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San Francisco Museum of Modern Art names new director after yearlong search

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The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art named Baltimore museum executive Christopher Bedford as its new director, the organization announced Wednesday.

He replaces Neal Benezra, who announced plans to step down as director in February 2021 after 19 years amid controversy over the museum's response to allegations of racism in May 2020.

The 44-year-old Bedford, the Dorothy Wagner Wallis director at the Baltimore Museum of Art since 2016, will join the SFMOMA as the Helen and Charles Schwab director in early June. Museums often receive endowments for the directorships.

Prior to leading the Baltimore museum, Bedford was director of the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University and was appointed as commissioner for the U.S. Pavilion for the 2017 Venice Biennale. He also held the positions of chief curator and curator of exhibitions at



Chris Bedford is taking over the director role at SFMOMA.

the Wexner Center for the Arts at Ohio State University, assistant curator and curatorial assistant in the department of contemporary art at Los Angeles County Museum of Art and consulting curator in the department of sculpture and decorative arts for the J. Paul Getty Museum in LA.

He has a bachelor's in art from Oberlin College and a masters in art history through the joint program at Case Western Reserve University and the Cleveland Museum of Art.

In Baltimore, he championed efforts to increase diversity, equity and inclusion by collecting and displaying works of art by traditionally underrepresented artists. He created controversy by announcing plans to sell some works by more mainstream artists to buy those of underrepresented artists, though the New York Times said he backed off of those plans.

The Baltimore Business Journal, a sister paper, honored Bedford with a Leaders in Diversity award in 2019.

The Baltimore museum has a yearly budget of \$16.9 million and 182 staff members. SFMOMA has a budget of \$53.4 million and a staff double that.

Baltimore has a collection more than 95,000 objects in its collection, while the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art has more than 50,500, according to each museum's respective websites.

The museum has other key leadership vacancies that will likely be filled by the new director as he begins to take over and set his vision for the institution.

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