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PRESS RELEASE (for immediate release)

MMAM Kicks off a New Year with Executive Director Scott Pollock at the Helm

Winona, MN - Minnesota Marine Art Museum (January 6, 2022) – The Minnesota Marine Art Museum (MMAM) in Winona, MN, is pleased to announce Scott Pollock as its new Executive Director.

With more than 15 years of experience in the arts field across Minnesota and Ontario, Canada, Pollock has led a variety of artistic and cultural institutions, including working as the inaugural Program Director and Communications Coordinator for the North House Folk School (Grand Marais, MN) from 2000-2010. He also played a significant role in transforming the American Swedish Institute (Minneapolis, MN) into a vibrant arts and cultural center where he served as Director of Exhibitions, Collections and Programs from 2012-2018. The community-centered and audience-focused work Pollock oversaw would be recognized as a “model of how a small institution can draw visitors with exciting programs” (Wall Street Journal), “a museum party done right” (Vita.mn), and a “sophisticated museum” committed to “educating the whole person” (New York Times). “I’m excited to do much of the same for MMAM,” says Pollock. Pollock begins his new role at MMAM January 1, 2022.

Pollock was selected after an extensive four-month national search. “His entrepreneurial skills, his strong track record of success in museums, and his engaging personality made him the clear choice to take our museum to the next level,” says Bill Hoel, the Board Chair of MMAM.

Pollock is looking forward to building on the firm and solid foundation former directors and staff set in place to position the organization as a destination museum with a world-class collection. Pollock was firmly impressed by the museum’s position in the community as a strong regional asset and thrilled to discover how the community has stepped forward and supported the museum in its first fifteen years. With over 25,000 visitors in 2021, Pollock is confident that MMAM will return to pre-pandemic engagement levels in the coming year, working purposefully, with caution, and a focus on expanding audiences.

Pollock is further impressed by the organization's ability to carve out a niche market in the arts sector. “I’m excited to both honor and build on the legacy our collecting partners put into motion by thoughtfully drawing a red thread through ‘great art inspired by water,’” says Pollock of the groundwork laid by the museum’s collecting partners, Mary Burrichter and Robert Kierlin. “I’m absolutely thrilled and indebted to the staff who have assembled an incredibly diverse lineup of artists and art experiences, everything from European and American masters, like Monet, O’Keeffe, Picasso and van Gogh, to contemporaries like Dudley Edmondson, Alec Soth, and Karen Savage-Blue. It’s a testament to the talented and professional staff at MMAM who have been committed to not only presenting what ‘marine art’ is, but have pushed the boundaries of what marine art can be,” he says.

“I’m excited to see MMAM build partnerships with major art museums nationally and internationally and continue threading the needle between art and water, bringing together some of today’s most ambitious artists, writers, curators and performers to Winona, while creating a highly site-specific visitor experience that is distinctly informed by this place. There is a generative pipeline of art by great artists, both historic and contemporary, sitting in museums around the world, waiting for regional museums like MMAM, with a tailored curatorial spin, to use their public galleries to connect with diverse audiences. I passionately believe our role at MMAM is to make the seemingly impossible possible as we enter a new era of what museums stand for and how they operate.”

Self-described as a “creative place-keeper,” Pollock sees the potential and accountability museums have to serve the places they operate from.

At the American Swedish Institute (ASI), for example, Pollock led a team of educators to establish authentic and long-standing relationships with community organizations dedicated to serving the West-Phillips Neighborhood of Minneapolis. ASI established the Community Action Fund, supporting service-oriented organizations that collectively have a stake in the museum’s efforts to create safe and supportive spaces for *all* residents who share the neighborhood. Prior to that, Pollock helped shape a campaign for more Indigenous representation at the North House Folk School by creating community-focused programs that benefited community members from Gichi-Onigaming / Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. And later at the American Craft Council, Pollock oversaw the development of Craft Labs, an experimental educational initiative for Indigenous makers to gather and share knowledge about their respective artistic practices and communities.

“I’m excited to work with organizations like Engage Winona to better understand what Winona and the surrounding communities’ needs are, so that MMAM can better and more purposefully support those needs for the benefit of *all* Minnesotans,” says Pollock. As Vice-Chair of the Minnesota Association of Museums (2016-18), Pollock advocated for museum colleagues across the state to collectively use their collections, exhibitions, and educational resources to create healthier, more resilient and inclusive communities. Pollock has been tapped to sit on grant panels for the Minnesota State Arts Board, the National Endowment for Humanities and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, helping museums get the resources they need to better serve their respective communities. Currently, Pollock is serving as Chair of the Board for the Environment and Culture Partners, a newly established national nonprofit committed to strengthening and broadening the cultural sector’s environmental leadership. “I am inspired to see MMAM become not only a *great* art museum, but a *great* community steward that is leaving the colonial heritage that museums were largely established behind.”

The MMAM will host an outdoor-riverside meet and greet reception for Pollock on Saturday, January 29th from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.

The Minnesota Marine Art Museum, established in 2006, is a nonprofit art museum that engages visitors in meaningful visual art experiences through education and exhibitions that explore the ongoing and historic human relationship with water. Located in Winona, Minnesota, the purpose-built museum is located on the banks of the Mississippi River and boasts six galleries, an educational and events space, and a destination retail shop on its seven acre riverside campus. It is through this surprising diversity that MMAM is not only describing what marine art is, but pushing the boundaries of what marine art can be.