

The Museum of Modern Art

MAKEDA BEST APPOINTED THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART'S NEXT EHRENKRANZ CHIEF CURATOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

NEW YORK, June 2, 2026 — The Museum of Modern Art announces the appointment of Makeda Best as the next Joel and Anne Ehrenkrantz Chief Curator of Photography. MoMA has exhibited and collected photography since its founding in 1929, and formally established a Department of Photography in 1940. When she joins MoMA in September 2026, Best will lead a department with a renowned legacy and an unparalleled collection of more than 30,000 works that continues to play a defining global role in exploring photography's diverse and powerful impacts on modern life. She will guide all aspects of the department, including its installations, acquisitions, exhibitions, publications, and loan programs. Best succeeds Clément Chéroux, who served as chief curator from 2020 to 2022 and now directs the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paris. Roxana Marcoci, MoMA's David Dechman Senior Curator of Photography, has served as the acting chief curator in the interim.

"After an extensive international search, we are thrilled to welcome Makeda as the new Ehrenkrantz Chief Curator of Photography," said Christophe Cherix, the David Rockefeller Director of MoMA. "Makeda's distinguished career as a curator, scholar, and institutional leader—spanning major collections at Harvard and Oakland—brings a fresh vision to the field. She champions photography's singular power to connect with audiences through storytelling, seamlessly crossing boundaries into sociology, environmentalism, performance art, labor, and civic life."

"MoMA is one of the only institutions in the world with the platform and the commitment to photography that these times demand," said Best. "I am deeply honored to join the Museum, to work alongside its extraordinary team, and to leverage and grow its collection. Photography is vital to understanding who we are as a society. I look forward to pursuing new research, and to helping audiences develop the visual and critical tools needed to navigate this complex world."

Best is currently the deputy director of curatorial affairs at the Oakland Museum of California, one of Northern California's largest museums, a role she has held since August 2023. In this capacity she oversees four departments—Curatorial, Design, Production, and Collections Management—comprising 38 staff members, and manages 12 curators, managers, and department heads. She leads the museum's exhibition strategy and proposal process and oversees the permanent galleries, special exhibition programs, and publications. Prior to Oakland, Best served as the Richard L. Menschel Curator of Photography at the Harvard Art Museums from January 2017 to August 2023. From February 2022 to July 2023, she also served as the Harvard Art Museums' interim head of the Division of Modern and Contemporary Art, where she conceived of and led an institution-wide reinstallation initiative called ReFrame.

Best's scholarship and curatorial practice are distinguished by intellectual rigor and a commitment to situating American photographic history within wider global stories, artistic practices, and social contexts. Her 2020 monograph *Elevate the Masses: Alexander*

Gardner, Democracy and Photography in Nineteenth-Century America reexamined the origins of American documentary photography by tracing their connections to British print culture and labor movements. Her exhibition *Devour the Land: War and American Landscape Photography Since 1970* (Harvard Art Museums, September 17, 2021–January 16, 2022) earned the 2022 Aperture/Paris Photo Photography Catalogue of the Year Award, and her most recent independent exhibition, *American Job: 1940–2011*, at the International Center of Photography (January–May 2025), was acclaimed by critics and audiences alike.

A committed educator, Best has taught the history of photography and curatorial practice at Harvard College, Harvard Summer School, and Tufts University, and previously held tenure-track faculty positions at the University of Vermont and the California College of the Arts. Best holds a PhD in the history of art and architecture from Harvard University and an MFA in studio photography from the California Institute of the Arts, where she studied with the late photographer Allan Sekula and filmmaker Billy Woodberry. She is a fellow of both the Center for Curatorial Leadership and the Center for Curatorial Leadership/Studio Museum in Harlem program.

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