



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**San Francisco Art Institute Reinstates Degree Programs,  
Reaching Agreement with Tenured Faculty for Upcoming Academic Year**

**(San Francisco, July 22, 2020)**—Reversing a previously announced suspension of all degree programs, the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) has resolved all contract disputes with its Faculty Union (FUSFAI) and has agreed to keep all tenured faculty on staff for the coming academic year. The faculty will be teaching a limited number of degree classes this academic year and assisting the college wherever appropriate.

“We are happy to say that this successfully resolves our grievances under the Collective Bargaining Agreement relating to shared governance as well as employment conditions,” said Faculty Union President Robin Balliger.

“The core faculty are the heart and soul of the SFAI community, and the Board is delighted that these disputes have been successfully resolved,” said SFAI Board Chair Pam Rorke Levy. “We look forward to welcoming back some of our degree-candidate students, as early as this fall. Most of our classes are likely to be online in fall semester, with on campus instruction resuming in the spring, pending the status of COVID-19 restrictions.”

“A number of students have already told us that they would like to return to SFAI to finish out their degrees here,” said Balliger. “The faculty are excited about working with them online and then getting back to the studios and classrooms with them when it’s safe to do so.”

“Our focus will be on working with faculty to build robust and financially sustainable programs for the future as well as re-enrolling both undergraduate and graduate students next academic year who are within one year of finishing, so they can receive their degrees from SFAI,” said Jennifer Rissler, Chief Academic Officer. “That will include candidates in our BFA and MFA programs, as well as our dual MA/MFA program. We also hope to attract students to our recently accredited programs, the BA and MA in Art, Place & Public Studies, as well as our rearticulated BFA major in Art & Technology, a signature program for SFAI chaired by Cristóbal Martínez.”

Three months ago, SFAI’s board announced the school would limit its instructional programs for the coming academic year, suspending degree classes to focus during this transition year on public/continuing education and grant-supported exhibitions, citing years of declining enrollment and financial woes exacerbated by the COVID-19 epidemic.

“In April, we were struggling to make payroll, and given the uncertainties wrought by the epidemic, the Board felt we could not responsibly commit to keeping our faculty or students through next year,” Board Chair Levy explained. “Since then, we’ve seen an outpouring of support and encouragement from potential partners and charitable organizations that enabled us to raise more than \$4 million from foundations, individuals, alums, and government programs in short order, three times our normal annual fundraising efforts.”

Following a lengthy and productive negotiation with the union, the SFAI Board of Trustees met on July 2 and approved a budget that would keep the school's fifteen tenured faculty on staff full-time through June 30, 2021, adding significantly to the need for additional fundraising in the coming year.

"We need to raise \$4.5 million more to make it through this fiscal year and cover the commitment to our faculty, staff, and students. But we have some exciting opportunities ahead to attract new supporters and build on our relationships with long-time donors," said Board Vice-Chair Jeremy Stone. "These include high-profile online auctions featuring works by well-known SFAI faculty and alumni, and a series of public events and programs leading up to SFAI's 150th anniversary celebration in March 2021."

The tenured faculty will also play a central role in the months ahead on the Committee to Reimagine SFAI, a community-wide task force that includes board members, adjunct faculty, staff, alumni, and students, and is led by alumni co-chairs Tom Loughlin, Karen Topakian, and Chris Williams. The Committee has been charged with the task of looking at resuming SFAI's historic majors and degree programs, exploring new models of art education for a wide range of students, centering conversations about anti-racism to self-reflect, educate, and repair at every level of SFAI's operations, and building a financially sustainable business model for the school.

"The Faculty have had robust discussions about how we can meet the challenges ahead and help the SFAI Board lead the Institute into our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year," said Faculty Senate President Brett Reichman.

"Fostering greater transparency and communication among our stakeholders is an important step in creating a positive, sustainable future for SFAI," says Faculty Union President Balliger. "And the formation of the Committee demonstrates a renewed commitment to building a collaborative culture together."

### **About the San Francisco Art Institute**

Founded in 1871, SFAI is one of the country's oldest and most prestigious institutions of higher education committed to the practice and study of contemporary art. SFAI fosters creativity and original thinking in an open, experimental, and interdisciplinary context, and has played a central role in many contemporary art movements including Abstract Expressionism, Bay Area Figuration, Color Field, California Funk, and the Mission School. Celebrated artists who have studied or taught at SFAI include Ansel Adams, Mark Rothko, David Park, Richard Diebenkorn, Jay DeFeo, Joan Brown, Barry McGee, Alicia McCarthy, and Kehinde Wiley. Other notable alumni include the photographer Annie Liebovitz and Academy Award-winning director Kathryn Bigelow.

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