

STAGE & ARTS

Co-founder of Minneapolis' Highpoint Center for Printmaking retires after 20 years

Carla McGrath steps down weeks after the opening of a Highpoint retrospective at Minneapolis Institute of Art.

By Alicia Eler (<https://www.startribune.com/alicia-eler/6370406/>) Star Tribune |

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Carla McGrath was working in the education department at Walker Art Center when she met printmaker Cole Rogers.

The two both had a goal of opening a high-end printmaking shop. It wasn't long before the two became partners not only in art, but in life, and their dream became a reality.

That was 20 years ago. Now, McGrath is retiring as executive director of Highpoint Center for Printmaking, which the two of them built into a pillar of the Twin Cities arts community. Rogers will stay on as master printmaker.

"Twenty years of being an executive director is pretty intense," said McGrath. "It's a job that's fascinating but can be sort of repetitive, and it just seemed like a good time overall for the organization."

Her retirement comes right after the Minneapolis Institute of Art's acquisition of the complete archive of Highpoint Editions prints produced by the center. The museum celebrated last month with the opening of "[The Contemporary Print: 20 Years at Highpoint Editions](https://www.startribune.com/a-lifetime-of-work-is-acquired-by-minneapolis-institute-of-art-it-will-be-like-a-family-reunion/600097933/?refresh=true)," (<https://www.startribune.com/a-lifetime-of-work-is-acquired-by-minneapolis-institute-of-art-it-will-be-like-a-family-reunion/600097933/?refresh=true>) an exhibition that includes prints by artists such as Julie Buffalohead, Willie Cole, Julie Mehretu, Todd Norsten and Dyani White Hawk.

Retiring after that opening wasn't part of the plan, she said. But it seems throughout Highpoint's history, nothing really coincided with the seemingly "right" timing.

"We opened a month after 9/11 and then we were trying to get a loan to buy this building right when the banks froze — that was pretty terrible timing, but it worked out as well," she said.

McGrath admits that it's hard to leave now; Highpoint hasn't been able to resume classes for children, and those are her favorite. She hasn't made any retirement plans, because "it's actually a lot of work to retire," she said.

Patricia Wilder, who recently served as interim executive director at Minneapolis' James J. Fiorentino Foundation and Museum, will serve as Highpoint's interim director until next summer.



ANTHONY SOUFFLE, STAR TRIBUNE

Highpoint co-founder Carla McGrath.

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