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ARTnews

Remembering Leah Chase, the Storied New Orleans Chef Who Filled Dooky Chase's Restaurant With Art

Andrew Russeth – December 23, 2019



Leah Chase CHERYL GERBER/AP/SHUTTERSTOCK

Susan Taylor, Director of the New Orleans Museum of Art

She had a very multivalent way of looking at how art can impact a community, an individual, a group of people, a city. She saw it as a bridge to other communities who might not necessarily think of a museum as their home. She realized how it can create a conversation around common values. She had works by Jacob Lawrence, John Scott, Elizabeth Catlett, John Biggers, Willie Birch. Her restaurant walls were covered with work, hung almost salon-style. There was an intimacy there: you were looking at works of art that she was passionate about and eating the food that she was equally passionate about. We established a fund for underappreciated, underrepresented, [and] emerging artists of color in honor of her 90th birthday. At the opening of an exhibition with works we acquired through it, she held forth on the importance of art in everyone's life, and said that artists need to have pride of place in any community. She was spellbinding. Everyone just listened.