

### **Kathleen S. Bartels Biography**



Kathleen S. Bartels is the Executive Director and CEO of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Toronto (MOCA/the Museum). Appointed to the position in April 2020, she has made a considerable impact in her first year at MOCA. In fall 2020, she was instrumental in the successful completion of the Tomorrow of Contemporary Art capital campaign, securing the Museum's most significant show of private support to date—\$5.7 million in the form of loan forgiveness from MOCA's landlord. She then led the Museum in a months-long process to create a five-year strategic plan completed in June 2021 and began its implementation on September 1. Opening September 29, 2021, *Greater Toronto Art 2021* represents her first major exhibition at the helm of the Museum.

Bartels arrived at MOCA following 18 years as Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG) in Vancouver, British Columbia. During her tenure, the VAG experienced unprecedented growth, transforming a regionally focused organization into an international leader, positioning Vancouver among North America's significant contemporary art centres. Under her leadership, the VAG significantly enhanced the quality of its programs by building strong and critically acclaimed exhibitions along with important presentations of the growing permanent collection. Doing so increased the museum's focus on the work of British Columbia artists, including its holdings of work by indigenous creators.

Bartels enhanced the visitor experience by investigating the vast and pervasive world of popular and visual culture, including design, architecture, fashion, film, and media arts. The VAG also engaged in a rigorous and ambitious international exhibition program through key collaborations and partnerships with institutions in Europe, the United States, and Asia. In 2014, the groundbreaking Institute of Asian Art was established to more formally recognize the VAG's longstanding commitment to foster exchange between East and West and to fully embrace and serve Asian communities in Vancouver and the region.

During her time as the Director, Kathleen also emphasized the VAG's permanent collection, growing it to over 12,000 works. Kathleen committed to an award-winning publication program to ensure broad national and international exposure for artistic and curatorial ideas, to promote scholarship on the visual arts, and to extend the impact of the VAG's exhibitions over the long term.

Among her contributions to numerous landmark VAG exhibitions, Kathleen worked with internationally acclaimed Vancouver artist Jeff Wall to co-curate many exhibitions, including *Kai Althoff*, 2008; *Anthony Hernandez*, 2009; *Kerry James Marshall*, 2010; *Patrick Faiganbaum*, 2013; and *Elad Lassry*, 2017.

Under her visionary leadership, Bartels grew the VAG's operating budget from \$6.2 million in 2001 to over \$21 million by 2018. VAG also experienced a five-fold increase in annual membership and art acquisitions increased by sixty percent over the same period.

Kathleen also spearheaded plans for a new building for the VAG. She led the site selection process working closely with the City of Vancouver, project feasibility and functional program studies, business plan development, architect selection process, conceptual through schematic design processes, capital campaign, and intensive stakeholder engagement.-With the selection of eminent architects Herzog & de Meuron, Bartels and the VAG Board raised \$135 million dollars for the project, \$85 million from the private sector including a major gift of \$40 million from the Chan Family and \$50 million from the provincial government.

Before relocating to Vancouver, Kathleen spent 13 years at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. She negotiated and brokered three major collection acquisitions, oversaw facility enhancement projects, and supervised the daily operational management of the museum.

Bartels earned her Master of Arts Degree in Pacific Art History from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Honolulu Hawai'i and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Photography from Columbia College, Chicago, Illinois.

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