



VCU

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

For media in Richmond:

Carrie Culpepper

Public Relations Manager

Institute for Contemporary Art, Virginia Commonwealth University

804-338-5669

cnculpepper@vcu.edu

For media outside of Richmond:

Megan Ardery / Isabel Sinistore

Resnicow Schroeder Associates

212-671-5178 / 212-671-5175

mardery@resnicowschroeder.com / isinistore@resnicowschroeder.com

**Lauren Ross Named Inaugural Curator of
Virginia Commonwealth University's Institute for Contemporary Art**

Opening in 2016, the multidisciplinary arts institution will serve as a catalyst for exhibitions, research and collaboration, working with the VCU School of the Arts, the top public university graduate arts & design program in the U.S.

Richmond, VA – September 10, 2014 – Virginia Commonwealth University announced today it has appointed Lauren Ross as curator of the new Institute for Contemporary Art, opening in 2016. Ross is currently the Nancy E. Meinig Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Philbrook Museum of Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and was previously the first curator of arts programs at the High Line in New York.

As the ICA's inaugural curator, she will work closely with Director Lisa Freiman to conceptualize the institution's dynamic programming and bring the building's flexible spaces to life, creating a new destination for contemporary art and design in the region. Ross will assume her role at VCU in October 2014.

The ICA will be a combination exhibition and performance space, laboratory and incubator for the presentation of visual art, performance and film by nationally and internationally recognized artists. The ICA will be located on the prominent corner of Broad and Belvidere streets in Richmond's Downtown Arts District. Designed by Steven Holl Architects, the ICA will be a non-collecting institution that will present an array of different media and practices, mirroring the cross-disciplinary approach at the VCU School of the Arts.

As the first fulltime modern and contemporary curator at the Philbrook Museum of Art, Ross was involved in the development of a strategic plan to increase the contemporary art holdings in the museum's permanent collection and promote its contemporary exhibitions. As project manager for original and traveling exhibitions, Ross worked across departments at both the Philbrook's main campus and its satellite location, Philbrook Downtown, which she helped launch in the summer of 2013.

Before her work in Tulsa, Ross was based in New York for 18 years, most recently as the Donald R. Mullen, Jr., Curator and Director of Arts Programs for Friends of the High Line, where she oversaw the commission of site-specific artwork and performance pieces along with arts-related public programming.

At the High Line, Ross commissioned and realized a number of public art performances and installations by major artists and collaborators, including the Trisha Brown Dance Company, Sarah Sze, Julianne Swartz, Kim Beck, and Francis Cape among others. Prior to her experience at the High Line, she was an interim curator at the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum from 2008 to 2009 and was previously at White Columns, where she was part of the leadership team from 1997 to 2004, including three years as its director/chief curator.

“We are thrilled for Lauren to join our growing staff as we look toward our opening in 2016,” said Lisa Freiman, Director of the Institute for Contemporary Art. “Her art historical background combined with her experience working creatively across disciplines, and her integral role working with newly created institutions like the High Line in New York City and the Philbrook’s satellite space, make her an ideal addition to our team.”

“I am honored to be the inaugural curator of VCU’s Institute for Contemporary Art,” said Lauren Ross. “I have long been impressed with VCU’s School of the Arts, whose renowned faculty and alumni are unparalleled. I am incredibly fortunate to have the opportunity to join the ICA’s staff at such a defining moment in its development.”

Ross has organized shows at many major institutions, including *Remainder* at the Philbrook Museum; *Reflections on the Electric Mirror: New Feminist Video* at the Brooklyn Museum; and *Fast Forward: Twenty Years of White Rooms* at White Columns.

Ross has contributed essays to publications by White Columns, The Studio Museum in Harlem, and the Whitney, and taught at the School of Visual Arts, the Rhode Island School of Design, and the Whitney Museum. Ross holds two degrees in Art History: a Master’s Degree from Hunter College and a Bachelor’s Degree from Cornell University.

About the Institute for Contemporary Art

Opening in 2016, 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, and mirroring the cross-disciplinary approach at the VCU School of the Arts. The VCU School of the Arts is one of the nation’s leading art 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 Repertory Theatre, the Richmond Ballet and the Richmond Symphony. The ICA, which will be funded entirely through private donations, has raised more than \$31 million to date toward its capital campaign goal of \$35 million. An endowment campaign is ongoing.

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 café. 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 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. 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, the VCU School of the Arts 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 the VCU School of the Arts, please visit: arts.vcu.edu

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