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Carl & Marilynn Thoma Foundation Names First Director

Holly Harrison's appointment brings the Foundation's work in closer alignment with the Organization's mission and vision, bolstering the arts and museum loan program while expanding rural education initiatives.



SANTA FE, NM - The Carl & Marilynn Thoma Foundation announces the appointment of Holly Harrison as Director, the first executive leadership appointment in the history of the Foundation. In her role, Harrison oversees grantmaking in the arts and higher education, as well as collection, museum lending, and exhibition programs. In anticipation of the Foundation's ten-year anniversary, Harrison will establish new education initiatives in the broader Southwest region, including Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas with the goal of expanding college and career opportunities and access for young people in rural areas.

Since its inception in 2014, the Thoma Foundation has:

- Lent more than 1,000 works of art to over 135 exhibitions across the globe
- Made over 100 grants totaling over \$8 million to nonprofit organizations
- Awarded funding to 21 individuals for scholarly research
- Hosted 26 exhibitions at its spaces in Chicago, IL and Santa Fe, NM

With a strong focus on grantmaking in the rural Southwest, Harrison will advance the Foundation's vision of operating at the intersection of arts and education philanthropy, with a strong emphasis on equity, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

"Marilynn and I are thrilled to welcome Holly, a leader whose experience, integrity, and vision will strengthen the work of our Foundation," said Carl Thoma, Founder. "Holly is known for her understanding of the needs of the art and nonprofit sectors, as well as her strategic organizational acumen—building the capacity of artists, curators, scholars, and museum and philanthropic leaders alike. Her leadership amplifies the Foundation's connection to rural Southwest communities that are philanthropically underserved and, more importantly, expanding the collective impact made by our grantees and partners."

(more)

Harrison joins the Foundation following her role as Deputy Director of Arts and Programs at the Mississippi Museum of Art and her work as Program Associate in the Arts and Cultural Heritage Program of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. At The Mellon Foundation, she spearheaded the first major initiatives in Native American art, which included professional training programs for emerging Native American museum professionals as well as collection, exhibition, and conservation support to first-time institutional grantees in the Northeast, Midwest, and Southwest United States.

“I am humbled by the opportunity to lead the Carl & Marilyn Thoma Foundation into a critical phase of strategic growth,” said Harrison. “Carl and Marilyn’s special commitment to the Southwest especially resonates with my own upbringing—I’m particularly honored to serve a region that has been so vital to all of us at the Foundation.”

Harrison holds degrees from Pepperdine University (MBA) and the University of Kansas (BA, History). Prior to her roles at the Mississippi Museum of Art and the Mellon Foundation, Harrison held curatorial positions at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Dallas Museum of Art, as well as in the private sector.

[The Carl & Marilyn Thoma Foundation](#) recognizes the power of the arts and education to challenge and shift perceptions, spark creativity, and connect people across cultures. The Foundation lends and exhibits artworks and provides grants to support pivotal initiatives in the arts and education. The Foundation is based in Chicago, Illinois and Santa Fe, New Mexico.



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