



MAH Plans For Executive Transition in 2019

The board of directors of the Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History at the McPherson Center (MAH) announces Executive Director Nina Simon's planned transition in 2019 to focus full-time on OF/BY/FOR ALL, a nonprofit initiative sharing the MAH's innovative approach around the world. Nina has been incubating this project while also leading the museum; this transition will enable each to have focused leadership. The MAH will now begin a search for a new executive director with an anticipated full transition in mid-2019.

"Nina has led the MAH to a position of great community strength. We look forward to working with her to recruit a new executive director who will keep building on the MAH's innovative community leadership," said Laura Best LaPorte, MAH board president and former employment attorney.

Simon became its third chief executive when she joined the museum in 2011. During Simon's tenure, the MAH grew from a shaky financial position to become a vibrant community institution. The MAH transformed Abbott Square into a creative plaza in the heart of downtown Santa Cruz and now welcomes 150,000 diverse participants each year to its exhibitions and events. The MAH has been celebrated internationally for its innovative approach to embracing community partners and using art and history to build community.

Bruce McPherson, County supervisor and a founder of the museum, reflected: "The museum has always been an important institution in our county, but Nina's vision and leadership exploded it into something new and phenomenal. The growth has been incredible and I can't wait to see what comes next."

One year ago, Simon began working with the MAH board on a new initiative to share the MAH's unique approach to community building with nonprofit organizations around

the world. Earlier this year, the MAH launched a global program, called OF/BY/FOR ALL, under Simon's leadership. Since the launch, this initiative has grown rapidly, already attracting interest from over 1,000 cultural leaders in 40 countries. The MAH board and Simon see the potential for OF/BY/FOR ALL to become a global movement, with the spirit and values of Santa Cruz County front and center. At the same time, they see the importance of planning ahead for the future leadership needs of the MAH.

"I love the MAH and am so proud of what we've created with our community. I'm excited to share our methods through OF/BY/FOR ALL, so other institutions around the world can become of, by, and for their communities too," Simon said. Simon will stay in Santa Cruz County with her husband Sibley and daughter Rocket.

The board, MAH senior staff, and Simon are working together to ensure a smooth leadership transition. "The MAH has incredible community relationships and momentum," LaPorte said, "and that enables us to recruit a superb leader who can keep deepening our commitment to Santa Cruz County." The board will launch a national search for a new director in December, with MAH trustee Ken Doctor chairing the recruitment committee.

Simon reflected, "Many people have thanked me for the MAH's incredible programs, exhibitions, festivals, and community partnerships. All I can say is – thank you. It has been my honor to make the MAH an inviting, inclusive space. But it is you – our beautiful, brave community – who fill it with joy and connection. I hope you will continue to do so for many generations to come."

[Read the statement from Nina Simon, MAH Executive Director](#)

[Read the statement from Laura Best LaPorte, MAH Board President](#)

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