

## **New Institute for Contemporary Art at VCU Will Open in April 2018**

**Designed by Steven Holl Architects, Building is a Gateway Between University and City,  
Anchoring Richmond's Vibrant Arts District**

**The ICA Has completed its \$37-Million Capital Campaign and Launched an Endowment Campaign,  
with Initial \$12-Million Goal**

**Richmond, VA – October 17, 2017** – On April 21, 2018, 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 also announced today the completion of its \$37-million capital campaign, several months ahead of opening, in support of the construction of the Markel Center, home of the ICA. The completion of the capital campaign was made possible through more than 1,000 gifts from individual donors, corporations, and private foundations. The ICA, which will be free to the public when it opens in April 2018, has also launched an endowment campaign to ensure the sustained growth of the new institution, with an initial \$12-million goal.

The ICA's inaugural exhibition, *Declaration*, will explore contemporary art's power to respond to pressing social issues through work by over 30 emerging and established artists. The exhibition will fill the ICA and reach into the city with a dynamic mix of projects in a wide array of media—from painting to new media to performance. It will feature many premieres and commissions from artists based in Richmond and around the globe, including Tania Bruguera, Peter Burr and Porpentine Charity Heartscape, Cassils, Sonya Clark, Amos Paul Kennedy, Jr., Autumn Knight, Lily Lamberta and All the Saints Theater Company, Paul Rucker, Marinella Senatore, Stephen Vitiello, and others. *Declaration* will remain on view through September 9, 2018.

Located at the intersection of Richmond's historic Belvidere and Broad streets, the ICA anchors one of the city's busiest junctures. With a total project cost estimated at \$41-million, the new building 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 need institutions dedicated to creative, civil, and intellectually grounded discourse now more than ever," said ICA Director Lisa Freiman. "When the ICA opens in April, it will become a platform for open dialogue and sharing perspectives. We can't wait to welcome Richmond, VCU, and the world into the ICA and begin engaging our visitors through contemporary art and ideas. I am grateful that we've completed our capital campaign before opening the Markel Center. Our donor's embrace of and generous support

for the ICA is critical to our success. Through our endowment campaign we can ensure that the ICA will be a viable resource for generations to come.”

### **About the ICA’s Capital Campaign and Endowment**

The ICA is the largest privately funded arts project in VCU’s history and is supported by generous leadership gifts of \$5 million each from ICA Campaign Co-Chairs Steve and Kathie Markel, and Pam and Bill Royall. Additional major donors include: Cabell Foundation, private VCU funds, John David and Meg Newell Gottwald, Lewis and Butler Foundation, 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. The \$37-million capital campaign was completed thanks to more than 1,000 gifts.

Major gifts from the Saunders Family Foundation, Dominion Energy, McGuireWoods, and a number of new individual donors over the summer of 2017 helped close the capital campaign. Support for the ICA’s opening events is provided by Altria Group.

The ICA is also raising funds for an endowment campaign to sustain the legacy of the ICA for generations to come, with an initial \$12-million goal.

### **About Declaration**

The ICA’s inaugural exhibition showcases the transformative power of art and artists. Featuring a dynamic, cross-generational group of established and emerging artists, *Declaration* includes many exciting new commissions—including several created in collaboration with the VCU and Richmond communities. Themes such as racial justice, gender, communication across barriers, human impact on the built and natural environment, and responses to social dysphoria weave throughout the exhibition, emerging through a variety of artistic media and methods of impact. Art will fill the fluid volumes of the building, activating sites beyond the ICA’s four galleries, from the entrance forum to the café to the auditorium, as well as off-site collaborations and performances. The ICA’s open circulation will allow visitors to experience the exhibition in a nonprescribed sequence from multiple sightlines, reinforcing the importance of choice and agency and the wide range of responses that art can foster.

“Why a declaration? Because declarations are strong statements that mark beginnings, clarify intentions, and propose a social contract. This is true whether we think about something as personal as a declaration of love between two people, or as grandly public as the Declaration of Independence,” said Chief Curator Stephanie Smith. “Simultaneously grounded in our rich local context and engaged with global concerns, *Declaration* affirms the ICA’s commitment to researching, supporting, and sharing projects that strengthen the common good.”

*Declaration* will feature 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 has created a new suite of hand-pulled letterpress prints for the ICA that combine rich layers of color and socially conscious text generated in collaboration with owners of barber shops and salons around Richmond. The prints will be grouped into a large wall installation in the ICA, and also be shown at the participating shops and salons to reach an

even wider public.

- **Autumn Knight:** In a new installation and performance that extend Knight's ongoing project, *The La-a Consortium*, Knight envisions an alternate reality in which the innovative contributions of African diasporic people are widely recognized and celebrated as institutional namesakes. Her consortium serves as an umbrella organization for these fictional institutions. During *Declaration*, Knight will transform an area adjacent to ICA administrative offices into a "waiting room" for La-a Consortium headquarters, while a critically playful performance on the ICA stage will evoke an annual meeting of the Consortium in which Knight and collaborators, acting as executive directors of these hypothetical organizations, probe current issues.
- **Paul Rucker:** Rucker, who is currently in residence at the ICA as part of VCU's new iCubed (Inclusion, Inquiry, Innovation) transdisciplinary core, is creating an expanded and reinterpreted presentation of Ku Klux Klan robes, *Storm in The Time of Shelter*. Using diverse fabrics and patterns, he reinterprets the robes to illustrate the repetitive nature of history. Rucker will contextualize his installation through a selection of historical artifacts and interpretive materials.
- **Marinella Senatore:** Beginning in Fall 2017, Senatore will lead a large group of Richmond citizens as they collectively write and produce *Richmond: Symphony of a City*, a new radio drama. It will premiere as a live performance during *Declaration* and then become part of *Estman Radio: Richmond* — a participatory installation that combines social space and a web radio station within the ICA.
- **Stephen Vitiello:** Vitiello, a VCU professor, produced the new sound installation *whether there was a bell or whether I knocked* to explore the power of multiple voices and the relationship between text and spoken word. Produced with support from the National Endowment for the Arts, the work 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, Sonya Clark, Andrea Donnelly, Edie Fake, Hope Ginsburg, GWAR, 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.

### **About the ICA's Design**

The open design of the ICA features dynamic exhibition and programming spaces that can be creatively activated in order to support widely varied forms 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 café, bar, and concept shop 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 and public programs. The first floor also features a state-of-the-art 240-seat auditorium for film screenings, performances, lectures, and other programs. The second floor includes two forking galleries and an adaptable "learning lab" for interactive engagement. It also includes a publicly accessible terrace, featuring one of four green roofs. The third floor features a gallery with soaring, 33-foot-high walls and 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 stormwater, offset carbon emissions, and maximize insulation. Native plantings include wood oats, little bluestem, 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 Steven Holl Architects**

Steven Holl Architects has realized architectural works nationally and overseas, with extensive experience in the arts (including museum, gallery, and exhibition design), campus and educational facilities, residential work, and master planning. Steven Holl Architects is a 40-person architecture and urban design office founded in 1976, and working globally as one office from two locations, New York City and Beijing. Steven Holl leads the office with partners Chris McVoy and Noah Yaffe. Most recently completed are the Lewis Arts Complex at Princeton University which was completed in October 2017, the Visual Arts Building at the University of Iowa, which opened in October 2016. Steven Holl Architects currently has seven projects under construction: the John F. Kennedy Center Expansion in Washington, D.C.; the Glassell School of Art and the Kinder Building at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston; the ChinPaoSan Necropolis in Taiwan; the Hunters Point Community Library in Queens, New York; the Maggie's Centre Barts in London; and the Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, VA.

#### **About VCU and 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. Currently ranked the No. 1 public school of art and design by *U.S. News and World Report*, the VCU School of the Arts offers 15 undergraduate and 10 graduate degree programs in fine arts, design, performing arts, historical research, and pedagogical practice. Distinguished faculty members are internationally recognized in their respective fields and contribute significantly to the stature of VCU, and are committed to mentoring the next generation of artists, entrepreneurs, scientists, scholars and engaged citizens of diverse communities around the world. 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.

#### **About the Institute for Contemporary Art**

The Institute for Contemporary Art (ICA) at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) is a non-collecting institution that will showcase a fresh slate of changing exhibitions and programs. The ICA will be a place to explore new ideas, providing an open forum for dialogue and collaboration across the region and the world. Mirroring the increasing emphasis on cross-disciplinary studies across VCU, the ICA will create a

new environment for artists and scholars from around the world to test unconventional and challenging ideas. As a university-wide resource, it will engage an international network of contemporary artists and organizations while encouraging collaborations between audiences and contemporary artists and with VCU departments, faculty, students, and the Richmond community. The ICA will be an agile, responsive institution that offers a broad range of artistic perspectives from across the world, with the goal of questioning assumptions and encouraging critical discourse. Additional information on opening programming will be available in the coming months. For more information on the ICA, please visit: [ica.vcu.edu](http://ica.vcu.edu)

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