

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

San Francisco Art Institute announces President Charles Desmarais' departure for new opportunity

Desmarais will assume the position of art critic at the San Francisco Chronicle

San Francisco, Calif. (September 10, 2015) — San Francisco Art Institute's Board of Trustees announced today that President Charles Desmarais is stepping down from his position to assume the role of art critic at the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Dr. Rachel Schreiber, Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs, has been appointed Interim President, effective October 1, 2015, while the Board conducts a search for a permanent replacement.

"We are grateful to Charles for providing strong leadership in educating and nurturing SFAI's student-artists and scholars, and for enhancing our exhibitions and public programs that engage the community," said Cynthia Plevin, Chair of the Board of Trustees. "We are thrilled for him and applaud him on his new appointment."

Desmarais has served as SFAI's president since August 2011. During his tenure, he has shaped a forward-looking vision for the 144-year-old institution that builds on its rich history as a distinguished educational institution with a strong impact on the cultural life of the Bay Area.

Roselyne Chroman Swig, SFAI trustee emerita, shared, "While I am very sorry to see Charles Desmarais leave his post as president of SFAI, I am pleased to know he that he will remain in San Francisco. Charles' legacy will be his vision of bringing the San Francisco Art Institute's graduate program to Fort Mason and further advancing its identity as a major arts education venue and cultural treasure."

Desmarais' administration and the Board of Trustees have together strengthened SFAI's institutional health over the last four years. A seven-year reaccreditation received in June 2015 was accompanied by praise for SFAI's leadership alignment, strategic planning, academic excellence, and financial stability. Desmarais and the Board have also raised millions of dollars to address long-deferred capital needs at SFAI's historic 800 Chestnut Street campus and for the graduate program. The culmination of these efforts is a plan to transform Pier 2 at Fort Mason Center into graduate artist studios and spaces for exhibitions and community engagement—a move that will provide long-term stability for SFAI and create a vibrant, publicly accessible cultural destination along San Francisco's northern waterfront.

"I came to SFAI because I appreciated its history, its people, and its mission," said Desmarais. "My love has only increased over my years of service. And so, even as I take this next step in my life and career, I will continue to focus on appropriate ways to contribute to the school and its artists, as well as to the broader Bay Area cultural community."

Prior to joining SFAI, Desmarais served as Deputy Director for Art at the Brooklyn Museum (2006–2011), as Director of the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati (1995–2004), and, in prior years, as director of museums in Southern California. An accomplished critic and curator, he has written scores of reviews, articles, and essays, and organized more than 50 exhibitions of the work of artists including Lee Friedlander, Tim Hawkinson, Paul Kos, Ron Mueck, and Ilene Segalove.

Interim President Dr. Rachel Schreiber has been Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs at San Francisco Art Institute since 2013. Prior, she served as Dean of Humanities & Sciences at California College of the Arts, Oakland and San Francisco for seven years; and Graduate Program Chair at the Maryland Institute College of Art for eight years. A practicing visual artist and publishing historian, Dr. Schreiber holds a BFA degree from the Rhode Island School of Design, an MFA degree in Art and Writing from the California Institute of the Arts, and MA and PhD degrees in American history from Johns Hopkins University.

About San Francisco Art Institute

San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI), founded in 1871, is one of the country's oldest and most prestigious institutions in the practice and study of contemporary art. As a diverse community of working artists and scholars, SFAI provides students with a rigorous education in the fine arts and preparation for a life in the arts through an immersive studio environment, an integrated liberal arts and art history curriculum, and critical engagement with the world. Committed to educating artists who will shape the future of art, culture, and society, SFAI fosters creativity and original thinking in an open, experimental, and interdisciplinary environment.

SFAI offers BFA, BA, MFA, and MA degrees, a dual MA/MFA degree, a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate, and a range of exhibitions, public programs, and public education courses. Notable past faculty and alumni include Lance Acord, Ansel Adams, Kathryn Bigelow, Enrique Chagoya, Angela Davis, Richard Diebenkorn, Paul Kos, George Kuchar, Annie Leibovitz, Barry McGee, Catherine Opie, Peter Pau, Laura Poitras, and Kehinde Wiley.

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