Michael E. Shapiro has been the Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr. Director of the High Museum of Art since March 2000. Since joining the High's leadership in 1995, Shapiro has overseen the reinstallation of the Museum's permanent collection, developed numerous partnerships with national and international art institutions to bring acclaimed art to the High, and spearheaded the High's 177,000 square-foot expansion by Renzo Piano that opened in November 2005, creating a "village for the arts" in Midtown Atlanta.

Shapiro began his tenure at the High as Director of Museum Programs and Chief Curator, followed by a position as Deputy Director and Chief Curator. The Olympic-related exhibition Rings: Five Passions in World Art in 1996, for which Shapiro was the Managing Curator, positioned the High for a partnership with the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Under Shapiro's curatorial leadership, this partnership brought four outstanding exhibitions to Atlanta: "Matisse: Masterworks from The Museum of Modern Art," 1997; "Picasso: Masterpieces from The Museum of Modern Art," 1998; "Pop Art," 1999; and "Van Gogh's Starry Night: Three Masterpieces from The Museum of Modern Art," 2000. This series of exhibitions set the stage for the High's membership growth into the top 10 nationally.

Shapiro continued with ambitious and highly-successful exhibitions from Europe, including "Impressionism: Paintings Collected by European Museums" in 1999, and "Paris in the Age of Impressionism: Masterworks from the Musée d'Orsay" in 2002. Through these two exhibitions, Shapiro began his longstanding relationship with Henri Loyrette, former Director of the Musée d'Orsay and current Director of the Musée du Louvre. Together, they developed the "Louvre Atlanta" partnership, bringing hundreds of works of art from the Louvre's collections to Atlanta from October 2006 through September 2009. The partnership also included student and staff exchanges, as well as publications and symposia.

In 2001, Shapiro embarked on a new series of exhibitions focusing on a small group of works or a single work of art. These exhibitions included "Michelangelo: Drawings and Other Treasures from the Casa Buonarroti, Florence," 2001; "Verrocchio's David Restored," 2003; and "The Gates of Paradise: Lorenzo Ghiberti's Renaissance Masterpiece," 2007. Exhibitions at the High continue to build on Shapiro's partnership and programming foundations with "Van Gogh to Mondrian: Modern Works from the Kröller-Müller Museum" (2004), "The Art of Romare Bearden" (2005), "Andrew Wyeth: Memory & Magic" (2006). And "The First Emperor: China's Terracotta Army" (2008), which was the second-highest attended exhibition in the museum's history.

Prior to coming to the High Museum, Shapiro was Director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. He joined The Saint Louis Art Museum in 1984, where he served as Chief Curator for six years. Shapiro also held the position of Assistant Professor in the Department of Art at Duke University, Durham, NC, and he has published numerous exhibition catalogues, books, and articles.

Shapiro received his master's degree in art history in 1978, and his doctorate from Harvard University in 1980. He also earned a Master of Arts degree from Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts, and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Hamilton College in Clinton, NY. Shapiro specializes in 19th- and 20th-century painting and sculpture. He has served on the faculty at the Getty, several panels, and is also active on several boards. In November 2005, Shapiro was awarded one of France's top cultural honors, the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters), for his partnership with France in the advancement of the arts. In 2006, Shapiro was inducted into the invitation only Bizot group comprised of directors from leading European and American art museums. Since 2008 Shapiro has been on the board of the Terra Foundation for American Arts and is also a member of the Harvard University Visiting Committee to the Harvard Art Museum until 2011.