CAPE ANN Museum

Museum Announces its first Endowed Position in advance of 150th anniversary in 2025.

Milestone gift inspired by the exemplary scholarship and leadership of a dedicated colleague.



Henrietta Gates & Heaton Robertson. Image Courtesy of the Cape Ann Museum

GLOUCESTER, MASS. (December 5, 2024) - Just four months after publicly launching its CAM-150 capital campaign with $18million raised, the Cape Ann Museum recently announced a new gift, one that will result in its first named staff position as an institution.

This transformative gift is a result of the generosity of Henrietta Gates and Heaton Robertson. Henrietta, the Museum's Chair of the Board of Trustees, and Heaton are keen to see the proceeds of their gift be used to endow the Chief Curator's position, a leadership role currently held by Martha

Oaks. As Henrietta said, “We are inspired to recognize the excellent work that Martha Oaks has done and continues to do for the Museum and ensure that CAM will be able to attract and retain top talent for this critical role in the future.”

“Martha’s commitment to the Museum, to excellence and scholarship has helped elevate CAM to one of the best regional Museum’s in this country,” said the Museum’s Director, Oliver Barker. He continued, “It is such a fitting tribute that in recognition of her expertise that the inaugural named position for the Museum is one now held and so expertly stewarded by Martha Oaks.”

In reflecting on this wonderful accolade for the Museum that was motivated by her superlative efforts, Oaks shared “Henrietta’s and Heaton’s generosity is truly remarkable. I am honored to assume this new position and look forward to continuing to serve the Museum.”



Martha Oaks, the new named and inaugural Henrietta Gates & Heaton Robertson Chief Curator at the Cape Ann Museum.
Image Courtesy of the Cape Ann Museum.

The Chief Curator role was created in 2020 in honor of Oak’s multi-decade commitment to stewarding the Museum and the art and history of Cape Ann as a singularly unique place. Prior to 2020 Oaks served as Curator of the Museum from 2007 to 2019 and earlier from 1981 to 1990. In these capacities, Oaks has organized numerous exhibitions exploring the history of Cape Ann and the artists who have lived and worked in the area including sculptors Walker Hancock and George Demetrios, and painters Marsden Hartley, Frank Duveneck, John Sloan, Milton Avery, Umberto Romano and Margaret Fitzhugh Browne. She has also curated numerous thematic exhibitions exploring topics including the history of the Rocky Neck and Rockport art colonies during the mid-20th century; women artists of Cape Ann; the Folly Cove Designers; the lure of the family-owned fishing vessel; and the architectural firm of Phillips & Holloran. Oaks has also worked with many contemporary artists and artisans, curating exhibitions for painters Jeff Weaver, Roger Martin, Judi Rotenberg and Charles Movalli; printmaker Don Gorvett; organ and harpsichord maker Jeremy Adams; and furniture maker Jay McLaughlan.

As Chief Curator, Oaks oversees the Museum’s Collections team and is responsible for the care, development and interpretation of the Museum’s extensive collection including its library and archives and four historic colonial structures. Oaks has contributed to Fitz Henry Lane Online, a digital resource and catalogue raisonné focusing on American marine artist Fitz Henry Lane; and is currently overseeing the digitization of the Museum’s collections. Oaks holds an M.A. in American and New England Studies from Boston University and a B.A. from Colby College.

With this new gift to endow the Chief Curator position, the CAM-150 campaign, named in celebration of CAM's 150th anniversary, has raised more than $21 million. "I am proud of what my colleagues have accomplished and humbled by the generosity and support of our community", said Oliver Barker. He added, "CAM is where art meets life and life meets art and I sincerely hope that spurred by this momentum, others in our community will consider supporting this important campaign initiative".

The CAM-150 campaign will allow the Museum to undergo major renovations to its Downtown facility, develop the 4-acre Cape Ann Museum Green campus (CAM Green), and grow the Museum's endowment. Board Chair Henrietta Gates shared, "This successful campaign will result in a greatly enhanced visitor experience, allowing CAM to showcase more of its outstanding collection, expanding its educational and community programming and continuing to grow CAM's deepening relationship with the Northshore community and beyond." These changes will also bring leading art museums, artists, collectors, teachers, residents, and visitors together to share the history of Cape Ann through art, storytelling, research, and learning.

Currently, the Downtown campus is closed with renovations work having commenced in early December 2024. All programming and exhibits have since transferred to the CAM Green campus at 13 Poplar Street in Gloucester. The target date for the reopening of the Downtown campus is the spring of 2026. In 2025, the Museum will celebrate its 150th anniversary and CAM-150, so named to celebrate this anniversary, is scheduled to wrap up in the spring of 2025.

The Cape Ann Museum, founded in 1875, exists to preserve and celebrate the history and culture of the area and to keep it relevant to today's audiences. Spanning 44,000 square feet, the Museum's Downtown campus which is closed for renovations through spring 2026, remains a major cultural institution on Boston's North Shore that has welcomed thousands of local, national, and international visitors annually to its exhibitions, programs and community led events. In addition to fine art, the Museum's collections include decorative art, textiles, artifacts from the fisheries and granite industries, four historic structures, a Library & Archives and a sculpture garden in the heart of downtown Gloucester.

The Cape Ann Museum Green (CAM Green), the Museum's campus off Grant Circle and Route 128 in Gloucester is home to three historic structures: the White Ellery House (1710), the Babson-Alling House (c.1740), an adjacent Barn (c.1740), a Contemporary Art Wetu (2023-2024) and a Mush8n (mi-shoon) (2023), an eastern woodlands boat. General admission to the Cape Ann Museum Green campus is free. Due to limited parking, timed parking reservations for vehicles are required.

More information can be found on www.capeannmuseum.org or please call (978)283-0455 x110.

MEDIA CONTACT:
Sarah Zhitnik; (781) 999-0604; sarah@teakmedia.com