

DIRECTOR ADAM LERNER TO STEP DOWN IN JUNE 2019

Lerner led MCA Denver for a decade, overseeing unprecedented audience growth while raising the Museum's local and national profile

DENVER, Nov. 27, 2018 – The Museum of Contemporary Art Denver announced today that Adam Lerner, the Museum's Mark G. Falcone Director and Chief Animator since 2009, will leave the position next year, after 10 years as director. Lerner has overseen unprecedented audience growth and expanded public engagement with the Museum, while also spearheading some of the most ambitious and innovative programming in the country, redefining the role of a contemporary art institution.

"I took very seriously my decision not to renew my contract. For the past ten years, I have greatly enjoyed fostering the growth of a museum that now pulses with energy and captures the imagination of wide audiences," said Lerner. "I am grateful to my board for entrusting me to reimagine what an art museum can be, but now I want to try my hand developing creative ventures from outside the platform of a museum. My success so far has always come from my willingness to depart from established paths and I'd like to continue off-roading. I'm excited to explore new endeavors, working with creatives and artists, broadly defined, to further enrich our city and impact people's lives."

Since joining MCA Denver in 2009, Lerner has led the MCA through extraordinary institutional growth. In the last decade MCA's audience has more than doubled, and the Museum is on track to welcome close to 100,000 visitors in 2018, an all-time high. Through a series of innovative programs and initiatives, the MCA has become a magnet for audiences under 35, and has attracted increasingly large numbers of teen visitors annually. Under Lerner's leadership, the Museum has also developed an exemplary exhibition program. Exhibitions organized by or co-organized by MCA Denver, featuring artists such as Marilyn Minter, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Senga Nengudi, have been presented at 26 museums around the world.

Lerner is perhaps best known for his innovative approach to museum programming that combines curatorial, education and artistic production and presents sophisticated material in a playful manner, which has been a model throughout the museum field. He currently runs *Animating Museums*, a three-year program funded by the Andrew W. Mellon foundation to provide creative professional development for a select group of art museum employees nationwide.

In addition to programmatic changes, Lerner also led significant fundraising efforts, whose success dramatically improved the financial stability of the Museum. Lerner worked with the board to retire and restructure approximately \$10 million of building debt he inherited, thereby allowing the Museum to reinvest money into programs, including expanding its exhibition program. Since 2016, the MCA has raised \$17.5 million as part of a fundraising campaign to grow an endowment, remodel elements of its building, and further expand exhibitions and programming. MCA is working with architect David Adjaye and Associates on the remodel, which will allow the Museum to better accommodate its new audiences and expanded programs.

"Adam Lerner's unparalleled vision and willingness to take risks has transformed MCA Denver over the past decade," said Mike Fries, MCA Denver Board Chair. "Adam has been instrumental not only in making MCA the heart of Denver's cultural community, but also in rethinking the role of a traditional art

institution by launching groundbreaking programs that are now mimicked around the country. On behalf of the entire Board, I want to thank Adam for his tireless commitment to MCA Denver, our audiences, and the Denver cultural community. We are grateful he plans to remain in Denver and know that both the MCA and our extended community will benefit from wherever his ideas take him next.”

The Board of MCA Denver will form a search committee to conduct a national and international search for the Museum’s next Director.

At MCA Denver, Lerner curated numerous exhibitions and projects with contemporary artists. He authored the book and curated the travelling retrospective *Mark Mothersbaugh: Myopia* (2014), the first comprehensive look at the polymath co-founder of the band DEVO. He co-organized the traveling exhibition and book *West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965-1977* (2011) and curated an unconventional exhibition of unauthenticated art, *Orphan Paintings* (2010), the inspiration for his book *From Russia With Doubt: The Quest to Authenticate 181 Would-be Masterpieces of the Russian Avant-Garde*. He also showcased the non-traditional talents of mixologists, astrobiologists, shamans, and pigeoneers.

“I want to thank Adam for his significant contributions to MCA Denver and for making Denver a more creative place to live, work, and visit,” said Mark Falcone, former MCA Denver Board Chair and Trustee Emeritus. “Adam understands that art and creative expression cannot exist in a vacuum and throughout his career in Denver, from roles at the Denver Art Museum to The Lab at Belmar to the MCA, he has worked to break down barriers and create unforgettable experiences for visitors. Our Museum, and the Denver cultural community have been changed for the better thanks to his imagination, vision and collaborative spirit.”

As MCA Denver Director, Lerner built a senior leadership team at the Museum which works in tandem with him to execute the curatorial, programmatic and audience engagement vision. The team is helmed by Nora Burnett Abrams, Ellen Bruss Curator and Director of Planning.

Prior to joining MCA Denver, from 2004 to 2009, Lerner directed The Laboratory of Art and Ideas at Belmar (The Lab), an organization he founded to explore the changing nature of art and museums. Formerly, he was the Master Teacher for Modern and Contemporary Art at the Denver Art Museum and the curator of the Contemporary Museum, Baltimore. He received his Ph.D. from the Johns Hopkins University.

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ABOUT MCA DENVER

The Museum of Contemporary Art Denver (MCA Denver) explores the art and culture of our time through rotating exhibitions and public educational programs. Featuring international, national, and regional artists, MCA Denver offers a wide range of exhibitions promoting creative experimentation with art and ideas. Through adult and youth education programs and other creative events, the museum serves as an innovative forum for a culturally engaged community.

CURRENT + UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

Tara Donovan: Fieldwork. Through January 27, 2019.

Aftereffect: Georgia O’Keeffe and Contemporary Painting. February 14, 2019 – May 26, 2019

Amanda Wachob: Tattoo This. February 14, 2019 – May 19, 2019

Andrew Jenschdotter: Flak. February 14, 2019 – May 26, 2019

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