



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 1, 2022



### Cheekwood Estate & Gardens welcomes Eric Birkle as Curator for the Cheekwood Museum

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.** – Cheekwood Estate and Gardens announces its appointment of Eric Birkle as the new Curator. Birkle will begin his position on March 14. Originally from Lapeer, Mich., Birkle began his career at the Saginaw Art Museum, holding multiple positions before ultimately becoming Associate Curator. During his time there, Birkle organized small-scale and major exhibitions that ranged from 15th through 21st century graphic arts to installations of paintings, glasswork, and ceramic sculpture. He moved on to the Flint Institute of Arts in 2018, where he developed the notable exhibition *Political and Personal: Images of Gay Identity*. In 2020, he completed a placement in the Modern and Contemporary Department at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

"I am honored to accept the Curator position at Cheekwood and excited to work within the context of its unique institutional history," Birkle stated. "Forging connections between art, architecture, and site is a great passion of mine, and Cheekwood's diverse collections provide the opportunity to do so in a rich and meaningful way."

"We are thrilled with Eric's impending arrival in the role of Curator," says Cheekwood Vice President of Museum Affairs, James W. Tottis. "He brings a wealth of knowledge in American art and the philosophy

behind museum architecture and installation. I look forward to the thoughtful approach he will bring to our exhibitions over the coming years.”

Birkle earned a Master of Arts in Art History & Museum Studies from Ohio University in 2019. His master’s thesis, *Detroit’s Belle Isle Aquarium: An Idiosyncrasy of Identity, Style, Modernity, and Spectacle*, was published through OhioLINK in 2019, and sparked the focus of his current research on museum spaces and the impact of evolving public health policies and design. From 2019 through 2021, Birkle served as a Teaching Assistant at York University while pursuing his Ph.D., and his forthcoming dissertation will highlight his scholarly and curatorial interest in European and American art and architecture of the late 19th century.

### **About Cheekwood**

Cheekwood is considered one of the finest American Country Place Era estates in the nation. Formerly the family home of Mabel and Leslie Cheek, the extraordinary 1930s estate, with its 30,000-square-foot Mansion and 55 acres of cultivated gardens and expansive vistas, today serves the public as a botanical garden, arboretum, and museum with period rooms and art galleries, showcasing works from its permanent collection as well as traveling exhibitions. The property includes 13 distinct gardens including the Blevins Japanese Garden and the Bracken Foundation Children’s Garden, as well as a 1.5-mile woodland trail featuring modern and contemporary outdoor sculpture. Each year, Cheekwood plays host to seasonal festivals including *Cheekwood in Bloom*, *Summertime at Cheekwood*, *Cheekwood Harvest* and *Holiday LIGHTS*. Cheekwood is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, and is a three-time *USA Today* Top 10 Botanical Garden. In 2020, the grounds were awarded a Level II National Arboretum Accreditation by The ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program and The Morton Arboretum. Cheekwood is located just 8 miles southwest of downtown Nashville at 1200 Forrest Park Drive. Daily hours of operation: Tuesday through Sunday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Admission to Cheekwood must be purchased in advance at [cheekwood.org](http://cheekwood.org). For further information, call 615-356-8000 or visit [cheekwood.org](http://cheekwood.org).

###

### **Images for Media**

Images available upon request.

### **Media Contact**

Kim Hugo  
Director of Marketing, Cheekwood  
[khugo@cheekwood.org](mailto:khugo@cheekwood.org)  
615.353.6985