

AMERICAN ACADEMY IN ROME

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Director

Rome, Italy

Reports to: President & CEO

Supervises: Andrew W. Mellon Humanities Professor; Andrew Heiskell Arts Director; Drue Heinz Librarian and Head of Collections; and Deputy Director for Fellowships and Programs

Term: Three-year appointment, renewable. Start date August 2027

Founded in 1894, the American Academy in Rome is a leading American overseas center for independent study and advanced research in the arts and humanities. Each year, the Academy awards the Rome Prize to approximately 30 artists and scholars who join a dynamic, transdisciplinary residential community on the Academy's eleven-acre campus on the Janiculum Hill—enriched further by invited Residents and Affiliated and Visiting Artists and Scholars, reaching a community of approximately 100 at any given time.

The Academy is led by the President & CEO, who sets its direction and serves as its chief fundraiser and public representative. A Chief Operating Officer manages the Academy's business and administrative functions across Rome and New York. The Director is responsible for the daily intellectual and communal life of the residential community. The Andrew Heiskell Arts Director and Andrew W. Mellon Humanities Professor report to the Director and, together with the Director, constitute the Academy's intellectual leadership team in Rome—the primary intellectual resources for the Rome Prize Fellows and the animating force behind the Academy's scholarly and creative life.

Role

The Director is the on-campus figure responsible for managing the day-to-day intellectual and community life of the American Academy in Rome. This is a role for an artist or scholar of genuine distinction who is also, by inclination and experience, a community builder. The Director leads an intellectual team consisting of the Mellon Humanities Professor, Heiskell Arts Director, and Drue Heinz Librarian and Head of Collections.

The Director gives shape and texture to the residential community through programming and also through attention to the work of those in the community. The Director must be someone who understands that the conditions in which creative and scholarly work unfolds are themselves a form of institutional authorship. The Director works closely with the Deputy Director for Fellowships and Programs on implementation and budget.

As head of the community, the Director is also a connector, sounding board, and promotor of all the fellows' work. These functions are two sides of the same coin because

community creates trust; trust encourages risk-taking; and risk-taking produces the breakthroughs the Academy exists to generate.

The Director is the Academy's public face in Rome: an intellectual and cultural diplomat who represents the institution in the city's artistic, academic, and civic life.

Key Responsibilities

Intellectual Leadership and Support of the Fellows

- Serve as the primary intellectual resource for Rome Prize Fellows across the full range of the Academy's fellowship disciplines in the humanities (Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, Early Modern and, Modern Italian Studies, as well as Conservation and Historic Preservation) and in the arts (Architecture, Design, Landscape Architecture, Literature, Musical Composition, and Visual Art), offering substantive engagement with Fellows' work and the intellectual generosity that makes the Academy's residential experience distinctive.
- Work in close partnership with the Humanities Professor and Arts Director to ensure that the scholarly and creative life of the community reflects the Academy's commitment to transdisciplinary excellence; stimulate dialogue and exchange among Fellows, Residents, and guests across disciplines.
- Enrich Fellows' experience of Rome through introductions to the city's artistic and scholarly communities and maintain an active intellectual or creative practice within the constraints of the role.
- Set an example to the community of what the life of the mind looks like.

Programming and Institutional Vision

- In consultation with the President, shape and execute the Academy's intellectual programming in Rome, ensuring events reflect the Academy's transdisciplinary identity and the creative energy of each year's residential community.
- Serve as a member of the Board of Trustees in an ex officio capacity, contributing to governance discussions on matters of intellectual life, fellowship programming, and campus community.

Community Stewardship

- Sustain the quality of communal life as a core institutional responsibility: attend meals with the residential community whenever possible; be present at evening and weekend programs; and be available to Fellows and Residents in the informal ways that matter most in a residential community.
- Foster an environment of intellectual generosity, mutual respect, and creative risk-taking, upholding the Academy's values of excellence without elitism, collaboration across disciplines, and responsibility to the broader public.
- Entertain frequently and graciously, hosting Fellows, scholars, artists, Trustees, donors, institutional partners, and dignitaries, while also sharing on-call duties with staff, responding to emergencies as needed.

External Engagement and Institutional Representation

- Represent the Academy in Rome's cultural, academic, and civic life, building relationships with Italian scholars, artists, institutions, and government officials that deepen the Academy's presence in the city.
- Host visiting Trustees, donors, and prospects in coordination with the Development, Communications, Programs, and Executive Office teams; represent the Academy externally with leaders in the arts, academia, philanthropy, and government in Rome and beyond.

Qualifications

Required

- A graduate degree and a record of outstanding professional achievement in one or more of the Academy's Rome Prize Fellowship disciplines, with a body of published or exhibited work commensurate with high standing.
- Demonstrated experience leading an educational, cultural, or arts institution—or a comparably complex organization—with a proven ability to build community, manage relationships across constituencies, and represent an institution with authority and grace.
- Fluency in spoken and written Italian; the ability to operate effectively in Italian professional, cultural, and civic contexts is essential.
- Exceptional intellectual generosity: the ability to engage substantively with creative and scholarly work across a wide range of disciplines and to support the work of others with genuine investment.
- Superior interpersonal skills, with experience mentoring talented individuals, building trust across diverse communities, and navigating complex institutional relationships with tact, discretion, and judgment.
- The social fluency and stamina to sustain a demanding public and communal role: comfort entertaining frequently and being present in community life.
- Willingness to travel within Italy and between Rome and New York, and flexibility to work outside standard hours given the Academy's evening and weekend programming, as well as its operation across time zones.

Preferred

- Existing established relationships with Italian scholars, artists, and cultural and academic institutions in Rome; familiarity with the artistic and cultural landscape of Rome and Italy.
- Experience living and working in Italy or another international context, with demonstrated cross-cultural fluency.
- Experience interacting with institutional leaders, public officials, and board members, including those of foreign governments or international institutions.

Leadership Profile

The ideal candidate will be recognized by Fellows, colleagues, and peers in Rome for the following qualities:

- **Intellectual presence.** A scholar or artist of real distinction who commands respect across disciplines not because of institutional authority, but because they possess a mind worth engaging.
- **Disciplinary range.** The capacity and genuine desire to engage with work far outside one's own field, to ask a good question of a composer, to follow the argument of a historian, to understand the task of a conservator.
- **Community instinct.** An intuitive understanding that the quality of communal life—the table, the conversation, the informal encounter—is not peripheral to the Academy's mission but constitutive of it.
- **Executive clarity.** The ability to translate the President's vision for the Academy into a coherent, living program and exercising independent judgment within a shared institutional framework and working effectively alongside a leadership team whose domains are operations, fundraising, and communications.
- **Roman fluency.** A genuine connection to Rome—its culture, its institutions, its rhythms—that allows the Director to move through the city as a participant rather than a visitor.
- **Mission conviction.** An authentic belief in what the Academy does, why it matters, in the value of sustained individual creative and scholarly work, in Rome as an irreplaceable context for that work, and in the Academy's unique role in American cultural life.

Compensation & Location

This position is based in Rome, Italy. The Director is provided with on-campus housing as a condition of employment, reflecting the residential nature of the role. As the position has been filled by individuals on secondment from their home institution, the salary has tracked that of the home institution. For those applying without an institutional position, it will be determined by comparison. The Academy offers a comprehensive benefits package.

To Apply

Nominations and expressions of interest are welcome and will be held in strict confidence.

Candidates should submit a letter of interest of no more than two pages outlining their interest in the Academy and the contributions they expect to make to its mission, along with a current CV, and three references. Applications should be submitted to careers@aarome.org with the subject line "DIRECTOR" and will be reviewed on a rolling basis. Submission deadline is October 15, 2026.

The American Academy in Rome is an Equal Opportunity Employer. AAR believes that a diverse community makes for a stronger institution, and actively encourages applications from candidates of all backgrounds, identities, and lived experiences. We are committed to a hiring process that is equitable, inclusive, and free from bias.