



## THE JAMES MUSEUM OF WESTERN & WILDLIFE ART

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### THE JAMES MUSEUM APPOINTS INTERIM DIRECTOR

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. – **Bernice Chu** has been named the Interim Director of The Tom and Mary James Museum of Western & Wildlife Art in St. Petersburg. She began her new role August 7 and will report directly to museum Chairman Tom James.

Chu has comprehensive working experience in design, construction and operations management, most recently with the MCA Chicago, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago. She has additional project management experience with financial institutions on Wall Street and ran her own facilities management, design and construction companies in New York. She has a BS degree in Architecture from CCNY and has studied Urban Planning at NYU.

“Bernice’s experience is a great fit for what we need right now, which is to plan for the opening, hire the staff, develop the systems and organize for the ongoing operations of the Museum,” said Tom James. “Her background in design, facilities management, budgeting, operations and visitor services, particularly her experience with the Met in New York transitioning from being open six to seven days, will be invaluable as we finish construction and look forward to opening and successfully operating this wonderful new cultural attraction in downtown St. Petersburg.”

“I am very interested in the growth of downtown St. Petersburg as an arts and cultural district,” said Chu, “which makes the launching of The James Museum even more exciting. Besides being a partner to the other museums in the area - particularly the Dali, which benefited so much from Tom’s involvement – I believe we can offer the public exciting programs and events that will add exponentially to the neighborhood dynamic.

“I am convinced that The James can be both a rival to the other museums and a partner in terms of the stories the collection tells and the offerings that will enhance the visitor experience. My previous experience in helping reorganize museums to make them more functionally efficient will be most valuable in building The James organization from the ground up, and I look forward to the opportunity to create an enterprising team that will be both creative and synergetic.”

Emily Kapes, Curator of Art at The James Museum, will continue to oversee the installation of the selected works from The Tom and Mary James Art Collection into the new galleries, as well as the selection of items for the Native American jewelry exhibition.

The announcements of a Director of Education and Director of Facilities are anticipated within a few weeks.

**About The James Museum:**

The James Museum will be the new, permanent home of approximately 400 premier works of art selected from the more than 3,000 pieces acquired by Tom and Mary James over their 50 years of collecting. The 84,000 square foot museum at 150 Central Avenue in St. Petersburg will include over 30,000 square feet of gallery space; a double height lobby with water feature; Native American Jewelry collection, 6,000 square feet of rental event space, supporting both large events and break-out sessions; a commercial catering kitchen; a museum store and café; as well as all of the spaces required to support and operate a 21<sup>st</sup> century museum of this scale. Planned programming includes special exhibitions in a variety of genres, artist talks and demonstrations, art classes, docent tours and children's activities. In addition to the museum space, the development of The James Museum building will include almost 35,000 square feet of leasable space, owned by James R.E., situated on the East and West sides of the project. The Sembler Company is leasing the ground floor retail units and Echelon Real Estate Services is leasing the Class A Office space located on the second floor. Construction of the museum is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2017, with a grand opening planned for early 2018.



**Bernice Chu**