



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**The San Francisco Art Institute Announces
Launch of Access50 Scholarship Fund
With the Support of a Major Leadership Gift**

San Francisco, CA, January 22, 2021 — In honor of its 150th anniversary this year, The San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) will launch a new scholarship program designed to provide a first-rate education in the fine arts annually to 50 students from underserved backgrounds. The Access50 Scholarship Fund would support tuition costs for eligible students through matriculation. It is a centerpiece of the school’s broader effort to combat racial and economic inequity, with the goal of diversifying at every level of the institution.

SFAI has recently received a major leadership gift towards the launch of the program from Julie Wainwright, founder and CEO of The RealReal. SFAI’s goal is to initially raise \$8-10M to fund 50 students and, over time, build an endowment of \$50M+ that would enable the school to maintain that commitment on an on-going, annual basis.

SFAI plans to begin offering scholarships to students applying now for enrollment in the fall semester of the 21-22 academic year. Students in SFAI’s degree programs, including transfer students, older students including veterans, the formerly incarcerated, those making a career change, and two- and three-year MA/MFA students will be eligible.

SFAI hopes to also create a new student center with academic and career support, counseling, a food bank, and additional services to ensure that students with a range of backgrounds, educational goals, learning styles, and abilities can thrive at SFAI.

“We are thrilled to make this commitment to students who would otherwise not have access to our programs and are so grateful to Julie Wainwright for sharing in our vision to support artists from all backgrounds at the beginning of their careers, when that support is most critically important,” says SFAI Board Chair, Pam Rorke Levy. “These are young artists – who, given the opportunity – could become the storytellers of our time. Students like Kehinde Wiley, who came to SFAI on scholarship, and was chosen to paint the official portrait of President Barack Obama. Years from now, their art will fill museums and galleries, public spaces and private homes, and SFAI will have provided them with the skills, experience, and connections that a fine arts school can provide.”

SFAI Board member and Access50 co-chair Lonnie Graham adds, "As a former SFAI student myself, I know how important it is for a young person who has something to say as an artist to have access to an environment like SFAI – a place where you can share ideas with an incredible faculty and student body who understand you. A place to learn how to cultivate new ideas and innovate. A place to actually understand all of the choices available to you. But what happens to all of that potential if you can't get in the door? With her lead gift, Julie Wainwright really understands that we have an opportunity to invest broadly in the problem solvers and innovators of the future."

"The San Francisco Art Institute uniquely provides an environment where soulful creativity thrives," says Wainwright. "One internet search of notable SFAI graduates confirms this. I helped fund these scholarships there because I firmly believe in art and artists as positive change agents. The launch of Access50 provides new opportunities for a more diverse student body to create and thrive."

Fundraising in support of Access50 is ongoing. For more information, contact Amory Sharpe, Vice President of Advancement, at asharpe@sfai.edu.

About 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 and thinkers who have studied or taught at SFAI include Angela Davis, Bruce Conner, Carlos Villa, Ansel Adams, Mark Rothko, David Park, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Mildred Howard, George Kuchar, Richard Diebenkorn, Jay DeFeo, Catherine Opie, Joan Brown, Cristobal Martinez, Toba Khedoori, Mike Henderson, Barry McGee, Alicia McCarthy, and Kehinde Wiley. Other notable alumni include the photographer Annie Liebovitz and Academy Award-winning director Kathryn Bigelow.

General Information

For general information, the public may visit sfai.edu or call (415) 749-4563. SFAI is located at 800 Chestnut St., San Francisco, CA.

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