

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

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**VENICE BIENNALE BOARD OF DIRECTORS TO PRESENT ART INSTITUTE'S SUSANNE GHEZ
WITH A SPECIAL GOLDEN LION FOR SERVICES TO THE ARTS**

**Ghez To Accept the Distinguished Honor in Venice at the
56th International Art Exhibition Inauguration and Awards Ceremony**

CHICAGO—The Art Institute of Chicago is thrilled to share the news that the Venice Biennale Board of Directors has announced it will honor **Susanne Ghez**, adjunct curator in the museum's Department of Contemporary Art, with a **Special Golden Lion for Services to the Arts**. She will receive the award on Saturday, May 9, 2015, at Ca' Giustinian, the historic headquarters of the Venice Biennale, during the awards ceremony and inauguration of the 56th International Art Exhibition.



The Venice Biennale Board of Directors, chaired by Paolo Baratta, and under the recommendation of the Exhibition curator, Okwui Enwezor, highly praised Ghez as a champion of contemporary art and a mentor to artists across the globe, writing: "Susanne Ghez is undeniably one of the most distinguished personalities in international contemporary art. Renowned for her analytical eye, conviction in the importance of experimentation, and innovative practices, over the last forty years Ghez has played a pioneering role in the field by introducing and giving young artists such as Jeff Wall, Mike Kelly, Isa Genzken, Thomas Struth, and Kara Walker their first museum exhibitions."

Ghez, who joined the Art Institute in 2013, has worked in all areas of the Department of Contemporary Art, including exhibitions, acquisitions, and collections. Her most recent curatorial project was the

commission and exhibition of new work by the Iranian Berlin-based artist Nairy Baghramian. "I am thrilled to receive this honor. A Golden Lion seems somehow fitting, as I work for a museum known for its lions as well as its legacy of collecting exceptional art in its time," said Ghez. "It is such a privilege to work with extraordinarily creative artists in supporting their new works."

"We congratulate our good friend Susanne on this remarkable and well-deserved honor from the Venice Biennale Board of Directors," said Douglas Druick, President and Eloise W. Martin Director of the Art Institute of Chicago. "We admire Susanne's experience, knowledge, and passion for the field, and this confirms our long-held esteem of Susanne as one of the most widely respected curators in contemporary art, not only in Chicago, but around the world."

James Rondeau, the Dittmer Chair and Curator of the Department of Contemporary Art at the Art Institute of Chicago, added, "Susanne has been a mentor to me since I came to work in Chicago more than fifteen years ago, and I am thrilled that the international community is recognizing her as a champion of the most innovative and important art of the moment. We're proud to have Susanne as a colleague and collaborator on our ambitious plans for contemporary art at the Art Institute of Chicago."

Before joining the Art Institute, Ghez served for 40 years as executive director and chief curator of The Renaissance Society at The University of Chicago, one of the earliest established museums contemporary art in the United States. Under her leadership, The Renaissance Society blossomed into a highly respected and globally-recognized venue for contemporary art in the world. During her tenure there, Ghez curated more than 160 exhibitions, including early exhibitions devoted to artists who have since become leading figures in the contemporary art world.

In the 1970s, Ghez introduced Chicago audiences to the work of groundbreaking conceptual artists Hans Haacke, Joseph Kosuth, Robert Smithson, and Lawrence Weiner in one-person shows. In the 1980s, The Renaissance Society balanced exhibitions of art by pioneering Europeans Daniel Buren, Louise Bourgeois, James Coleman, and Hanne Darboven, with shows highlighting prominent Americans Nancy Spero, Mike Kelley, and Dan Graham. The 1990s brought a number of landmark exhibitions and exposed Midwest audiences for the first time to the now legendary candy spills of Felix Gonzalez-Torres and the black paper silhouettes of Kara Walker. Most recently, Ghez curated important exhibitions by international figures Pierre Huyghe, Joan Jonas,

Feng Mengbo, Amar Kanwar, Yang Fudong, Joelle Tuerlinckx, Steve McQueen, Francis Alys, Allan Sekula, Rebecca Warren, Gerard Byrne, Danh Vo, R.H. Quaytman, and William Pope.L.

Ghez's energy and passion have extended beyond her work at the Art Institute and The Renaissance Society. She has also served from 1999 to 2002 as co-curator of Documenta 11, and she maintains an extensive record of advisory and consulting roles with a global reach. She served as a member of the International Advisory Committee for the Carnegie International; Advisory Committee for the MIT List Visual Arts Center; and Advisory Committee at the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona.

Ghez has been recognized for her important contribution to the arts with honorary doctorates from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the San Francisco Art Institute, as well as numerous awards for curatorial excellence, including the 1996 Curators Grant from the Peter Norton Family Foundation and, in 2002, the International Award for Curatorial Excellence from the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College. In 2013, Ghez received the prestigious Benton Medal for Distinguished Public Service from The University of Chicago, awarded to those who have contributed in a systematic and distinguished way to shaping minds and disseminating knowledge.

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