

Appointments & departures
News

Influential collection of Indigenous art hires former Whitney curator, will open exhibition space in New York

The Gochman Family Collection has hired Laura Phipps as its director and will open a venue in Katonah, New York, this autumn

Petala Ironcloud

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Laura Phipps has been hired as director of the Gochman Family Collection
Photo courtesy Roeg Cohen

The [Gochman Family Collection](#), an important lending collection of Indigenous and American art, has appointed Laura Phipps, a former associate curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art who is white, to lead the collection with the Tlingit co-curator and creative director Rachel Martin as it expands its public programming and opens an exhibition venue at an unspecified date this coming autumn in Katonah, New York.

Since its founding in 2021 by Becky Gochman and the former gallerist Zach Feuer, the Upper East Side-based collection has grown quickly to include more than 750 works, primarily by Indigenous artists, and has loaned more than 260 pieces to over 100 exhibitions worldwide. Phipps, will work closely with collection co-founder Gochman and five curatorial consultants, three of whom are Indigenous.



Cara Romero, *When Animals Were People (A Study), Untitled #2, 2025*
Image courtesy of the artist

“I’ve been aware of the Gochman Family Collection for a number of years through my work with artists in the collection, including during the organisation of *Jaune Quick-to-See Smith: Memory Map*,” says Phipps, referring to the influential 2023 Whitney retrospective devoted to [Jaune Quick-to-See Smith \(1940-2025\)](#), who was a citizen of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nation. “What drew me to the role was the chance to focus on the parts of curatorial work that excite me most—supporting living artists and helping them realise their visions.”

While Native scholars, artists and curators have gained greater visibility in recent decades, the appointment raises a [familiar question](#) in Native art circles: why major collections that regularly exhibit Indigenous art so rarely appoint Native curators to lead them. “Could they have hired a Native curator? I think they could have. Did they try? I think they tried,” says Joseph Pierce, an associate professor and the founding director of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative at Stony Brook University. “Is Laura someone who has the skills to take them in the direction of continuing to support Native artists? Absolutely.”



Lily Hope, *Chilhat Protector Mash, 2020*
Photography Tyson Houseman, Model: Alizae Shaw

During her 16-year tenure at the Whitney, Phipps co-chaired the museum’s Indigenous art, artists and audiences working group, curated Native-centric exhibitions and contributed to the museum’s influential recurring exhibition, the Whitney Biennial.

“Laura brings the perfect combination of curatorial rigour, deep relationships with Native artists and real experience building institutional initiatives,” Gochman says. “At this moment in the collection’s evolution—when we’re expanding our public programming and opening a dedicated exhibition space in Katonah—we felt it was important to bring in a director who understands both institutions and artists.”

The Gochman Family Collection provides opportunities and space for emerging artists to be seen and heard. Its new Katonah space that Phipps will be supporting also offers a unique platform for artists: a flexible site near New York City’s art world but also accessible to more remote Native communities. Unlike some dedicated Native art spaces farther from the city, like [Forge Project](#) in Taghkanic (which Gochman and Feuer co-founded), the Gochman Family Collection’s new space will be accessible by public transit, inviting broader public engagement.



Collectors

Buy work from living artists: Becky Gochman—supporter of Indigenous artists—on what she collects and why

Benjamin Sutton



Ishi Glinzky, *Inertia — Warn the Animals, 2023*
Image courtesy of Ishi Glinzky and Chris Sharp, Los Angeles

“One of our goals has always been to make sure the work doesn’t live quietly in private spaces but continues to circulate and be shared with new audiences,” Gochman says. “Contemporary Native artists are producing some of the most compelling work today.”

The recognised Native art community in the US—where there are 577 federally recognised tribes—is geographically and creatively diverse, yet opportunities for Native curators and public exhibition spaces in New York City and other important hubs remain sparse. By keeping work circulating, the Gochman Family Collection helps address some of these institutional gaps and amplifies emerging and underrepresented voices.

“Supporting Native artists doesn’t necessarily mean getting collected by the Museum of Modern Art or Whitney, but actually having ongoing, continual support. Hopefully the Gochman Family Collection is one of the places that can make that happen,” Pierce says.



Preview

An overdue retrospective for an artist in touch with America’s dark ‘underbelly’

Benjamin Sutton

