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New Curator in Town: Milwaukee Art Museum's Tanya Paul

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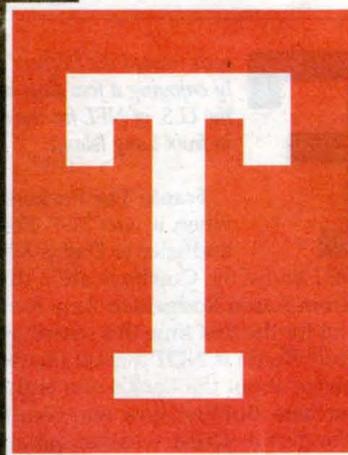


OFF THE CUFF



NEW CURATOR IN TOWN

Milwaukee Art Museum's
Tanya Paul BY CURTIS L. CARTER



anya Paul is the new Isabel and Alfred Bader Curator of European Art at the Milwaukee Art Museum. Equipped with a Ph.D. in art history from the University of Virginia and curatorial experience at some of the nation's major museums, including the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, and most recently, the Philbrook Museum of Art in Tulsa, she hopes to apply her knowledge to enrich MAM's collections and exhibitions.

What can we expect when a new curator comes to town?

First, expert knowledge and experience concerning a particular area of art. My main area of interest is old master European art of the 17th century (Dutch and French) including prints.

What plans do you have for changes in the curating of the collections at the Milwaukee Art Museum?

Already my colleagues at the Museum and I are planning a major reinstallation. Our aim is to re-imagine the entire collection. The plan is to bring together disparate parts of the collections so as to enrich the experiences of visitors and allow for more in-depth gallery experiences. In preparation for my work on the European galleries, I have recently visited the newly reopened Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and other museums in search of the best ideas for developing our plans for reinstalling the Milwaukee Art Museum Collections. The newly reinstalled galleries will reopen in 2015.

What are your thoughts concerning future exhibitions?

A curator's challenge is to organize or otherwise secure important changing exhibitions to augment the holdings in the permanent collection. The task of creating such exhibitions requires in-depth knowledge of the art of a particular period, diplomatic skills with respect to securing loans from prospective lenders and the ability to secure the necessary funding. Currently, we are making plans for a major exhibition of European Art, "Of Heaven and Earth, 500 Years of Italian Painting from Glasgow Museums in Scotland," opening in October 2014.

What are your plans concerning acquisitions to the Museum's permanent collection?

My approach will be to focus on bringing the very best quality art possible, to thoughtfully connect with existing parts of the collection. I am currently in the process of researching possible acquisitions that meet this standard. I don't believe in acquiring art simply to fill gaps in the collections.

How will you engage the contemporary media-driven public with old master European paintings?

It is important to remember that all art was once contemporary. A curator's challenge is to make connections between art and life both in its historical past and also in contemporary life. Experiencing art through the Internet is no substitute for seeing art directly in a museum where it can be activated by text, lighting and installation design, and seen in relation to other works of art.

Any concluding thoughts?

I am happy to be in Milwaukee and honored to serve as the first Isabel and Alfred Bader Curator of European Art. The museum has strong community support, worthy collections and offers many opportunities for service to the community and a base for collaboration with other museums across the world.