

New DIA Director Salvador Salort-Pons

By Susan Kehoe, Ph.D.



Far left: Salvador Salort-Pons with Warren Evans, Wayne County Executive, in the Rivera Court.

Above: Salvador Salort-Pons with DIA staff and volunteers on the day of his announcement as director.

Left: Salort-Pons and his wife, Alexandra May.

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— Salvador Salort-Pons, 2015.

Detroit is beginning a renaissance and the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) is at its cultural center. Its new director, Salvador Salort-Pons, is poised to make the DIA a significant part of Detroit’s rebirth.

The newly appointed director has a vision as multi-dimensional as the community itself. Growing up in Madrid, Spain, Salort-Pons thinks of art museums as places where everyone comes to gather and exchange ideas.

“In order to represent all the communities of a diverse Detroit,” Salort-Pons says, “the institution needs to be accessible. It should be a place where everyone is represented. Every person should be able to see himself or herself in the museum’s art. The end goal is that the DIA is the mirror of the society around us.”

“We are the perfect place, in the perfect location to become a city square,” continues Salort-Pons, 45. “American art museums have not historically been places to meet; they are *destinations* or a nice place to see the latest exhibition.”

To understand current DIA visitors, he intends to conduct an audience study as one of his first steps. He wants to learn who comes to the DIA, why they come, where they come from, and what they like or don’t like about the museum.

Selecting a curator for the Contemporary Gallery is another of his initial concerns. Some say the DIA has not had a real, full-time curator of the Department of Contemporary Art since Sam Wagstaff in 1971.

One of the qualifications for the candidate, according to Salort-Pons, is “to have an eye,” the ability to see which works and schools are going to be important and which artists will be regarded as masters in the future.

Salort-Pons wants the new curator to work with the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD) as well as the Center for Creative Studies and Cranbrook Academy of Art to identify promising local artists. He would also like to have an exchange with those artists who have come to Detroit from around the world to create in this expanding art space.

Salort-Pons talks a lot about collaboration: with staff, communities, suburbs, artists, institutions and even with international museums. He wants to continue hosting exhibitions like the recent *30 Americans* and to broaden outreach programs like *Inside|Out* that pull in the young as well as the old. He wants to have a dialogue with everyone so the DIA can play a major role in Detroit’s renaissance.

“Relevant exhibitions and DIA works of art are the platform from which we can discuss social matters that are important to the communities by which we live,” Salort-Pons says. “We want the DIA to be more than a landmark institution with remarkable collections. We want everyone to come and find their voice through art.” **NS**

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