

Dr. Lisa Freiman Named Inaugural Director of Virginia Commonwealth University's New Institute for Contemporary Art

The multidisciplinary arts institution will serve as a catalyst for exhibitions, research, & collaboration, working with VCUarts, the top public university graduate arts & design program in the U.S.

Richmond, VA – May 15, 2013 – Virginia Commonwealth University announced today that it has appointed Dr. Lisa Freiman as the inaugural director of the university's new Institute for Contemporary Art (ICA). Freiman is currently a senior curator and chair of the contemporary art department at the Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA). In addition to her role as Director of the ICA, Freiman will also be a professor in VCU's acclaimed School of the Arts (VCUarts). Freiman will assume her role at VCU on July 1, 2013.

The ICA will be a combination exhibition and performance space, laboratory and incubator featuring a series of flexible programming spaces for the presentation of visual art, theater, music, dance, and film by nationally and internationally recognized artists in a building designed by Steven Holl Architects. Anticipated to open in 2015, the ICA will be a non-collecting institution designed to accommodate the increasing lack of barriers among different media and practices, mirroring the cross-disciplinary approach at VCUarts.

Freiman is an internationally recognized curator and leader in the contemporary art field. During her ten years at the IMA, Freiman has transformed the experience of contemporary art in Indianapolis. She created a dynamic and widely renowned contemporary art program that has become an influential model for encyclopedic museums as they engage with the art of our time. Actively seeking out the works of emerging and established international artists, Freiman has provided a platform to support artists' work through major traveling exhibitions, commissions, acquisitions, and publications. During her tenure, Freiman also helped raise more than \$10 million to support contemporary exhibitions, programs, collection development, scholarship, and other initiatives at the IMA.

In 2011, Freiman served as commissioner of the U.S. Pavilion in the 54th International Art Exhibition, la Biennale di Venezia, presenting six newly commissioned, site-responsive works by Puerto Rico-based artists Allora & Calzadilla, the first collaborative to be presented in the U.S. Pavilion. Under Freiman's vision and direction, the IMA opened 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park to international critical acclaim in June 2010. 100 Acres offers a new model for sculpture parks in the 21st century, emphasizing experimentation, place-making, and public engagement with a constantly changing constellation of commissioned artworks. Inaugural installations included works by eight artists and artist collaboratives from around the world including Atelier Van Lieshout, Kendall Buster (Sculpture + Extended Media Professor, VCUarts), Jeppe Hein, Alfredo Jaar, Los Carpinteros, Tea Mäkipää, Type A, and Andrea Zittel.

"Lisa is a respected curator and scholar whose innovative programs extend well beyond the walls of the museum and into the community," said Beverly Warren, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at VCU. "Her work in Indianapolis exemplifies how a smart, dynamic program can energize a city and increase its engagement with contemporary art. Lisa's creativity and her visionary leadership will be essential in bringing the ICA to life and ensuring that it plays a vibrant role in both the campus community and the broader international art world."

“I am honored to have been selected to serve as the first director of VCU’s Institute for Contemporary Art,” said Lisa Freiman. “VCU has established itself as a dynamic and diverse center for contemporary practices and I look forward to working with the university’s leadership, faculty, students, and patrons to realize the bold vision that they have put forth to build a leading center for contemporary art. I am confident that together we will build exciting and innovative multidisciplinary programs that will serve as a resource to the campus, the entire Richmond community, and the international art world, complementing the work already being done by VCUarts acclaimed faculty and students.”

“We are so fortunate to have found an ICA director who has such deep and far-ranging experience in contemporary art and a clear commitment to scholarship,” said Joseph Seipel, Dean, VCU School of the Arts. “Lisa brings a wealth of ideas and energy to both the ICA and VCUarts and we know the students, staff, and faculty will benefit greatly from her leadership and insight. We are excited to add Lisa to the team in creating an exceptional new resource for contemporary art in Richmond and beyond.”

Freiman has instituted a number of public art installations while in Indianapolis, including a rotating series of site-specific commissions for the IMA’s Efrogmson Family entry pavilion. Most recently, she led a major collaboration with a local Indianapolis developer to curate the art program for The Alexander art hotel that opened in downtown Indianapolis in 2013, featuring work by 25 artists, including 14 newly commissioned pieces. Freiman commissioned works from artists including Jorge Pardo, Alyson Shotz, Jaume Plensa, Sonya Clark (Craft/Material Studies Chair, VCUarts), Adam Cvijanovic, Mark Fox, Artur Silva, and Paul Villinski for the project.

At the IMA Freiman realized major commissions by artists including Robert Irwin, Kay Rosen, Tony Feher, Orly Genger, Julianne Swartz, and Ghada Amer, and curated numerous exhibitions of works by international contemporary artists including Aziz + Cucher, Amy Cutler, Ingrid Calame, Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Ernesto Neto, and Tara Donovan (1999 VCUarts MFA). Between 2002 and 2005, Freiman implemented a renovation and expansion of IMA’s contemporary art galleries, which doubled in size to 25,000 square feet and introduced a new contemporary video art gallery.

Freiman has published extensively on contemporary art, including books on Amy Cutler (*Amy Cutler*, Hatje Cantz, 2006), Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons (*Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons: Everything Is Separated by Water*, Yale University Press, 2007), Type A (*Type A*, Hatje Cantz, 2010), Allora & Calzadilla (*Gloria*, Del Monico/Prestel, 2011), and Aziz and Cucher (Hatje Cantz, 2012). She is currently adapting her dissertation, “(Mind)ing The Store: Claes Oldenburg’s Psychoaesthetics,” into the first scholarly monograph on Claes Oldenburg entitled *Claes Oldenburg and the Sixties*.

Prior to joining IMA, Freiman worked as assistant professor of art history, theory, and criticism at the University of Georgia, Athens and served in the curatorial department of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. She earned her doctorate and master’s degrees in modern and contemporary art history from Emory University and has a bachelor’s degree in art history from Oberlin College.

About the Institute for Contemporary Art

Currently anticipated to open in 2015, the ICA will be a non-collecting institution designed to facilitate the way artists are working today by accommodating the increasing lack of barriers among different media and practices, mirroring the cross-disciplinary approach at the VCU School of the Arts. VCUarts is one of the nation’s leading arts schools, with distinguished alumni and noted artists at campuses in Richmond and Qatar, and has long been the top public university graduate arts and design program in the country according to *U.S. News & World Report*. The ICA will complement and enhance the offerings of VCU while also serving as a new destination for contemporary

arts and culture in the region and a cornerstone of Richmond’s already vibrant arts community — joining the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Science Museum of Virginia, the Virginia Opera, Virginia Repertory Theatre, Richmond Ballet and the Richmond Symphony. The ICA, which will be funded entirely through private donations, has raised more than \$22M to date towards its capital campaign goal of \$50M, which includes \$35M for construction and a \$15M endowment campaign.

Sited at the corner of Belvidere and Broad Streets directly off of Interstate 95, and one of Richmond’s busiest intersections, the ICA will form a gateway to the University and the city. Designed by Steven Holl Architects, the ICA will feature dual entrances—one facing Richmond and the other fronting VCU’s campus. At the heart of the building will be an inviting, double-height “forum,” a flexible space for both spontaneous encounters and planned events that connects to the ground-floor performance space and also opens to the sculpture garden and cafe. The galleries radiate out from the forum in forked arms, shaping the space of the garden. Large pivot doors open to the garden in order to create a seamless interplay between interior and exterior spaces. The open circulation serves to remove the formal protocols associated with entering traditional arts facilities. The three levels of galleries are linked through the open forum, allowing artists to create works that extend across, and visitors to circulate through, the spaces via a variety of paths. The ICA's exterior walls of pre-weathered satin-finish zinc will complement its urban setting. Additional clear and translucent glass walls will create transparency, bringing natural light into the building during the day and radiating light at night, signaling the activities taking place within.

About VCU and VCUarts

Virginia Commonwealth University is a major, urban public research university with national and international rankings in sponsored research. Located in downtown Richmond, VCU enrolls more than 31,000 students in 222 degree and certificate programs in the arts, sciences, and humanities. With a distinguished faculty of professional artists and 16 departments, including Craft/Material Studies, Fashion Design and Merchandising, Dance and Choreography, Graphic Design, Music, Painting and Printmaking, Photography and Film, Sculpture + Extended Media, and Theatre, VCUarts has been the top-ranked public university visual arts and design graduate program in the country for nine years, according to *U.S. News & World Report*. Its campus in Qatar provides students and faculty with a direct tie to the Middle East, a region of increasing significance in the contemporary art world.

For more information on VCUarts, please visit: arts.vcu.edu

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