

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Michael Sanders to join Minneapolis Institute of Art as Chief Operating Officer**

*Sanders comes to Mia with two decades of experience in museums, most recently as the President and CEO of The Bakken Museum in Minneapolis*

**Minneapolis Institute of Art**  
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Minneapolis, MN 55404  
artsmia.org



Photo courtesy of Michael Sanders

**MINNEAPOLIS—February 11, 2022**—The Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) announced today that Michael Sanders has been appointed as the museum’s new Chief Operating Officer (COO).

Currently the President and CEO of Minneapolis’ Bakken Museum, where he has been since 2015, Sanders comes to Mia with two decades of experience in museums, particularly in leadership roles in operations. Sanders began his career in the hospitality industry, and those experiences have also guided his work, underscoring the importance of visitor experience as an essential element to each of his operations roles.

“I am very pleased to announce that Michael Sanders will be joining Mia and supporting our institution in the role of Chief Operating Officer,” said Katie Luber, Nivin and Duncan MacMillan Director and President of Mia. “Michael’s exceptional experience in leading and managing operations at institutions of various sizes makes him a terrific choice for Mia, while his additional expertise across all aspects of museum work means he is even better positioned to support our mission. Furthermore, his knowledge of the non-profit sector in the Twin Cities is an additional asset that will serve Mia well.”

For more than 25 years, Sanders has worked with public-serving organizations such as aquariums and science, natural history, and history museums—the last 15 of those in leadership and oversight roles. As the President and CEO of the Bakken Museum, he supported the organization in its transition from being a founder-led institution, expanded its board of trustees, implemented a sustainable business model, developed a clearly articulated mission and marketing plan, and raised funds to sustain operations. During his time there, Sanders successfully diversified revenue sources

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while increasing the number of gifts, raising more than \$15 million in his first four years, and creating the organization's first comprehensive investment plan, including a designated endowment fund.

Prior to joining the Bakken Museum, Sanders was the Executive Director and COO of the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium in Dubuque, IA, where he oversaw a year-over-year increase in membership, annual fund, and corporate partnerships. He also led the initiative to secure both Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and American Alliance of Museums (AAM) accreditation, one of only eighteen organizations to achieve both accreditations. Previous positions have included the position of Director of Operations at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, from 2012-2014, and Manager of Public Operations at the Science Museum of Minnesota in Saint Paul. In both positions, Sanders has been directly involved with the museums' strategic planning and future-thinking work alongside daily operational needs. In Cleveland this included essential upgrades to key services affecting both behind-the-scenes operations such as security and HVAC systems, and front-of-house services such as new technologies for the auditorium and theater, and upgraded food services.

"Mia is an iconic institution in the city and region, and one of the best museums of its type in the country," said Sanders. "I have made museums my career, and what drives me is the passion for delivering a museum's mission. I am honored to have worked with such wonderful staff and board members at The Bakken, and proud of what we accomplished these past six years. The opportunity to work at an institution with such an incredible reach, in the city that I love, is a dream."

Sanders fills this role within a newly restructured leadership team at Mia. A generous endowment gift from Mia patron C. Curtis Dunnavan allowed the museum to split its previous Deputy Director role, held by Pat Grazzini since 1992, into two new leadership positions– the C. Curtis Dunnavan CFO and the COO role filled by Sanders. Grazzini will become Mia's Senior Deputy Director, stewarding future planning projects and continuing the museum's strategic work to serve and sustain its neighborhood, the Twin Cities, and the people of Minnesota.

A native of Minnesota, Sanders holds a Master of Arts (MAEd) degree from Hamline University in Saint Paul, with a focus on Natural Science and Environmental Education, and a Bachelor of Arts (BA) from Minnesota State University, Moorhead, with a major in Anthropology. Sanders will begin his role at Mia in March.



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## Press Contacts

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## About the Minneapolis Institute of Art

Home to more than 90,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest art collections in the country—from all corners of the globe, and from ancient to contemporary—Mia links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration.

General admission to Mia is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee.

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## Museum Hours

Tuesday-Wednesday 10am–5pm

Thursday 10am–9pm

Friday-Sunday 10am–5pm

Monday Closed

For more information, call + 1 612 870 3000 or visit [artsmia.org](http://artsmia.org)

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