

Vancouver Art Gallery Announces Sirish Rao as New Director of Public Engagement and Learning



October 27, 2022, VANCOUVER, BC // *Traditional Coast Salish Lands including Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəyʷəm), Squamish (Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw) and Tsleil-Waututh (səlilwətaʔ) Nations*

[Vancouver Art Gallery](#) proudly welcomes **Sirish Rao** to the position of Director of Public Engagement and Learning. Sirish will take up this new role on January 16th, 2023.

As an arts leader, writer and cultural innovator with deep connections to the international arts world, Sirish is a welcome addition to the Gallery's leadership team.

Sirish spent a decade as Director of Tara Books, one of India's most awarded publishing houses. He has worked with international cultural institutions including the J. Paul Getty Museum (Los Angeles), The Frankfurt Book Fair, Kunsthal (Rotterdam), The Museum of London and the Jaipur Literature Festival. Sirish co-founded the Indian Summer Arts Society with his partner, Laura Byspalko, and has emerged as Canada's preeminent presenter of South Asian art and thought.

In his role as founding Artistic Director of the Indian Summer Society, Sirish has presented more than a thousand artists on the stages of the festival, in a roster that features Nobel, Booker, Grammy and Oscar Award-winning artists alongside exciting emerging talent.

“We are immensely excited to welcome Sirish to the Vancouver Art Gallery’s leadership team,” states **Anthony Kiendl, Vancouver Art Gallery CEO & Director**. “Sirish’s wide-ranging interests and experience in a diversity of cultural forms coalesce in the art of storytelling. As a storyteller, writer, educator, and public intellectual, we eagerly anticipate Sirish adding his voice to the Gallery’s team of thinkers, innovators and advocates as we collectively re-imagine what an art museum can be in a global context in the 21st century.”

In the role of Director of Public Engagement and Learning, Sirish will be responsible for providing collaborative organizational leadership to create paths that share perspectives and build and engage communities. Reporting to the CEO, Sirish will direct the activities of the Public Engagement and Learning Department and work collaboratively with the Program Leadership team. In this position, Sirish will interface with all areas of the Gallery and contribute to the long-term planning of the organization, cultivating an appreciation for the arts and a culture of philanthropy while creating a positive work environment that enables staff to contribute their best.

“I am delighted to be joining the gallery in this transformational moment. Five years from now, the gallery will have a home in an innovative new building. What excites me is the work of inner building that will give the new space a heart and soul and make it a cultural hub,” says Sirish Rao. “I look forward to creating programs that spark wonderment and curiosity and offer a sense of belonging and healing.”

Sirish is the recipient of an Extraordinary Achievement Award (Darpan) and a Lifetime Achievement Award (Hari Sharma Foundation) and has been named “One of 20 Most Influential South Asians in Vancouver” (Urban Asian). His organization, the Indian Summer Festival, was recently awarded the Lieutenant Governor’s Arts and Music Award for Visual Arts.

Currently, he serves on the boards and advisory councils of several major organizations including the Vancouver Foundation, the Vancouver International Film Festival, Simon Fraser University’s India Advisory Council and the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts at UBC.

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ABOUT VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

Founded in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of North America’s most innovative visual arts institutions. The Gallery’s ground-breaking exhibitions, extensive public programs and emphasis on advancing scholarship all focus on historical and contemporary art from British Columbia and around the world. Special attention is given to the accomplishments of Indigenous artists, as well as to those of the Asia Pacific region. The Gallery’s exhibitions also explore the impact of images in the larger sphere of visual culture, design and architecture.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is a charitable not-for-profit organization supported by its members, individual donors, corporate funders, foundations, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is situated on the ancestral and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, and is respectful of the Indigenous stewards of the land it occupies, whose rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Vancouver and the work of the Gallery.

Photo credit: Kristine Cofsky

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