

**The Schweinfurth Art Center  
Search for Executive Director  
Auburn, New York**

March 5, 2025

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH**

The Schweinfurth Art Center (SAC) seeks a leader with creative and entrepreneurial drive to serve as their Executive Director (ED). For 44 years, SAC has locally and regionally been recognized as an exciting, inventive space for art education and exhibition. Nationally, SAC is known for its highly regarded focus on textile arts, particularly contemporary quilting. The next ED will be a passionate promoter of SAC's mission, connecting its core visual arts programming to enthusiastic regional and national audiences, advancing its role as a essential provider of community visual arts education and exhibition in central NY region while also elevating SAC's national reputation in contemporary textile art programing.

The ED will guide SAC to the next chapter in its life story, taking advantage of an opportunity to enhance and elevate the work of this unique community art center. The successful candidate will understand the strategic issues facing community arts organizations and be able to navigate SAC through the future such that it continues to thrive. The ED will lead a small internal team, and represent SAC to local and national donors, foundations, arts professionals and students, while upholding its values, (integrity; diversity, equity, access, and inclusion; excellence, generosity of spirit and lifelong learning). They will be effective administrators, working closely with SAC's Board of Directors and staff to oversee artistic and educational programs, strategy and goal setting, finance and budgeting, fundraising and development efforts, and marketing and communications. As the SAC's leading voice and guardian, the ED will continue to build the organization's excellence within Central New York and beyond.

Confidential inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications should be sent to:

**Gerri Spilka, [gerrispilka@gmail.com](mailto:gerrispilka@gmail.com)  
Strategic Leadership Consulting**

## AUBURN, NY

Located in the heart of the beautiful Finger Lakes Region of NY, Auburn, (<https://www.fingerlakes.com/towns/auburn/>) is located at the northern end of Owasco Lake. In 2024, Southern Methodist University's Cultural Data Project listed Auburn, NY as one of the top ten small cities in the country for arts and culture. The city of about 31,000 is a mix of historic and contemporary affordable housing at all income levels, and a unique mix of eateries, craft breweries, arts and history attractions, lodging and boutique retail, health and wellness offerings, and business and government services. Plus, with the Owasco River running right through the center, and over a dozen public art installations, the downtown's attractiveness is further heightened.

Though Auburn is small, it boasts of quality public education and easy community distance to Syracuse, Ithaca and Rochester NY, and to a myriad of exquisite natural resources for outdoor enthusiasts, including numerous waterfalls, hiking trails, lakes for swimming, fishing and boating, and skiing mountains. New York City and Montreal are four hours away. Nicknamed "History's City," Auburn is also unusually rich with historic sites that continue to narrate America's story through the voices of indigenous tribal, colonial, civil war, suffragette and modern cultures. The region is replete with public and private higher education institutions, which provide access to advanced education and training, as well as a vast array of arts and culture resources. Further, Central New York is purposely growing a high technology industrial base. For example, Micron Technology is investing an unprecedented \$100 billion to establish a leading edge computer memory fabrication facility. Construction is scheduled to begin in spring 2025.

## THE SCHWEINFURTH ART CENTER

Boston architect Julius A. Schweinfurth grew up in Auburn, NY, and was educated in Auburn schools. Throughout his life, he retained an affection for and a desire to benefit his birthplace and its inhabitants. In his will, Schweinfurth directed that the remainder of his trust be used to build an art center in Auburn for the exhibition and study of the arts, with particular emphasis on people who display "a special talent for art in any form and who intend to follow it as a life work." Construction on the art center was celebrated on May 17, 1981. The opening exhibition included artists from 12 Central New York counties. That tradition continues with SAC's annual Made in New York exhibition.

Today, SAC looks back on a history filled with creativity, connections and memorable moments. Generations of families have celebrated the creativity of their children in our *Both Ends of the Rainbow* exhibit and classes in everything from ceramics to printmaking. Senior citizens have found community and creativity in adult classes. Quilters have made thousands of quilts and formed 20-year friendships at SAC's *Quilting by the Lake* conference. Artists from diverse backgrounds have been featured in solo exhibits, group shows, juried exhibits, member exhibits and have been celebrated at retrospective exhibits over the years. Refugee artists have shared

their cultural heritage through folk art programs. Audiences have gathered for events including poetry, music, drop-in art activities, exhibit receptions, First Fridays, dance, and other special events from Schweinfest to creating a huge pink crocheted banner honoring Harriet Tubman that was stretched across the building. Through all these events and shared experiences, connections have been made that impacted lives and helped build a better community.

With funding from public and private sources in 2025 SAC and its partnering neighbor Cayuga Museum of History and Art, completed the construction of the West End Art Campus project. The enhanced campus and building facilities now allow these properties to more effectively connect to increase public access, facilitate collaborative community programming, and to attract more tourists.

## **Programs**

Today, 44 years later, as an important cultural attraction and visual arts venue for the region, SAC provides a roster of exhibits for local, regional and national artists and audiences along with high quality educational programs for youth and adults. For adults, weekly classes (typically 8 weeks per season) are taught by professional teaching artists. Studio Schweinfurth classes include multi-day workshops attracting regional participants. For youth, Art After School is a set of multi-week classes; and Camp Sessions, multi-day classes, are offered in winter and summer sessions. All classes are modestly priced, making its programs widely accessible.

Nationally, SAC has had and continues to look forward to ongoing national leadership in the fiber arts, particularly in contemporary quilting. Quilts=Art=Quilts (QAQ), a signature textile exhibit, ranks among the top five quilt art exhibiting opportunities nationally and internationally. Live and online Artist Trunk Shows and Artists Talks augment this annual show. And, Quilting by the Lake (QBL), a two-week quilting conference held on a nearby college campus, has grown into an internationally recognized quilting event with over 150 participants attending.

Along with QAQ, SAC's other annual exhibits include Made in New York, and Both Ends of the Rainbow-feature the artwork of local youth and adults. Additional highly recognized textile and mixed media exhibitions are installed-in the museum's quality galleries-throughout the year attracting hundreds of local visitors and tourists. The SAC team typically mounts six curated exhibitions annually. In God's Voice: A Celebration of the Spirituality of Harriet Tubman (2022), Nancy Crow: Sequences, Riffs and Drawings (2023), and Recycled Light: An Ode to Neon (2022) illustrate the range of materials and topics. In the most recent year, SAC hosted its first Artist-in-Residence, a program expected to continue in the future.

## **The Facility**

The 21,000 square foot contemporary facility includes high quality exhibition galleries on the main floor and the second floor, and a well-equipped ceramic studio, a sewing studio, and a wet studio in the basement. A large multi-purpose classroom rounds out the second floor, and

a well-regarded gift shop sits adjacent to the Main Street entry, as do administrative offices, and a fully outfitted kitchen. Located on Auburn's Main Street, SAC shares the West End Arts Campus with the Cayuga Museum. In 2024, both organizations completed a collaborative infrastructure project to establishing the West End as an arts and history anchor destination for visitors. Today, enhanced shared walkways, exterior lighting, and signage better connect both institutions. Along with those improvements, SAC's new entry addition with an elevator and stairs improve access from the parking lot to classrooms for all. Both institutions are now more able to share joint outdoor programming during summer months in their parking lot

### **Staff, Board, and Annual Budget**

Along with an executive director, a program director, marketing director, an administrative coordinator and facility coordinator round-out the ongoing staff. Bookkeeping and finance are contracted out as are teaching artists. Currently, SAC's board of directors consists of eight local and regional community leaders. SAC's annual budget for 2025, is approximately \$800,000.

### **Key Opportunities and Challenges**

**Implement and expand strategic directions and programs, respecting the 44-year legacy while also positioning SAC for a thriving future.** The ED is expected to honor SAC's mission, and core education and exhibition activities, and also take advantage of future opportunities to grow and shift these activities bringing them to expanded local and regional audiences. Also, given the contemporary renaissance of the textile arts, the ED will leverage SAC's expertise to grow and enhance its reputation nationally.

**Elevate and expand the reputation and influence of SAC within the local and national visual arts community.** SAC programs have a strong reputation for quality program delivery, and they fill critical community gaps in Auburn, in Central New York, and nationally. Nonetheless, opportunities exist for expansion at all levels.

**Expand fundraising, program and board capacity.** Now that the building improvements are completed, Board and staff agree that local fundraising efforts can now be directed to meeting the increased public demand for arts center programming. SAC is also well positioned to build on recent success obtaining new national public and private foundation grants. Similarly, the Board is ready to recruit nationally recognized professionals as directors.

**Demonstrate nonprofit business acumen in a small organization environment; the ability to effectively guide financial resources for maximal impact; and continue to build a strong financial foundation for the future.** Although SAC's annual budget of \$800,000 is small, its impact is strong. The ED will assure that day to day finances continue to be managed according to excellent accounting standards; and that it maximizes program delivery to its audiences. The ED will lead efforts with the Board and staff to prudently expand the budget by growing its individual donors, and its government and foundation grants while also continuing to build a financial reserve.

**The staff team is currently comprised of 6 people including the Artist-in-Residence. As in all small organizations, each staff person is called upon to wear many hats.** It is expected that the ED will bring their own set of talents, and also be prepared to pitch in on a range of activities as needed

## **ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

The ED will provide visionary and administrative and curatorial leadership for SAC's programs, finances, resource development, human resources, physical plant, and communications and marketing within its local, regional and national communities, while also maintain excellence and its values. In doing so, the ED will guide SAC in the context of an overall strategy grounded in an understanding of its past and recent context, external shifts anticipated, its strengths and challenges, and take advantage of emerging opportunities.

## **QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

The Executive Director role calls for a motivated and visionary organizational leader with the intent to preserve SAC's legacy while building a dynamic future as a regional community arts center and museum with excellent national programming. Rooted in knowledge of community arts education and museum administration, they will be a strong communicator with a demonstrated history of building strong relationships across diverse audiences and organizational stakeholders, and proven success in execution of strategic plans with fiscal responsibility.

While no single candidate will bring all of the desired qualifications, the successful candidate will possess many of the following qualifications and qualities:

- A track record of successful leadership of an organization, or a comparative leadership role, with the ability to grasp an exciting opportunity to shape the next phase in a small organization's life cycle;
- The ability to communicate a vision to different constituencies;
- Knowledge of and credentials in visual arts and arts education, visual arts management, and/or museum administration;
- Experience curating or organizing exhibitions;
- Demonstrated fundraising experience with the ability to cultivate relationships and close contributions from all revenue sources;
- Nonprofit business proficiency, experience and interest in managing organizational finances;
- A track record of working with a board of directors, overseeing staff, and building partnerships across other public and private organizations;

- Experience in arts education and museum facilities management;
- Interest in working in a small but thriving city with proximity to some medium sized cities and numerous natural resources, and the ability to translate this life into creative and transformational experiences for all people;
- A proven commitment to and track record in advancing diversity, equity and inclusion.

**SALARY RANGE**

**\$70,000 - \$80,000** commensurate with experience

**TO APPLY**

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*The Schweinfurth Art Center is an Equal Opportunity Employer (EOE). All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, or veteran status. SAC embraces diversity within the workplace and outside, and welcomes all candidates to apply, without fear of discrimination.*