



North Carolina Museum of Art

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MEDIA CONTACT**

Kat Harding | (440) 759-8148 |  
kat.harding@ncdcr.gov

**North Carolina Museum of Art Director of Education Michelle Harrell Wins National Museum Education Award**

*Harrell Named Art Educator of the Year by the National Art Education Association*

**Raleigh, N.C.**—The North Carolina Museum of Art’s (NCMA) Michelle Harrell, of Clayton, recently received the 2021 National Museum Education Art Educator Award, presented by the National Art Education Association (NAEA). This prestigious award, determined through a peer review of nominations, recognizes the exemplary contributions, service, and achievements of one outstanding NAEA member annually at the national level within their division. The award was presented during the virtual 2021 NAEA National Convention.

“The North Carolina Museum of Art is extremely proud of the work that Michelle has done, connecting our collection and 164-acre Museum Park to students around the state and beyond,” said Director Valerie Hillings. “Reaching students in all 100 North Carolina counties has long been a goal of the NCMA, and through virtual field trips, our educational site NCMA Learn, and other resource distribution, Michelle has helped make that happen.”



Harrell has been part of the NCMA staff for 11 years. Growing up in a small town a short drive from Raleigh, she had never visited an art museum until attending college at what is now William Peace University. Her professor Caroline Parker gave students extra credit for going to a lecture at the Museum; Harrell’s participation changed her career goals. After an internship at City Gallery of Contemporary Art, she received her undergraduate and graduate degrees in art education at East Carolina University. While teaching middle and high school, Harrell worked closely with the NCMA, creating lesson plans and supporting teacher workshops. Her work at the Museum has built upon her master’s thesis, “Interactive Technology: A Tool for Student-Centered Instruction in Middle School Art Education.” She

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developed the “flipped museum” distance learning model with Emily Kotecki to create a more active student-centered learning experience.

“I believe technology has great potential to deepen learning and increase access to the arts and museums,” said Harrell. “I am proud of the work the NCMA is doing to become a cultural resource for students and teachers across our state.”

NAEA President Thom Knab stated, “This award is being given to recognize excellence in professional accomplishment and service by a dedicated art educator. Michelle Harrell exemplifies the highly qualified art educators active in education today: leaders, teachers, students, scholars, and advocates who give their best to their students and the profession.”

Founded in 1947 the National Art Education Association is the leading professional membership organization exclusively for visual arts educators. Members include elementary, middle, and high school visual arts educators; college and university professors; university students preparing to become art educators; researchers and scholars; teaching artists; administrators and supervisors; and art museum educators—as well as more than 54,000 students who are members of the National Art Honor Society. The NAEA represents members in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia, U.S. possessions, most Canadian provinces, U.S. military bases around the world, and 45 foreign countries.

The mission of the NAEA champions creative growth and innovation by equitably advancing the tools and resources for a high-quality visual arts, design, and media arts education throughout diverse populations and communities of practice. For more information about the association and its awards program, visit the NAEA website at [www.arteducators.org](http://www.arteducators.org).

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#### **About the North Carolina Museum of Art**

The North Carolina Museum of Art’s permanent collection spans more than 5,000 years, from antiquity to the present, making the institution one of the premier art museums in the South. The Museum’s collection provides educational, aesthetic, intellectual, and cultural experiences for the citizens of North Carolina and beyond. The 164-acre Museum Park showcases the connection between art and nature through site-specific works of environmental art. The Museum offers changing special exhibitions, classes, lectures, family activities, films, and concerts.

The Museum, located at 2110 Blue Ridge Road in Raleigh, opened West Building, home to the permanent collection, in 2010. It is the art museum of the State of North Carolina, Roy Cooper, governor; an agency of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources under the direction of Secretary D. Reid Wilson; and led by Director Valerie Hillings.