

Crystal Bridges Names New Director Don Bacigalupi to Lead Museum

BENTONVILLE, Ark., August 17, 2009 – Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art announced today that Don Bacigalupi has been appointed director of the museum, and will start in late-October 2009. Since 2003, Bacigalupi has served as president, director, and CEO of the Toledo Museum of Art. Alice Walton, founder and chair of the board, made the announcement this afternoon in Bentonville.

A specialist in post-WWII American art and popular culture, Bacigalupi (pronounced *baa-chee-ga-loop-ee*) previously served as executive director of the San Diego Museum of Art (1999 to 2003); director and chief curator of the Blaffer Gallery, the art museum of the University of Houston (1995 to 1999); and the Brown Curator of Contemporary Art at the San Antonio Museum of Art (1993 to 1995).

“After a comprehensive national search, we have found the ideal person for the job in Don,” said Alice Walton. “The depth of his experience in managing a museum, his scholarship in American art, and his commitment to arts education are a perfect fit with our mission and will ensure the success of Crystal Bridges.”

“The opportunity to lead and help launch a major new art museum is thrilling,” said Bacigalupi. Crystal Bridges is distinguished among museums worldwide in offering an outstanding collection of American art in a beautiful natural setting. For me, the museum’s vision for offering meaningful learning experiences and a dynamic mix of programming serving local, regional and national audiences is especially important.”

While in Toledo, Dr. Bacigalupi oversaw the development and opening of the critically acclaimed Glass Pavilion (in 2006), designed by SANAA. This elegant building, an expansion to the historic museum facility, was named “Best Museum” design in the world by *Travel and Leisure* magazine in 2007.

John Wilmerding, noted art historian and board member of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, said: “Don is one of finest leaders in the museum field today. With his strong background in arts education and his deep management experience he is uniquely suited to lead Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art.”

Dr. Bacigalupi received his master’s and doctorate degrees in art history from the University of Texas at Austin, and his bachelor’s degree in art history from the University of Houston, where he was honored as valedictorian. He was a 1996 fellow at the Museum Management Institute of the J. Paul Getty Trust and the American Federation of Arts at the University of California, Berkeley.

Dr. Bacigalupi began his career teaching art history at the University of Texas at Austin before moving into museum management. He has served on the boards of organizations such as the Association of Art Museum Directors and currently serves on the board of the national committee of the International Council of Museums. He has also been active in the American Association of Museums.

Bacigalupi has contributed to publications and exhibition catalogues addressing a wide range of topics, including contemporary art, and he has lectured throughout the United States. He has won numerous honors, including most recently 2007 and 2008 Institutional Excellence Awards from the Ohio Museums Association, a 2007 Newsmakers Award from the Northwest Ohio Black Media Association and a 2007 "Design 100" designation from Time magazine.

About Crystal Bridges

Crystal Bridges will be a premier art institution dedicated to American art and artists, learning and community gatherings. The museum takes its name from the nearby natural springs and the unique glass-and-wood building designed for the natural setting by world-renowned architect Moshe Safdie. The complex will encompass more than 100,000 square feet of public space, including galleries, meeting and classroom spaces, a large auditorium, areas for outdoor concerts and public events, and sculpture and walking trails.

Crystal Bridges will house a permanent collection of masterworks of American art that ranges from the colonial era to contemporary work. The museum also will display a constantly changing array of special exhibitions featuring art from museums and collections throughout the region, the nation and abroad. The 100-acre site of the museum complex is located in Bentonville, Ark. For more information about Crystal Bridges, visit www.crystalbridges.org.

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