lessons on our way to embracing some of our larger initiatives during year three and beyond.

## GOALS

BE MORE RELEVANT TO THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE AND SEEK TO SERVE

INCREASE AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF OUR MUSEUM'S MISSION, OFFERINGS, AND IMPACT

STRATEGICALLY SHAPE, SHARE, AND INTERPRET OUR COLLECTIONS AND EXHIBITIONS

COMMIT TO PRACTICES THAT REINFORCE A CULTURE OF LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

BUILD CAPACITY TO ENSURE A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

## GOAL ONE

# Be more relevant to the communities we serve and seek to serve

1. Create and activate a Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, Inclusion plan / Y1
2. Develop additional interactive audience engagement opportunities for galleries, grounds, website, and social media / Y1
3. Activate the Museum as a valued public gathering and gallery space / Y2
4. With art and artists as the inspiration, facilitate community conversations around the most important issues of our time / Y1
5. The interests and concerns of our local audiences are reflected in our exhibitions and educational offerings / Y1 & 2
6. Museum School programming aligns with our broader cross-departmental and interdisciplinary educational priorities / Y1 & 2
7. Extend our presence and impact beyond the Museum campus to engage with our audiences where they live / Y2 & 3

## GOAL TWO

# Increase awareness and understanding of our Museum's mission, offerings, and impact

1. Develop funding strategies for realizing a phased implementation of Campus Landscape Plan / Y1
2. Create and reinforce a distinct “brand identity” that communicates our mission / Y2
3. Improve wayfinding, signage, and other visitor amenities / Y2 & 3
4. Develop a more personalized communications plan for specific segments of our audience / Y2
5. Continue donor and member cultivation events, curator-led tours, and other special Museum access / Y2
6. Develop and implement a communications program for hotel concierges and realtors / Y2
7. Key staff become more actively involved in regional and national Museum conferences and arts advocacy groups / Y2 & 3
8. Develop platforms for Museum constituents to amplify our message and impact / Y2 & 3

### GOAL THREE

## Strategically shape, share, and interpret our collections and exhibitions

1. Curate exhibitions that encourage a lively exchange of ideas and perspectives / ongoing
2. Refine our permanent collection acquisition strategies and discuss de-accession plans / Y1
3. Install recently acquired outdoor sculptures and discuss repositioning, removal, and de-accessioning of those sculptures currently on view / Y1
4. Increase virtual visibility and engagement of our exhibitions, collection, and history / Y2 & 3
5. Provide opportunities for guest curators / Y2
6. Continue making improvements to our collection storage and collection study areas / Y2 & 3
7. Re-envision installation of artworks on Griswold House 2<sup>nd</sup> floor stairwell / Y2 & 3
8. Develop and install a visually compelling installation of our Museum's history / Y3
9. Develop a Curatorial Council to assist with acquisitions, promised gifts, and site-specific commissions / Y3
10. Seek funding for scholarly publications for selected exhibitions / Y3

### GOAL FOUR

## Commit to practices that reinforce a culture of learning and engagement

1. Develop accountability and performance metrics for trustees and key staff / Y1
2. Develop additional audience and donor feedback opportunities / Y1 & 2
3. Create systems to more effectively manage and share important information internally / Y1 & 2
4. Plan a Board retreat and self-assessment every other year / Y2
5. Provide professional development for key staff and faculty / Y2 & 3
6. Provide more opportunities for trustees to engage with Museum staff, faculty, and volunteers / Y2 & 3
7. Provide additional mentoring opportunities for students and artists with the purpose of cultivating career-building skills / Y2 & 3



## GOAL FIVE

## Build capacity to ensure a sustainable future

1. Refine Museum's Advancement Plan to support Strategic Plan / Y1
2. Create a 3-year operating budget to support Strategic Plan / Y1
3. Nominating, Advancement and Collection committees are increasingly active and engaged / Y1
4. Discuss possible alternatives to summer fundraising events / Y1
5. Strengthen capacity of Museum staff across departments to enable ability to devote time to agreed upon priorities / Y2 & 3
6. Develop new and support existing earned-revenue programs / Y2 & 3
7. Increase endowment to \$12 million through philanthropy and legacy giving / Y3
8. Establish a major maintenance endowment for the Cushing Building / Y3
9. Continue to care for our historic buildings and grounds / ongoing.
10. Continue to provide the highest level of donor stewardship / ongoing
11. Attract new Museum visitors, donors, and advocates / ongoing

# strategic planning process

Our first step in the creation of this plan was to research major trends affecting the arts and culture sector writ large, as well as strategic plans of other Museums, from the V&A in London to Newfields in Indianapolis. We talked. We shared. We listened. We talked some more. And we wrote.

Once we identified five areas of concentration, including relevancy, visibility, collections and exhibitions, productivity, and adequate capacity, a series of community stakeholder focus groups were conducted. We posed six main questions to each group, 1) What is your most memorable moment at the Museum? 2) What should our purpose be? 3) Are we relevant to the community and if so how? 4) What impact would you like to see the Museum make in our community? 5) How might we go about achieving this impact? and 6) What might be some indicators of success?

A few key takeaways were: 1) The reasons for being engaged with our Museum varied widely, 2) Having a museum in town was a key reason for choosing to live here, 3) It's not apparent from the outside that we are an art museum inside, 4) Our Museum should bridge the inequality gap in Newport County, and 5) We should find a better way to engage with those residents who are not here year round.

In fall 2019, our strategic planning committee attended a half day session led by Gayle L. Gifford, President of Cause & Effect, Inc. We emerged with agreement on five overarching goals, which directed the writing of the final plan.

Three years of early morning strategy sessions with our strategic planning committee, trustee retreats, small discussion groups, stakeholder meetings, a multitude of Post-it notes, and a unanimous Board approval on September 17, 2020 resulted in INSIGHT 2020: A New Direction for a New Decade.



During this multi-year process, it became obvious that in order to achieve what we envisioned we would have to build fundraising capacity, maximize and increase earned revenue sources consistent with our mission and brand, and build endowment and other investment income to secure our future.

Furthermore, this past year has made it perfectly clear that we cannot possibly anticipate challenges the magnitude of a global health pandemic, or its resulting

shock waves. Therefore, we intend for our plan to be 'evergreen' with updates and revisions as needed to respond to ever changing events, audience needs, and our aspiration to be the cultural center of our community.

## trustees & staff



### TRUSTEES

Joan C. Abrams

Anne Baker

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**Vice President**

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Elizabeth Brooks

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Cleo Smart Gewirz

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**Secretary**

Curt Richardson

Steven Richter,  
**President**

Barbara Schoenfeld,  
**Vice President**

Teryn Weintz,  
**Vice President**

### MUSEUM TEAM

Merrill Allen, *Director of Marketing*

Cristin Searles Bilodeau, *Director of Community Engagement*

Leslie Chazan, *Staff Accountant*

Jeff Day, *IT Manager*

Ivy Dickison, *Museum Experience Associate*

Norah Diedrich, *Executive Director*

Meredith Fitzgerald, *Museum Experience Associate & Educator*

Hillary Fortin, *Registrar*

Megan Horn, *Curatorial Assistant*

Suzanne Kelly, *Bookkeeper*

Marc Lennon, *Facilities Manager*

Marisa Longolucco Douglas, *Museum Experience Associate*

Jen McMahan, *Event & Venue Rental Manager*

Joanne Rodino, *Membership Manager*

Sarah Rohrman, *Museum Experience Associate*

Allison Thompson, *Museum Experience Associate*

Francine Weiss, *Senior Curator*

Elizabeth Whitehouse, *Museum Experience Associate*



## acknowledgments



We thank all of those who generously offered their time, talent, and insight in order to help us develop our new strategic plan designed to move the Newport Art Museum into the next decade.

We would like to especially recognize the efforts of our Museum trustees and staff; as well as former Museum trustees; Newport's State Representative, Newport Mayor and City Council members; artists, planning consultants; and the many community members who attended our stakeholder meetings.

We will continue the dialogue with our valued community members as we evaluate our efforts moving forward.

### COVER IMAGES:

[top left]

William Trost Richards, *Off the South Shore*, 1896, Oil on canvas, Newport Art Museum, Purchased by members of the Art Association of Newport, 1922.002.001

[bottom right]

Dale Chihuly, *Vessel*, 1982, Blown glass, From the "Macchia" series, Gift of the artist, 1983.004.001

# NEWPORT ART MUSEUM

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[newportartmuseum.org](http://newportartmuseum.org)

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art | together | now