

Joseph Thompson

Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art

Joseph Thompson is the founding director of the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA), having guided the museum's development and arts programming since its inception in 1987. Opening with 200,000 square feet of renovated space in 1999, the arts complex has grown to over 400,000 square feet of galleries, stages, workshops, and tenant space. One of the liveliest and largest centers in the world for making, showing, and enjoying the best art and music of our time, MASS MoCA is renowned for its daring program of large-scale exhibitions and performances that capitalize on the museum's vast 28-building, 16-acre site. It is also the home of the long-term retrospective of Sol LeWitt wall drawings, which Thompson co-organized with Jock Reynolds and the Yale University Art Gallery and, since September 2013, a long-term installation of the paintings and sculpture of Anselm Kiefer, realized in collaboration with the Hall Art Foundation. The third phase of the project's multi-decade re-inhabitation of a historic property is now under way, with a planned 2017 opening that will add 130,000 square feet of galleries, artist workshops, and music festival amenities.

A 1981 graduate of Williams College, Thompson received an M.A. in Art History from the University of Pennsylvania, where he was an Annenberg Fellow, and holds an MBA from the Wharton School of Business, where he was named a Morgenthau Fellow for his work in public policy and management. Thompson has written widely on contemporary art and has organized many exhibitions and performing arts events at MASS MoCA, including the first solo exhibition of the visual art of David Byrne; the *Clocktower Project*, a permanent sound art installation by Christina Kubisch; Robert Wilson's *14 Stations*; Tim Hawkinson's *Überorgan*; Ann Hamilton's *corpus*; Cai Guo-Qiang's *Inopportune*; and, most recently, Xu Bing: *Phoenix*. Thompson is a co-organizer of the annual Bang on a Can Summer Music Festival at MASS MoCA, and with the rock band Wilco, he co-produces the Solid Sound Festival of music and art at MASS MoCA. He helped conceive and organize the premier editions of FreshGrass, a festival of American roots and new bluegrass music that takes place at MASS MoCA every September. Thompson has served on many public agencies and boards, including 1Berkshire, the county's leading economic and tourism development organization and was advisor to the Massachusetts Gaming Commission. He serves on the board of directors of MountainOne Bank. For his work in the arts and regional economic development, he has been awarded the Commonwealth Award, the highest award granted to private citizens by the state of Massachusetts, and the Williams College Bicentennial Medal for outstanding achievement by a Williams College alumnus.

Under Thompson's tenure, MASS MoCA's visitation has grown from 80,000 in 1999 to over 160,000 in 2013, about twelve times the population of its home city, North Adams, Massachusetts. The arts center has become an important regional catalyst for economic revitalization, adding over 600 jobs and \$21 million per year in economic impact to the region.