

Casey Mesick Braun to Join the Bowdoin College Museum of Art as Curator

Brunswick, ME—June 29, 2022—The Bowdoin College Museum of Art (BCMA) announced today that it has appointed Cassandra (Casey) Mesick Braun as its new curator, following an international search. Mesick Braun comes to BCMA from the Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas (KU) where she has worked since 2012, most recently as associate curator of global Indigenous art, in addition to experiences at the The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology at Brown University. An anthropologist by training, Mesick Braun has particular interests in contemporary Indigenous art, as well as in exploring the intersections of art, science, and medicine, and the role of social justice work in museum settings. She will begin work at BCMA in August.

“We are excited that Casey will be joining the Museum, particularly at this pivotal moment,” said Anne Collins Goodyear, co-director of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art. “Her interests and experience are strongly aligned with the work we have been doing, from the implementation of our anti-racism plan, to the diversification of our collections, to the support we provide for students in curating exhibitions of their own design.” Added Frank Goodyear, co-director of the museum, “Casey’s deep knowledge of—and experience with—the teaching role of museums is a standout characteristic for us, since serving the Bowdoin community is at the heart of what we do.”

At the Spencer Museum of Art, Mesick Braun’s work has focused on effectively integrating its collection of more than 9,000 works of art from the Americas, Africa, and Oceania into the exhibition, programming, and teaching and research mission of the museum. Since joining in 2012, her diverse array of projects has emphasized the promotion of civic engagement, identifying and addressing socially relevant issues, and centering voices and ideas that have often been underrepresented in museums and higher education. Among her recent exhibitions are *The Ties that Bind: Haiti, the United States, and the Art of Ulrick Jean-Pierre*, co-curated with Cécile Accilien (2018), and *Healing, Knowing, Seeing the Body* (2021), which explored the enduring fascination with the human body in its many physiological, psychological, and symbolic dimensions.

From 2018-2021, Mesick Braun co-directed an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar entitled “Chronic Conditions: Knowing, Seeing, and Healing the Body in Global Africa.” This yearlong speaker and workshop series adopted an arts-integrative interdisciplinary approach to investigate the historical, structural, and cultural processes that have given rise to racially-based health disparities. Prior to that, in 2017, she co-directed a National Endowment for the Humanities Landmarks of American History and Culture project for K-12 educators. This focused on exploring the educational experiences of Native American and African American communities in Kansas, and included a related exhibition, *Separate and Not Equal: A History of Race and Education in America*, also curated by Mesick Braun.

“I am thrilled to be joining the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, a highly respected institution with outstanding collections and a long-standing commitment to innovation in its work as a teaching museum with strong connections to the College’s students, faculty, and staff,” said Casey Mesick Braun. “In my time at the Spencer, I learned how to create and implement programs that worked within the context of a large research

university. I am now looking forward to bringing some of these experiences to my work at Bowdoin, and to learning—and teaching—new ideas in a new environment.”

Mesick Braun earned her PhD in anthropology at Brown University in 2012, writing her dissertation on “The Culture of Construction: Architectural Technology and Building Practice among the Classic Period Maya.” Before this, she earned her MA at Brown in 2006, also in anthropology, and her BA at New York University in 2004, in anthropology and linguistics. Before joining the Spencer Museum of Art, she served two internships in the Department for the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas at The Metropolitan Museum of Art (2011–2012 and 2010–2011), and as an intern at the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology at Brown University (2006).

In addition to her work curating exhibitions, Mesick Braun has been actively engaged in organizing and facilitating artist residencies and commissions. These include projects with artists such as: Cara Romero (Chemehuevi), as part of the 2021–2022 Indigenous Arts 2022 Initiative; Dario Robleto’s work “The Aorta of an Archivist,” as part of *Healing, Knowing, Seeing the Body* (Spring 2021); and Diego Teo’s “Comanche is Dead,” an International-Artist-in-Residence co-organized with Kris Ercums in 2013. She has also written articles and contributed to numerous books, including *Veiled Brightness: A History of Ancient Maya Color* (2009), with coauthors Stephen Houston, Claudia Brittenham, Alexandre Tokovinine, and Christina Warriner. In addition to her role at the Spencer, Mesick Braun has served as affiliate faculty in the Museum Studies Program at the University of Kansas.

Bowdoin College Museum of Art

The Bowdoin College Museum of Art is the cornerstone of the arts and culture at Bowdoin. One of the earliest collegiate art collections in the nation, it came into being through the 1811 bequest of James Bowdoin III of 79 European paintings and a portfolio of 140 master drawings. The collection has been expanded through the generosity of the Bowdoin family, alumni and friends, and now numbers more than 20,000 objects, including paintings, sculpture, works on paper, decorative arts and artifacts from prehistory to the present from civilizations around the world. www.bowdoin.edu

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