

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Minneapolis Institute of Art announces appointment of Virajita Singh as first Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer**

*Plans for the new CDIO position were announced last summer, With the position supported by \$6.5 million in near-term and endowed funding*



Photo courtesy of Virajita Singh

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**MINNEAPOLIS—February 8, 2022—** The Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) announced today that it has selected Virajita Singh to serve as the museum's first Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer (CDIO), following a national search. Singh will come to Mia from the University of Minnesota, where she has served in the Office for Equity & Diversity (OED) since 2015, first as the Assistant Vice Provost and, since 2019, as the Associate Vice Provost. Originally trained as an architect—a field in which she has practiced and taught since 1992, both in India and in the United States—Singh's more recent work has included collaborations with the 17 distinct colleges within the University of Minnesota's Twin Cities Campus, as well as supporting the University's system-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and policies. Mia's new CDIO position, which will join the museum's senior leadership team, is made possible through more than \$6.5 million in funding from former board chairs Nivin MacMillan and Hubert Joly, and trustee Sheila Morgan, to endow the position and support DEAIIB initiatives at the museum. Singh will begin her role at Mia in March.

"I am excited that Virajita Singh will be joining the team at Mia, bringing her outstanding array of skills to the museum and helping us advance our diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and belonging goals," said Katie Luber, Nivin and Duncan MacMillan Director and President of Mia. "Virajita stood out as the leading candidate through the search process because of her experiences locally and internationally, both within the context of DEAIIB work and beyond. That she moved from architecture into this line of work, applying design thinking skills to the process of facilitation, collaboration, and problem solving, demonstrates her creativity and drive. We look forward to welcoming her in person soon."

"Mia is a very community-focused and beloved asset of the Twin Cities, and the global content of its collection provides many opportunities to advance and foster diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and belonging," said Virajita Singh. "I have been associated with Mia as a volunteer Guide since 2006, and I have seen many of the changes that have already taken place. There are great opportunities to build on this history, recognizing the critical role that the arts and culture can play in advancing equity, and I am thrilled to be joining the team to lead this work."

A native of Mumbai, India, Singh received her Bachelor of Architecture degree from Mumbai University, Sir J.J. College Of Architecture, followed by her Masters of Architecture from University Of Minnesota, College Of Architecture & Landscape Architecture. She spent four years as a Senior Architect with DAAT: Design, Architecture & Associated Technologies in New Delhi, where her projects included working with Lok Jumbish ("Peoples Movement") to design and build schools participatorily with 75 rural communities.

# Mia

Since completing her Masters in Minnesota, Singh has served in a variety of roles related to architecture, sustainable design, and design thinking and, most recently, diversity, equity, and inclusion. During four years as the Program Leader in Design Thinking at the University's College of Design, she worked with the College's Dean to bring thought leadership to the process of creating and facilitating a leading-edge consulting program focused on non-profits. Using design thinking tools and processes, Singh and her team worked to innovate sustainable and equitable solutions in a wide range of external business and nonprofit environments, from the University of Iceland, School of Education in Reykjavik, Iceland, to Arts Midwest and (in 2013) at Mia. As a College of Design faculty member and researcher, Singh has regularly taught design studios and other courses. She founded and has continued to lead a program, Design for Community Resilience (DCR), in the University's Center for Sustainable Building Research (CSBR) that particularly serves rural communities across Minnesota.

In 2015, Singh became the Assistant Vice Provost in the University of Minnesota's Office for Equity & Diversity, where among other things she worked on the early phases of the University's Diversity Community of Practice (DCoP), a grassroots community of faculty and staff, to create and implement innovative strategies focused on ensuring successful implementation of DEI goals across the entire system. During this time, Singh also taught in the OED Equity & Diversity Certificate Program, collaborating on custom workshops on topics including multicultural religious and spiritual identities, and identifying and challenging implicit bias. She also served as the University's liaison to the Wake Forest University-led Research Initiative for the Obama Administration's White House Initiative for Women and Girls of Color.

Following her promotion to Associate Vice Provost in 2019, she has continued to lead the College MADE (Multicultural Access, Diversity, and Equity) Initiative, including engaging in data-driven discussions and goal setting aimed at increasing representational diversity, improving cultural inclusivity, and creating partnerships that drive change throughout the University community. She has continued leadership of the DCoP, including shaping and guiding the work of five key DCoP committees: Programming, Assessment, Communications, Equity Lens Policy Review, and Organizing, and has provided oversight to the University's Women's Center and the Gender Sexuality Center for Queer & TransLife. Following George Floyd's murder in 2020, Singh and her colleagues led the OED's work to respond to hundreds of requests to address needs from multiple parts of the institution for anti-racist action and social justice. And she has served as the University's representative on national initiatives and programs for the US Department of Education, including leading the initiative for the University's successful designation as an AANAPISI (Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution), resulting in more relevant, higher quality programming, support, and communication for AAPI students.

#### **About Mia's CDIO Position**

Mia's Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer (CDIO) position is part of the museum's ongoing work to serve racial equity by advancing the institution's DEAIIB-focused goals and outcomes. In her role as CDIO, Singh will have oversight of the museum's Human Resources department and be responsible for ensuring Mia's leadership practices, structures, systems and policies contribute to an organizational culture that meets the needs of all. This will help ensure that DEAIIB goals are not siloed, but rather embraced as part of the work of all teams throughout the institution. In addition to establishing goals for the museum's DEAIIB initiatives, Singh will facilitate external relationships to develop systemic and sustainable programs, policies, and structures that foster a greater sense of inclusion, equity, accessibility and belonging among and with Mia's visitors, neighbors, and the general public. This involves collaboration with partner organizations, funders, community members, government officials and other external stakeholders.

Singh will serve on Mia's senior leadership team and report directly to Mia's Director & President, while collaborating with staff across the institution and providing support and perspective to board members and peers. It is one of the few positions of this type in the museum field nationally to be endowed—an important distinction because the long-term funding ensures that leadership on these issues would not be sacrificed in the event of an economic downturn or short-term budget constraints. More information on Mia's current DEAIIB policy can be found [here](#).



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## Press Contacts

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## About the Minneapolis Institute of Art

Home to more than 90,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest art collections in the country—from all corners of the globe, and from ancient to contemporary—Mia links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration.

General admission to Mia is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee.

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## Museum Hours

Tuesday-Wednesday

10am-5pm

Thursday

10am-9pm

Friday-Sunday

10am-5pm

Monday

Closed

For more information, call + 1 612 870 3000 or visit [artsmia.org](http://artsmia.org)

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