

Institute of Contemporary University Art of Pennsylvania

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ICA Philadelphia Appoints Denise Ryner as Curator

Philadelphia, PA—April 17, 2023—The Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania (ICA) today announced the appointment of Denise Ryner as its Andrea B. Laporte Curator, effective immediately. With experience working at academic and artist-led non-profits and museums internationally, Ryner has served most recently as the Director and Curator at Or Gallery in Vancouver, which advances emerging, conceptual, and experimental art practices, and as an Associate Guest Curator at Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) in Berlin. Ryner joins ICA as it looks ahead to its 60th anniversary and will collaborate closely with Zoë Ryan, the ICA’s Daniel W. Dietrich, II Director, and Hallie Ringle, ICA’s Daniel and Brett Sundheim Chief Curator, in the advancement of new curatorial programs and initiatives.

Ryner’s curatorial practice emphasizes the role of location as an active participant in exhibitions and she brings an interest in exploring the cultural production of transnational exchanges during the 19th and 20th centuries. In her position as Director and Curator at Or Gallery from 2017 to 2022, Ryner was responsible for conceptualizing and presenting a dynamic programming cycle of exhibitions, symposia, and publications. Major projects included *Unmoored, Adrift, Ashore*, a multiday symposium considering the impact of climate change on relationships with land, property, and future, which was developed in collaboration with HKW; and *Whose Land Have I Lit on Now?*, an exhibition and weekend of programming considering concepts of hospitality and hostility, presented in collaboration with Savvy Contemporary. In the areas of access and capacity-building alongside racialized communities and cultural workers, Ryner developed a curatorial residency and mentorship program in addition to the youth-led policy consultation initiative, “Schooling the Institution.” She additionally oversaw the relocation of Or Gallery and its 35-year archive, along with the overhaul of its visual identity.

“With her experience working at the intersections of art and academia, Denise brings an exciting perspective and expertise that will enhance the reach, relevance, and impact of ICA’s exhibitions,” says Ryan. “On behalf of the ICA Board and staff, I am thrilled to be welcoming her to join our team as we advance our mission as an experimental hub for contemporary art from around the world.”

Concurrent with her work at the Or, Ryner has served as an Associate Guest Curator at HKW since 2016, where she supported the institution’s Kanon Fragen project series, which interrogates the

canonization of modernity. Major initiatives with HKW included her work developing *Ceremony (Burial of an Undead World)*, an exhibition co-curated with Anselm Franke, Claire Tancons, Elisa Giuliano, and Zairong Xiang, and *Bodies of Fact: The Archive from Witness to Voice*, which featured KristaBelle Krista Belle Stewart, Filipa César, Grada Kilomba, and Diana McCarthy.

Noted Ringle, “Denise’s commitment to artists, research, and audience-engagement aligns perfectly with the values of ICA. I look forward to working with her during this exciting and transformative moment as we move into our 60th anniversary year.”

“Since first visiting ICA in 2017, I have been drawn to its programming, which consistently poses questions for broad engagement around a range of artistic practices, cultural debates, and collective narratives, as well as around the work of under-explored and emerging artists,” said Ryner. “I look forward to learning from the communities that comprise ICA’s audiences, collaborators, supporters, and neighbors in Philadelphia, and to offering the full range of my own experience and ideas to my new colleagues and mentors at ICA.”

Ryner earned her master’s degree in art history from the University of British Columbia, focusing on participatory and site-specific performance and installation, where her thesis was on the site-specific work of Indigenous artists Rebecca Belmore and Brian Jungen. Her undergraduate degree is in art history from the University of Toronto. She is a member of the Canadian Black Curators Forum and has served on review committees for Canada Council for the Arts and City of Vancouver public art and grant programs.

About the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

The Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) at the University of Pennsylvania serves as a laboratory for new artistic and curatorial practices, supporting the production of urgent work across disciplines and providing a critical platform for an exchange of ideas on art and society. Since its founding in 1963, ICA has shared the University’s commitment to experimental research and belief in supporting the next generation of imaginative and creative thinkers. ICA is dedicated to advancing new directions in artistic practices, creating meaningful connections for the public with art and artists, and advocating for artists, research, and dialogues that contextualize and resonate with the socio-political conditions of our time.

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