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New Institute For Contemporary Art At Virginia Commonwealth University To Open In December

BWW News Desk
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On October 28, 2017, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) will unveil the Institute for Contemporary Art (ICA), a new, non-collecting contemporary art institution designed by Steven Holl Architects. The ICA's inaugural exhibition, *Declaration*, will explore contemporary art's power to catalyze change, and will feature painting, sculpture, multimedia works, site-specific installations, and time-based performances by emerging and established artists. Featuring new work by artists from around the globe, including Amos Paul Kennedy, Jr., Marinella Senatore, Tania Bruguera, and Paul Rucker, the exhibition will also include artists from Richmond's vibrant arts community, such as VCUarts Professor Stephen Vitiello and VCU alum Levester Williams. Examining themes of protest, social justice, connection, and creative community, *Declaration* will remain on view through February 25, 2018.

The \$41-million, three-story Markel Center, home of the ICA, is located at the intersection of Richmond's historic Belvidere and Broad streets, one of the city's busiest junctures. The ICA provides a striking new gateway for Richmond, with dual entrances opening to the city's arts district on one side and VCU's Monroe Park campus on the other. Free of charge to all visitors, the ICA will be a significant new cultural resource for Richmond and VCU, in direct dialogue with VCU School of the Arts, the #1-ranked public school of art and design in the U.S. The ICA will offer a vital new dimension to a premiere urban research university, and contribute to a national and international cultural dialogue. With nearly 41,000 square feet of flexible space, including an inviting 33-foot high central forum, the ICA will feature a dynamic slate of changing exhibitions, performances, films, and interdisciplinary programs. Its fluid spaces are designed to support the diverse practices characteristic of the art of today, mirroring VCU's interdisciplinary approach and supporting the varied needs of contemporary art and audiences.

"We are thrilled to unveil the ICA in October," said ICA Director Lisa Freiman. "Steven Holl Architects' design provides a platform for deep experimentation and engagement. I am eager to open the ICA to our neighbors in Richmond, the VCU community, and the world as a welcoming forum for collaboration and dialogue. Our diverse program will introduce visitors to artists from around the world, offering a variety of perspectives to inspire new ways of thinking, create meaningful connections, and explore the central issues of our times. These aims are exemplified in our opening exhibition, *Declaration*, which considers the roles of art, artists, and cultural institutions in times of intense debate and social change."

About Declaration

Declaration will assert contemporary art's vital role in society through works that raise urgent questions about the state of our world and how artists and other citizens choose to respond to our times. The exhibition will explore questions of speech and silence, conflict and connection, the interrelation between the many and the one, and between institutions and the communities they serve. It will demonstrate how artists participate in civic conversations, activate diverse creative communities, and catalyze reflection and renewal. Featuring a cross-generational mix of artists who offer a range of perspectives and approaches, the exhibition will embody the range of formal, thematic, and emotional decisions artists make in their work. The ICA's open circulation will allow works to be experienced from multiple sightlines, reinforcing the importance of choice and agency and illustrating the wide-ranging responses art can foster.

"Our inaugural exhibition declares the ICA's intention to provide a forum for dialogue and exploration that is both rigorous and generous. This exhibition and our future programs will be simultaneously grounded in a rich local context and engaged with global concerns," said ICA Chief Curator Stephanie Smith. "Artists respond to the pressing issues of our times-sometimes directly, sometimes obliquely. However they choose to speak, their work opens alternate pathways. Each choice we make has consequences. Each declaration of independence or connection, compliance or resistance, leads toward different futures. The works in Declaration will invite reflection, debate, action, and collaboration, making space for individual contemplation while also unleashing the power of multiple voices."

Declaration will feature a number of new commissions and premieres, including:

- Peter Burr and Porpentine Charity Heartscape: The ICA will premiere an immersive media installation and launch a video game - two components of Burr and Heartscape's ambitious collaborative work Aria End. Drawing on independent gaming, literature, and experimental film, their project centers on Aria End, "a trans woman with cyborg guts," who navigates a gorgeously rendered dystopian landscape.
- Amos Paul Kennedy, Jr.: Kennedy will create a new suite of hand-pulled letterpress prints for the ICA that combine socially conscious text and rich layers of color. They will be grouped into a large wall installation in the exhibition, and also shown at sites around Richmond to connect with the wider public.
- Paul Rucker: The ICA will premiere a new installation, Storm in a Time of Shelter. The artist has reinterpreted KKK robes using diverse fabrics and patterns to illustrate the repetitive nature of history. During 2015 he made one robe per week. This will be the first showing of the full group, as well as new robes that Rucker will create in response to recent events.
- Marinella Senatore: The newest edition of Senatore's ongoing project Estman Radio will be a participatory installation that combines social space and a web radio station within the ICA. Beginning in spring 2017, Senatore will also lead a large group of Richmond citizens as they collectively write and produce a new radio drama. It will premiere as a live performance at the ICA and then become part of the Estman Radio web archive.

•Stephen Vitiello: The new sound installation whether there was a bell or whether I knocked, supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, explores the power of multiple voices and the relationship between text and spoken word. It features recordings by creative professionals as well as local teens reciting phrases from Argentine writer and poet Jorge Luis Borges' *The Garden of Forking Paths* (1941).

Additional artists featured in *Declaration* include Nidaa Badwan, Martín Bonadeo, Tania Bruguera, Chim Pom, Andrea Donnelly, Edie Fake, Hope Ginsburg, GWAR, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Kate Just, Titus Kaphar, Autumn Knight, Lily Lamberta and All The Saints Theater Company, Cannupa Hanska Luger, Noor Nuyten, Geof Oppenheimer, Cheryl Pope, Curtis Talwst Santiago, Jon-Phillip Sheridan, Deb Sokolow, Tavares Strachan, Betty Tompkins, and Levester Williams, among others.

Declaration is co-curated by Stephanie Smith and Lisa Freiman, with Amber Esseiva, Johanna Plummer, and Lauren Ross. The exhibition is made possible by Altria with additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

About the ICA's Design

The open design of the ICA features a series of dynamic exhibition and programming spaces across its three levels that allow for creative opportunities that engage the unfixed and multidirectional nature of contemporary art. The glass walls and windows create continuity between the interior and exterior spaces of the building. On the first floor, a 4,000-square-foot gallery and large café, bar, and retail space radiate from the ICA's central forum and frame an outdoor garden, which Steven Holl describes as the "Thinking Field," that will be used for social gatherings, temporary art installations, and public programs. The first floor also features a state-of-the-art 240-seat auditorium for film screenings, live performances, lectures, and community programs.

The second floor includes two forking galleries and an adaptable learning lab for interactive educational engagement that will be open to the public. It also includes an accessible terrace—one of the four green roofs—that will be programmed with art works and available for special events. The soaring 33-foot-high gallery on the ICA's third floor will feature large-scale installations and experimental projects. The third floor also houses one of the administrative suites and the boardroom. Additional staff offices are located in the building's lower level, which also includes a lobby for visitors, art storage and preparation facilities, a fabrication workshop, a green room, the catering kitchen, and general storage.

"We designed the ICA to be a flexible, forward-looking instrument that will both illuminate and serve as a catalyst for the transformative possibilities of contemporary art," said architect Steven Holl. "Like many contemporary artists working today, the ICA's design does not draw distinctions between the visual and performing arts. The fluidity of the design allows for experimentation, and will encourage new ways to display and present art that will capitalize on the ingenuity and creativity apparent throughout the VCU campus."

In keeping with VCU's master sustainability plan, the ICA's design incorporates state of the art technologies and environmentally conscious design elements, and makes use of numerous natural resources. The pre-weathered, satin-finish zinc exterior of the Markel Center, which houses the ICA, includes interspersed clear- and translucent-glass walls and skylights that infuse the building with natural light and lessen the reliance on nonrenewable energy. These include the use of geothermal wells to provide heating and cooling energy for the building, and four green roofs to absorb storm water, offset carbon emissions, and maximize insulation. Native plantings include wood oats, little blue stem, Pennsylvania sedge, and goldenrod. Building materials include Virginia bluestone and custom glass cavity walls, designed to exhaust heat in the summer and harness it in the winter. The project is designed to meet LEED Gold Certification standards.

About the ICA's Capital Campaign and Endowment

The ICA has raised more than \$35 million in private funds to date toward its goal of \$41 million for construction. An endowment campaign is also ongoing. The ICA is the largest privately funded arts project in VCU's history and is supported by generous leadership gifts from ICA Campaign Co-Chairs Steve and Kathie Markel, and Pam and Bill Royall. Additional major donors include: John David and Meg Newell Gottwald, George W. and Helen H. B. Logan, True and Charlie Luck, Markel Corporation, Abby W. Moore, NewMarket Corporation, The Mary Morton Parsons Foundation, Patsy K. and Hunter R. Pettus, Jr., and Carolyn and John Snow.