

The Bronx Museum of the Arts Appoints New Executive Director Deborah Cullen-Morales

Bronx, New York, June 19, 2018 - The Bronx Museum of the Arts announced today that Deborah Cullen-Morales will become the Museum's new Executive Director. She will succeed Executive Director Holly Block, who passed away in October 2017. Cullen-Morales comes to the Museum from the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery at Columbia University. After serving more than 15 years at El Museo del Barrio, New York, Cullen-Morales has been the director and chief curator of the Wallach for the past six years, overseeing the Gallery's expansion into The Lenfest Center for the Arts on the University's new campus in West Harlem. Cullen-Morales will report to the Board of Trustees and will be the strategic lead in developing and implementing plans for advancing the Museum's mission. She will assume the post at the Museum in July 2018.

Throughout her career, Cullen-Morales's curatorial and scholarly projects have focused on the work of Latinx, Caribbean, and African-American modern and contemporary artists. Cullen-Morales is recognized for her work with emerging and established contemporary artists and is a resident of the Bronx. In her new position, Cullen-Morales will lead the Museum's pioneering exhibitions and public initiatives, which are a vital resource for the borough and reach audiences nationally and internationally.

"We were looking for a candidate who could immediately lead the Bronx Museum forward and advance our mission for the future," says Joseph Mizzi, Chair of The Bronx Museum of the Arts Board of Trustees. "Deborah stood out because of her deep and relevant experience as a leader at New York arts institutions at both the director and chief curator levels. She is recognized for actively engaging with the communities in which she works, for fostering established and emerging living artists, for her strong focus on African-American, Caribbean and Latinx art, and for her expertise in these areas. She comes to us with long and productive relationships with supporters that are relevant to the Bronx Museum and our future growth. We are excited that Deborah will bring this exceptional range of accomplishments to her leadership of the Bronx Museum."

"I'm honored and inspired by this opportunity," said Cullen-Morales. "The Bronx Museum of the Art's mission and innovative programs intersect with my passion for working with emerging talents and exploring a diversity of contemporary production through crucial, accessible programming rooted in community. Now more than ever, in light of the pressing issues of our current moment, the Bronx Museum needs to resonate locally, yet project nationally and internationally."

"The Ford Foundation has long been a supporter of The Bronx Museum of the Arts, and we have had the opportunity to work with Deborah Cullen-Morales on projects over the years," said Ford Foundation President Darren Walker. "It is therefore a particular professional pleasure to see her join the Bronx Museum as its new Executive Director. With her dedication to building ties with a broad range of communities and audiences, and the breadth of her experience as a champion of the arts and artists, she is the perfect leader for this institution that is poised for such important growth."

"The Bronx Museum of the Arts is one of our most important cultural institutions, bringing outstanding arts and education programming to this Borough, and I am delighted that Deborah Cullen-Morales is joining the Museum as its new Executive Director," says Bronx Borough President Rubén Díaz, Jr. "As Deborah is a Bronx resident, I know she will bring her commitment to our borough to her role as the Museum's next leader. We all look forward to the great arts initiatives to come."

Cullen-Morales has served as the director and chief curator at the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery at Columbia University in the City of New York since July 2012. Most recently, Cullen-Morales curated

the exhibitions *Passages: Robert Blackburn*, a retrospective on the Jamaican-American printmaker (Driskell Center, MD, 2014); *Interruption: The 30th Biennial of Graphic Arts* (Ljubljana, 2013); and *The Hive: The Third Poligraphic Triennial of San Juan* (Puerto Rico, 2012). She is currently organizing *Robert Blackburn & Modern American Printmaking* for the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. Cullen-Morales has worked with Robert Blackburn and his Printmaking Workshop since the mid-1980s, and wrote her dissertation on the legendary Jamaican-American printmaker.

In 2017, Cullen-Morales founded *Uptown*, a triennial of contemporary art initiated by the Wallach Art Gallery in collaboration with 12 institutions in northern Manhattan that showcased more than 75 artists' work. Cullen-Morales oversaw the new Gallery facilities at the Lenfest Center for the Arts, designed by Renzo Piano Building Workshop, on Columbia University's rising Manhattanville campus. Cullen-Morales spearheaded more active participation in the broader community as well as a partnership with Columbia's School of the Arts' Visual Arts and Sound Arts Programs. Under her leadership, the Wallach Art Gallery had an increase in attendance of seven times the visitorship it had seen previously.

Prior to joining the Wallach Art Gallery, Cullen-Morales served at El Museo del Barrio, New York from 1997 to 2012, culminating her tenure as director of curatorial programs. Her projects there included participating on the team for *Caribbean: Crossroads of the World*, organized by El Museo del Barrio in collaboration with the Queens Museum of the Arts and The Studio Museum in Harlem (2012), and curating *Retro/Active: The Work of Rafael Ferrer* (2010, alongside a 2012 monograph for UCLA); *Nexus New York: Latin/American Artists in the Modern Metropolis* (2009), and *Arte ≠ Vida: Actions by Artists of the Americas 1960-2000* (2008). She also co-founded and co-curated the first four editions of El Museo's contemporary art biennial, *The S-Files* (1999, 2000, 2002, 2004).

Deborah Cullen-Morales is widely published and has contributed texts for recent retrospective exhibition catalogs on Laura Aguilar, Marisol, ASCO, and others. She has received an Emily Hall Tremain Exhibition Award, a J. Paul Getty Curatorial Research Fellowship, and a Faith Ringgold "Anyone Can Fly" Foundation Professional Scholars Grant.

About The Bronx Museum of the Arts

The Bronx Museum of the Arts is an internationally recognized cultural destination that presents innovative contemporary art exhibitions and education programs and is committed to promoting cross-cultural dialogues for diverse audiences. Since its founding in 1971, the Museum has played a vital role in the Bronx by helping to make art accessible to the entire community and connecting with local schools, artists, teens, and families through its robust education initiatives. In celebration of its 40th anniversary, the Museum implemented a universal free admission policy, supporting its mission to make arts experiences available to all audiences. The Museum's collection comprises over 1,000 modern and contemporary artworks in all media and highlights works by artists of African, Asian, and Latin American ancestry, as well as artists for whom the Bronx has been critical to their development. Located on the Grand Concourse, the Museum's home is designed by the internationally recognized firm Arquitectonica.

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