

Maxwell L. Anderson

The Melvin & Bren Simon Director and CEO of the Indianapolis Museum of Art

Maxwell L. Anderson is The Melvin & Bren Simon Director and CEO of the Indianapolis Museum of Art, a position he has held since May 2006. During his tenure at the IMA, he has added more than 125 significant works to the permanent collection as part of IMA's 125th Anniversary celebrations in October 2008; built a significant international exhibition calendar; resumed a free general admission policy; more than doubled attendance to reach some 450,000 visitors annually; and in June 2010 launched 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park, one of the largest contemporary art parks in the United States featuring ongoing site-specific commissions. In 2008 the IMA secured the donation of Miller House and Garden, Eero Saarinen's iconic 1957 residence in Columbus, Indiana, which will open to the public in spring 2011. Under Anderson's leadership, the IMA received the 2009 National Medal of Museum and Library Service, the nation's highest honor for museums and libraries that make extraordinary civic, educational, economic, environmental, and social contributions. In 2011, the IMA will represent the United States at the 54th Biennale di Venezia with commissioned works by the collective Allora & Calzadilla.

Anderson received an A.B. from Dartmouth in 1977 with highest distinction in Art History, and A.M. (1978) and Ph.D. (1981) degrees from Harvard, having spent 1979 to 1980 abroad as Harvard's Frederick Sheldon Travelling Fellow. He worked in The Metropolitan Museum of Art as curatorial assistant and later assistant curator for Greek and Roman Art from 1981 to 1987. In 1985 he taught in the Department of Art & Archaeology at Princeton University, and in 1987 at the Università di Roma. Anderson has served as museum director for the Whitney Museum of American Art (1998-2003), Art Gallery of Ontario (1995-1998), and Michael C. Carlos Museum of Emory University (1987-1995). He was decorated as a Commendatore (Knight Commander) in the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic, and decorated as a Chevalier in the French Republic's Order of Arts and Letters.

Since becoming a museum director in 1987, Anderson has pursued solutions to challenges facing art museums internationally. In 1988 he inaugurated a series of loan projects from the bulging storerooms of some of the world's leading museums in London, Paris, Rome, Mexico City, and elsewhere, looking for alternatives to buying antiquities from the illicit trade. He initiated the first multinational art purchase, a work by Bill Viola today jointly owned by the Whitney Museum, the Pompidou, and the Tate, to cope with the large scale of many contemporary artworks in variable media. He has long championed the rights of artists to receive fair tax treatment when donating works of art to museums. Shortly after the attacks of September 11, as chair of the Art Issues Committee of the Association of Art Museum Directors, he introduced a successful motion to forego terrorism insurance, assuring that U.S. and international loan exhibitions could continue uninterrupted. He helped lead U.S. art museums to adopt 1970 as a bright line when considering acquisitions of archaeological material and ancient art. Anderson joined a lawsuit against every prosecutor in the State of Indiana to strike down a statute abridging freedom of expression. He pioneered complete transparency in museum deaccessioning practices by posting valuations of prospective sales prior to placing objects in the art market. And he launched two consecutive projects to build international libraries of digital media documenting the collections and activities of art museums—one for still images (AMICO), and one for video (ArtBabble).