

Mark Auslander Named Michigan State University Museum Director

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EAST LANSING, Mich. – Mark Auslander, a sociocultural anthropologist, has been appointed director of the MSU Museum. He will lead one of the earliest established museums in the nation, and the state’s first museum to receive Smithsonian affiliate status.

“I’m honored to join the MSU Museum, a museum known for the remarkable depth and breadth of its scientific and cultural collections, and for its innovative exhibits and public programs. I am thrilled to be working with this dedicated and imaginative group of museum professionals. Our shared vision is to deepen and extend the Museum’s impact across campus, in the diverse communities of mid and southeast Michigan, and around the world,” said Auslander, who will begin his position on July 1.

The MSU Museum is the science and culture museum at Michigan State University. It is a public steward for nearly a million objects and specimens in anthropology, natural science, folk arts, and history from around the world.

Auslander is currently at Central Washington University (CWU), where he oversees the Museum Studies program and directs the university’s Museum of Culture and Environment. At CWU he developed innovative approaches for engaging faculty and students in the physical and biological sciences, the interpretive and quantitative social sciences, and arts and humanities in collaborative projects.

In addition, he served on the exhibition development core team for the Smithsonian National Museum for Natural History’s permanent exhibition of African/Diaspora. His scholarly work includes papers on African witchfinding movements, Zulu iconography in global contexts, popular narratives of slavery in the rural American South, and “living history” reenactments of traumatic events, including lynching and slave auctions. His book, “The Accidental Slaveowner: Revisiting a Myth of Race and Finding an American Family,” received two national academic awards.

Dr. Walter Hawthorne, chairperson of the Museum director search committee and of the Department of History, said, “Mark has a research profile and museum management skill set that the search committee thought was ideal for the MSU Museum. During his interview, he immediately started making connections to a great variety of people and projects on campus, in the community and around the world. Throughout his career, he has been committed to inclusive programming and has raised the profile of the institutions he has been associated with.”

“We look forward to Mark’s leadership at the MSU Museum. His ability to build transdisciplinary collaborations, engaging community and campus in active learning and scholarship, will stimulate innovative and creative exhibits. These exhibits will address critical societal issues, and provoke deliberative dialogue not only about the historical context of contemporary issues, but also about



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possible solutions,” said Hiram E. Fitzgerald, associate provost for University Outreach and Engagement.

Administratively at Michigan State University, the MSU Museum operates within the Office of the Provost, through the Office of University Outreach and Engagement. The MSU Museum also is closely aligned with core academic and outreach units. It shares faculty and academic staff appointments and coordination of programs with MSU colleges, including Arts and Letters, Education, Natural Science, and Social Science, and works closely with MSU colleges and campus units where Museum collections and resources intersect with teaching, research, and outreach.

To learn more about the MSU Museum, visit <http://museum.msu.edu/>.

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As the science and culture museum at Michigan State University, the MSU Museum is committed to understanding, interpreting, and respecting natural and cultural diversity through education, exhibitions, research, and the building and stewardship of collections that focus on Michigan and its relationship to the Great Lakes, and the world beyond. The MSU Museum features three floors of special collections and changing exhibits and is open seven days a week free of charge. The museum is located on 409 West Circle Drive next to Beaumont Tower on the MSU campus.