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Bill Arning. Photograph by Topher Cox, Boston, MA

The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston names Bill Arning as new director

Houston, TX (January 26, 2009)—The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston announced its selection of Bill Arning as its next Director. The Museum selected Mr. Arning, currently curator at the MIT List Visual Arts Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, from an extensive field of national and international candidates. The Board of Trustees elected Mr. Arning at today's meeting, and he will assume the directorship of the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston on April 6, 2009.

"The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston just celebrated its 60th anniversary and as we look forward to our next sixty years, it is with the greatest enthusiasm that I announce the election today by the Board of Trustees of Bill Arning as the Museum's new director," said Reggie Smith, Chairman of the Board of Trustees and of the Trustee Search Committee. "Mr. Arning impressed us not only with his experience and scholarship but also with his infectious energy and love of contemporary art. He is an internationally respected art curator and writer whose prior experience as a director

satisfies the Museum's long-standing conviction that a successful museum leader possess an understanding of both roles. We are confident that he will be an asset both to the Museum and the city of Houston; his track record is one of active involvement with the community—visiting artists' studios, meeting the public, talking with students, collaborating with arts organizations, and engaging the community at large.”

”I am very excited to return to the director's role in an institution as vibrant as CAMH, located in a city blessed with many strong museums, alternative spaces, galleries, and artists working in all media,” said Bill Arning. “I know something of the cultural landscape, having curated the Houston Area show for the Blaffer Gallery in 2004, and I have stayed in touch with many of the area's artists, curators, and gallerists. I look forward to renewing those relationships, learning more, and working together both with professional colleagues and the larger community to invigorate the dialogue around art in Houston.”

A native of New York, Bill Arning brings more than twenty years' experience in the arts to the CAMH. In addition to his leadership at the MIT List Visual Arts Center, Mr. Arning served as director and chief curator at White Columns Alternative Arts Space in New York for over ten years. During his tenure there, Mr. Arning was able to stabilize and grow the budget and build a strong board.

Lynn Herbert, the former Senior Curator for the Museum who served on the Search Committee, commented: “The Search Committee tasked itself with finding a director who had not only strong management skills, but also strong curatorial credentials in contemporary art. Mr. Arning is a visionary who will bring enormous energy and talent to the Museum, and we are delighted to have him join a terrific team of professionals at the CAMH.”

While at MIT, Mr. Arning used his breadth of knowledge of art history, critical theory, film, and music to envision and implement the List's vibrant public programs, including the annual Max Wasserman Forum on Contemporary Arts and The Lavine Lecture on Minimal Art, and exhibition-related music programs. These programs expanded the List's audience beyond traditional visual arts patrons and helped create a nexus for dialogue among the greater Boston community's diverse culture. “I plan to encourage the staff expertise already in place at CAMH to think broadly about opportunities to get new audiences through the doors in ways that are both smart and stimulating,” says Mr. Arning.

Mr. Arning has organized numerous exhibitions, including the widely acclaimed retrospective *America Starts Here—Ericson and Ziegler—1985-1995* (in collaboration with Ian Berry, curator, Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY) that toured to Austin, Kansas City, and Cincinnati. The exhibition won an AICA award from the region's branch of the prestigious art critics association as did other Arning-curated shows such as AA Bronson's *Mirror, Mirror, Son et lumière*, a

show of sound and light works, and *The Boston Area Drawing Show* for the Mills Gallery at the Boston Center for the Arts.

Mr. Arning was also one of the four curators on the acclaimed exhibition *Sensorium* that considered how technology has altered our experience and understanding of the five human senses, another AICA-award winner. The accompanying MIT Press book has entered a third printing. He was also one of the collaborators on *Chantal Akerman-Moving Through Space and Time*, seen in Houston at the Blaffer Gallery in 2008 before traveling to Cambridge, Miami, and St Louis. Mr. Arning sees fostering more collaboration with other peer institutions as one method for navigating challenging economic times by allowing institutional dollars to do more.

Mr. Arning received his Masters in Art History from Tufts University in Massachusetts and his Bachelors degree from New York University. He has served on the boards of numerous not-for-profits, most recently Participant Inc. in New York, and The Gallery at Green Street in Boston.

The appointment of Mr. Arning completes a ten-month search that took place with the guidance of the highly respected New York firm of Phillips Oppenheim.

For the past year and a half Linda Shearer served as the CAMH's interim director, handling the day-to-day operations of the Museum, including overseeing its 60th anniversary celebrations last year. "The CAMH has been fortunate to have had such an able leader oversee the Museum during this time, and we, along with the staff and CAMH members, extend our heartfelt gratitude to Linda for all her contributions," says Elizabeth Howard, Board President.

Founded in 1948, the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is a non-collecting institution dedicated to presenting the best and most exciting international, national, and regional art. The Museum prides itself on presenting new art and documenting its role in modern life through exhibitions, lectures, original publications, and a variety of educational programs and events. The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston occupies the famous stainless steel building designed by architect Gunnar Birkerts in the heart of the Houston Museum District.

CAMH MISSION

The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is an idea and a place shaped by the present moment. The Museum exemplifies the dynamic relationship between contemporary art and contemporary society through its exhibitions, public and educational programs, and publications. The CAMH provides the physical and intellectual framework essential to the presentation, interpretation, and advancement of contemporary art; it is a vibrant forum for artists and all audiences, and for critical, scholarly, and public discourse.

ALWAYS FRESH, ALWAYS FREE

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is located at 5216 Montrose Boulevard, at the corner of Montrose and Bissonnet, in the heart of Houston's Museum District. Hours are Tuesday to Saturday, 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Thursdays to 9:00 PM, and Sundays noon to 5:00 PM. Admission is always free. For more information, visit www.camh.org or call (713) 284-8250.

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