



Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts Launches its New Arts Research Institute

A Touchpoint for Arts Research in the U.S., the Institute Will Apply Arts as a Rigorous Research Tool Aimed at Solving Global Issues

Richmond, VA – September 19, 2017 – Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts (VCUarts) announced today the launch of its new Arts Research Institute, which will serve faculty in their creative research and interdisciplinary practices across the university. Through supporting comprehensive faculty projects, catalyzing interdisciplinary collaborations, and facilitating public dialogue about the role of artists in society, the Arts Research Institute will be the one of the few arts research offices to employ a spectrum of artistic practices as rigorous research methods on par with science, directed at responding to current issues of our time and a complex future.

A catalyst for transformational hybrid research, the Arts Research Institute will be nestled in the university's innovative Depot building on Broad Street, and grounded within VCUarts' broader mission to advance the human experience by generating knowledge through significantly expanded creative practice. It will be a vital touchpoint for arts research in the U.S., providing research assistance for faculty and the development of their work while collaborating with national and international cultural institutions on pioneering investigations. Research assistance for faculty will include refining original concepts, implementing research methodologies and design, identifying funding opportunities and developing proposals to further scholarship.

"At VCUarts we believe creators are at the heart of thriving societies. Compounded with the growing global demand for innovative practice, it is essential that the university promotes a culture of creative exploration for our valued faculty," said Shawn Brixey, Dean of Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts. "By establishing meaningful partnerships with external industries and the untapped wealth of creative practitioners, the Institute will shape the frontiers of research and discovery and illuminate the extraordinary value contributions of cultural producers on a local, national and international scale."

VCUarts faculty are engaged in the exchange of ideas and exploration of new territory within and beyond their fields. Projects coming out of strategic support provided by the Arts Research Institute include:

- iCubed, a transdisciplinary effort with visiting fellows at VCU's Department of African American Studies, Department of Dance and Choreography and the new Institute for Contemporary Art, to develop mechanisms for advancing racial equity;
- A research partnership with the Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities (a2ru) at the University of Michigan to study arts and health investments across 41 research universities; and
- The Lullaby Project, a collaboration between Carnegie Hall, the Arts Research Institute, and the Department of Music and VCU Health to work with mothers on composing new lullabies for their newborns and better understand maternal-fetal attachment.

"An expansive ethic of curiosity, tenacity and resilience characterizes the VCUarts community, as each faculty member makes their mark on our culture. With over 300 working artists and designers, many collaborating with peers in health, science and education, VCUarts needed more than a research office," said Dr. Sarah Bainter Cunningham, Ph.D., Director of the Arts Research Institute. "The Institute is a place where faculty work can be supported and celebrated, where surprising and important research outcomes



are collected and shared with all of our communities, and where thoughtful coordination can propel innovation and reveal new completely new research possibilities.”

“I strongly believe in the value of an education that is collaborative and transdisciplinary—it is necessary in our ever-changing world,” said Michael Rao, Ph.D., President of VCU. “As a public research university that is home to the number-one public arts and design program in the nation, VCU strives to work collaboratively to find solutions to the incredibly difficult issues we face today. Research and creativity is fundamental to the university’s mission to serve the community, commonwealth and beyond.”

About Arts Research Institute

Founded in 2017, the Arts Research Institute at Virginia Commonwealth University’s School of the Arts applies the arts as an investigative method for understanding and addressing the issues of our time. By supporting faculty research projects from conception to completion, catalyzing interdisciplinary collaborations, and facilitating public dialogue about the contributions of artists and designers in civil society, the Arts Research Institute reflects the research university’s mission of advancing the human experience through knowledge in all its forms.

About VCU and the VCU School of the Arts

VCU 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. Currently ranked the No. 1 public school of art and design by *U.S. News and World Report*, the VCU School of the Arts offers 15 undergraduate and 10 graduate degree programs in fine arts, design, performing arts, historical research and pedagogical practice. Distinguished faculty members are internationally recognized in their respective fields and contribute significantly to the stature of VCU and are committed to mentoring the next generation of artists, entrepreneurs, scientists, scholars and engaged citizens of diverse communities around the world. 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.

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