



Palm Springs
Art Museum

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ADAM LERNER NAMED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PALM SPRINGS ART MUSEUM

Lerner will join the museum in summer 2021

PALM SPRINGS, CA (June 22, 2021) — The Board of Trustees of Palm Springs Art Museum today announced the appointment of Adam Lerner as the museum’s incoming JoAnn McGrath Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer. Lerner will begin his new position July 15, 2021. He comes from the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver (MCA Denver) where he served as the Mark G. Falcone Director and Chief Animator from 2009-2019.

“Adam is one of the art world’s most respected and imaginative curators and program developers,” says Jane Emison, Chair of Palm Springs Art Museum’s Board of Trustees. “We are thrilled that a person of his singular talent and vision will be guiding our museum. Adam’s proven record of developing organizations and inspiring his supporters makes him a perfect fit for our museum which is poised for its next level of growth. And I’m particularly pleased with Adam’s reputation for being an extraordinary mentor who nurtures talent among his staff.”

Before becoming the Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, Lerner was the founder and Executive Director of The Laboratory of Art and Ideas at Belmar until The Lab merged with the MCA Denver in March 2009. He was also Master Teacher for Modern and Contemporary Art at the Denver Art Museum from 2001 to 2003. Prior to his arrival in Colorado, Lerner served as Curator of the Contemporary Museum, Baltimore.

“I’m honored to take the helm of Palm Springs Art Museum as the institution and the region are both poised for tremendous growth” Lerner says. “I am looking forward to building on the success of my predecessors, and cultivating a dynamic and inclusive institution that is relevant not only to the art world but also to the lives of everyone who lives in the Coachella Valley.”

Lerner will assume the position most recently held by Louis Grachos who is leaving Palm Springs Art Museum to become the Phillips Edwards Executive Director of SITE Santa Fe in New Mexico. Of Lerner’s appointment Grachos says, “I could not be more thrilled at the prospect of Adam Lerner coming in to serve as the Palm Springs Art Museum’s new executive director and I heartily commend our Chair Jane Emison as well as Executive Vice Chair Craig Hartzman who headed up an outstanding search committee

for this position. They identified and evaluated an impressive group of candidates, and ultimately made an inspired selection in Adam. He is an exceptional museum professional and—having followed his career since the late 90s—I’ve been continually impressed by his creativity and innovative programming. Adam’s broad spectrum of knowledge and his keen interest in popular contemporary culture will not only serve the museum well but also the community at large.”

At MCA Denver, Lerner developed an institution that combined scholarly exhibitions with an inviting energy that attracted wide audiences. Haven taken over just after the completion of the museum’s new building, he tripled attendance within ten years, doubled the operating budget, and attracted large numbers of visitors through robust public programming. Placing a strong emphasis on Mexican and Latinx art and culture, he transformed the institution into one of the premier showcases for contemporary Mexican art among U.S. museums. This lively mix of programming helped cultivate the next generation of museum goers, making the hard-to-reach 25-34-year-old audience the museum’s largest demographic category.

Under his leadership, MCA Denver earned a leadership role among peers by producing groundbreaking exhibitions traveling to multiple venues, including an exhibition of early Jean-Michel Basquiat works that had never been exhibited in a museum previously, and the first museum survey exhibition of artist Senga Nengudi. MCA Denver also developed a major career retrospective of Mark Mothersbaugh and co-produced the retrospective of Marilyn Minter, both of which traveled to art museums throughout the country. In addition to presenting the work of emerging and established contemporary artists, Lerner has consistently presented unconventional art museum subjects, such as the early history of graffiti writing, Emory Douglas’ illustrations for the Black Panther newspaper, and the everyday spectacles of the 1970s theatrical group the Cockettes.

For more information about Palm Springs Art Museum exhibitions, programs, and events, please visit psmuseum.org or call (760) 322-4800.

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About Palm Springs Art Museum

Palm Springs Art Museum is the largest cultural institution in the Coachella Valley and includes three locations in Palm Springs and Palm Desert. The flagship building, located in downtown Palm Springs, features compelling art exhibitions, a vast permanent collection, and the Annenberg Theater, all in a 150,000-square-foot, architecturally significant building. The Palm Springs Art Museum Architecture and Design Center, Edwards Harris Pavilion, features exhibitions and programming that explore the rich topics of architecture and design. In Palm Desert, Palm Springs Art Museum’s four-acre Faye Sarkowsky Sculpture Garden is open to the public from sunrise to sunset, seven days a week.