

Susan Visser, Executive Director of South Bend Museum of Art, To Step Down

(South Bend, July 20, 2021)

Susan Visser, Executive Director of the South Bend Museum of Art since 1987, will step down from her position this summer, after 34 years in that position. A museum professional since 1974, Visser came to the museum after her early career at the Chicago History Museum, the Terra Museum of American Art, Chicago, and the Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, taking on the leadership at SBMA and growing the institution into one of the top arts organizations in the region.

David Matthews, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, said, “We are most grateful to Susan for the important contributions she has made to the institution. Over the course of her tenure, she has creatively and effectively built a program of exhibitions, educational programs, and community events, and, through civic partnerships, increased fundraising, and operational stability. She leaves the museum in a strong position as we head into our 75th anniversary year. SBMA has been well served by Susan’s passion for art, regional history, and local pride, as well as her desire to embrace the vital part all these elements play in allowing us to become our best selves. We have voted to honor her with the title of Executive Director Emerita and will join in celebration of her accomplishment later this summer.”

Ms. Visser became Executive Director in September 1987. Under her leadership, the South Bend Museum of Art enhanced collaboration and expanded the museum’s reach into the community, connected diverse constituencies through exhibitions, programs, and common interests, and focused the museum’s mission and vision. She increased the museum’s endowment, completed renovations and expansions, and hired a professional staff rich in experience and insight. Under her leadership, SBMA has been twice re-accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

The recipient of many honors, including a special award from the Friends of the Snite Museum of Art for her service to the Michiana community, she has also given her time and expertise to the National Endowment for the Arts, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Indiana Arts Commission, South Bend Heritage Foundation, Habitat for Humanity, and was a founding board member of the New York-based Directors’ Forum, a national organization for directors of small to midsize museums. In 2002, she served as one of six Indiana museum leaders to meet with colleagues in Paris, a delegation sponsored by the Indiana Humanities Council.

Ms. Visser earned her B.A. degree and teaching certificate in fine arts at Marietta College, Ohio. She received her M.A. in the history of art from the Ohio State University and a certificate from the Museum Management Institute at UC, Berkeley, sponsored by the J. Paul Getty Trust.

In order to provide for a smooth transition at SBMA, the board has engaged Carrie Reborá Barratt, an art historian with expertise in museum change management, most recently at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the New York Botanical Garden. Born in Chicago and with family history in the South Bend and Michiana area, she comes to us to work with staff and board on an interim basis, providing guidance and support while the board searches for a new director.

About the South Bend Museum of Art

Since its founding in 1947, the [South Bend Museum of Art](#) has provided insight into the art, history, and culture of the region. The museum features a full spectrum of historical and contemporary art in its galleries, and educational programs representing a wide range of artistic traditions for all ages.

The South Bend Museum of Art affirms the enduring power of the visual arts to reflect and create community, engage minds, and nurture growth through exhibitions, collections and educational programs.

Located inside the Century Center in downtown South Bend, Indiana, the SBMA occupies three levels in the northern wing of the building. SBMA is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.