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SANTA CRUZ MAH ANNOUNCES LEADERSHIP CHANGE

June 7 Community Input Opportunity

SANTA CRUZ, CA (May 21, 2024) — After more than four years at the helm of the **Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History (MAH)**, **Robb Woulfe** has announced his plans to step down from his role as executive director in the next 9 months, citing his family’s plans to relocate. The MAH’s Board of Trustees has convened a search committee to identify the organization’s next leader.

“We want to engage MAH staff, supporters, partners, trustees and Santa Cruz community members in this exciting moment for the museum,” said **MAH Board Chair, Jorian Wilkins**. “This summer the MAH will host a series of events to engage with the community and learn about our shared vision for the future of the MAH, our treasured community museum. This will start with a **First Friday event held at the MAH on June 7 from 5 - 7 PM**, with additional outreach opportunities coming to Watsonville and mid-county later this summer. The MAH belongs to everyone in the county and we look forward to hearing your voice as we work to identify an outstanding leader for the future.”

Woulfe started at the MAH just weeks before the coronavirus outbreak in 2020, which subsequently forced the museum’s physical closure for a year. Despite the challenges, Woulfe—who was hired to help lead the institution into a new era and be a catalyst for forward momentum—focused on strategic realignment, resource optimization, and broader public visibility.

“I am proud of where the MAH is today,” said Woulfe. “The board, staff, and I have worked very hard to enhance programs and build financial resilience during an incredibly difficult period. I am confident that the board can now facilitate a seamless succession process.”

During his time with the museum, Woulfe supported an ambitious and inclusive curatorial agenda, strengthened infrastructure and policy frameworks, and navigated the institution through the pandemic crisis. His work to champion artistic excellence, historic preservation, and interdisciplinary collaboration resulted in the MAH receiving multi-year grant awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, Institute of Museum and Library Services, California State Library, and Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions, among other prominent funding bodies.

Programmatically, Woulfe conceived and introduced the museum’s two biennial festivals, Frequency and CommonGround, and brought to town the world-renowned public art installation *RedBall Project* for the MAH’s 25th anniversary in 2021. In addition to regularly staging performative and visual works at

local cultural and historic sites—including Evergreen Cemetery and Davenport Jail—the museum also presented a series of popular exhibitions and important thematic shows. Highlights include: *The Art of the Santa Cruz Speed Wheel* with iconic skateboard company NHS; *Ocean of Light: Submergence* by U.K. digital arts collective Squidsoup; *Strange Weather* with the Institute of the Arts and Sciences at UC Santa Cruz; *The Land of Milk and Honey* with the Mexicali Biennial, *Sé'sh Shóto'sh Psí'sh* by Indigenous artist Cannupa Hanska Luger; and the recent *Richard Mayhew: Inner Terrain*, a retrospective of the acclaimed, Soquel-based landscape painter.

Additional accomplishments during Woulfe's time at the MAH included embarking on a long-term collections digitization project, fostering more collaborations with local and regional universities, introducing a pay-what-you-wish admission policy, and extending the reach of the institution through efforts such as its ongoing *museum without walls* initiative—where the organization connects people with art and history outside of its formal spaces.

“We are grateful to Robb, who over the course of his tenure has moved the MAH forward during COVID-19, and found new ways to expand the museum's mission and engagement,” said MAH Board Chair, Jorian Wilkins. “We are looking forward to working with the community to find, welcome and support the MAH's next leader. We deeply appreciate all of our community partners, and thank you in advance for your interest and support as we begin this effort together.”

The search for Woulfe's successor will begin later in 2024. Before the search begins, the board is inviting staff, partners and the public to inform the recruiting goals and process through surveys and feedback sessions. **The first community input opportunity is on June 7, 2024 from 5PM to 7PM at the Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History, 705 Front Street in Downtown Santa Cruz.** Find out more about the First Friday event [here](#). **Take the Community Survey [here](#).**

ABOUT THE MAH

The MAH is a thriving community gathering place that offers rotating art and history exhibitions, visual and performing artworks, public festivals, education and outreach programs, and cultural celebrations in collaboration with its many partners. It maintains a permanent collection of regionally significant art and artifacts, a research library, a historical archive, and historic sites including the Evergreen Cemetery, Octagon Building, and Davenport Jail. It is also home to Abbott Square, a vibrant public plaza on the museum's doorstep that offers food, social events, and year-round creative happenings.

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