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Marquette's Haggerty Museum has a New Director: Off the Cuff with Susan Longhenry

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By [Curtis L. Carter](#)

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Susan Longhenry joined the Haggerty Museum of Art at Marquette University in August 2015. She becomes the museum's third director just as the Haggerty celebrates its 30th anniversary. Most recently director of the Harwood Museum in Taos, N.M., Longhenry previously served as director of learning at the Boston Museum of Fine Art, with prior appointments at the Indianapolis Museum of Art and the Chicago Art Institute. She has been involved in national leadership projects in the museum field in conjunction with the Association of Academic Museums and Galleries and the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

What attracted you to Milwaukee and the Haggerty Museum?

After more than 20 years of focusing on museum learning experiences, the role of director in a university setting offers me new opportunities for leadership and impact on a wider level. I'm inspired by Marquette's Jesuit mission, which emphasizes community engagement and social justice.

How will your prior experiences in museum learning benefit your plans for the Haggerty visitors?

My work with amazing museums that set high standards of excellence will inform my contributions to the Milwaukee community. Understanding how people experience art in museums is an essential aspect of my role. My research has focused on understanding what the characteristics of a meaningful art experience include: personal, social and spiritual.

How is a university museum different from other museums?

As part of an academic institution, our mission is to engage students and faculty and the community in meaningful learning experiences that relate art to life.

What may we expect to see in the coming exhibitions at the Haggerty?

Upcoming exhibitions include Kristen Leenaars' video installation based on work with the near West Side Milwaukee community and exploring the role of public policy in happiness. That's one project.

Experimentation with 3D visualization as a means of helping visitors look at art, with Italian artist Giuseppe Mazzone and the Marquette College of Engineering, offers new possibilities for

interpreting the Haggerty's art collection. For example, deconstructing the pictorial space of paintings by the African American artist Jacob Lawrence to show how he uses two perspectives to tell a story will be explored in an upcoming exhibition. Selections from the Haggerty's permanent collection will be featured in next summer's program.

Looking at the big picture, what is in store for the Haggerty?

Currently the Haggerty is exploring possibilities for expansion of the building, so as to provide stronger interpretive tools and a physical environment that will enhance the personal and social aspects of museum visits.

What are some critical problems museums face in our changing life today?

Diversity in audience, in collections and in funding. Collaboration with diverse community organizations, as well as assessing the relevance of collections and museum programs to diverse audiences over time, will be essential to addressing these issues. Museums, like other aspects of society, may need to change the way they approach what they do.