

**MCA
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MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENT

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Cydney Payton To Step Down As Executive Director and Chief Curator of MCA DENVER Following Seven Successful Years of Service: Transition to Take Place In October 2008.

Denver, July 15, 2008 — MCA DENVER announces the resignation of its visionary Executive Director / Chief Curator, Cydney Payton, who will leave the museum at the end of October 2008. Cydney Payton led MCA DENVER from a modest institution with an exhibition space in a former fish market with an annual budget of \$360,000 to a recently completed, environmentally sustainable, permanent home designed by David Adjaye. Today MCA DENVER's annual operating budget exceeds \$2.8 million. While an international search for MCA DENVER's next Executive Director / Chief Curator is underway, Payton will continue to guide MCA DENVER through the transition, including curating key future programs.

Cydney Payton began her tenure at MCA DENVER in January of 2001. Since that time, Payton led the museum through a nearly complete \$16.5 million building campaign, the realization of its new permanent home designed by Adjaye, while also acting as Chief Curator. Through her visionary curatorial program, Payton has presented artists from around the world early in their careers, many of whom have gone on to international recognition. At MCA DENVER, Payton has presented the U.S. museum premieres for: Trevor Appleson, Yu-Cheng Chou, Jasper de Beijer, Adam Helms, Rangi Kipa, Susanne Kuhn, and Collier Schorr. Artists presented early at MCA DENVER include: David Altmejd, Carlos Amorales, Candice Breitz, Sergio Prego, and Wang Qingsong, to name just a few.

Mark Falcone, President of MCA DENVER's Board of Trustees, comments: "Under Cydney's leadership, MCA DENVER has experienced incredible growth as evidenced by the Museum's award winning new building, our highly successful capital campaign, and 34,500 visitors since the inauguration.

"The realization of this building has been the result years of hard work by Cydney and other key supporters of this institution. The Museum is extremely proud of Cydney's accomplishments. On behalf of MCA DENVER, our members, and the citizens of the Denver, I honor and thank Cydney for her enormous contributions to this institution and our community.

"We will miss Cydney and are grateful to her for her support through this transition. As we look to the future, we are certain we will identify another talented leader who can continue and expand upon Cydney's many successes."

Karl Kister, MCA DENVER's Board of Trustees President from 2004 to April 2008 states:

"Working with Cydney, particularly as the President during the building process, has been

incredibly gratifying. Cydney championed the goals we set out to achieve, and she truly embraced the consideration of the building's impact on our environment. It's been a privilege to be a part of MCA DENVER during Cydney's tenure, watching the institution transform itself into the world-class creative engine that it's proving to be.

"The community owes much to her vision and commitment. I'm looking forward to the inevitable success in the next chapter of Cydney's career and the inspiration that others will draw from it."

Cydney Payton states: "My dream to build a lasting and beautiful home for contemporary art in Colorado began many years prior to my role at MCA DENVER, but the trustees and supporters of MCA DENVER allowed that vision to come to fruition. I am grateful to have had the support in realizing this dream of many individuals but in particular: MCA DENVER Founder Sue Cannon; Karl Kister; MCA DENVER's trustees and donors; the exemplary Foundations that provided generous support; our dedicated staff; our members; and, above all, the artists who have created and presented risk-taking works at MCA DENVER. It is all of their generosity that is embedded in the poetic building that David Adjaye designed as a permanent home for contemporary art in Denver.

"The openness of the West has provided an ideal forum for the artists we have presented at MCA DENVER to work experimentally and on the cutting-edge. It is the question of *what art is* that is essential. It is a query for the senses, a desire to describe the indescribable nature of being. In that way, the daringness to make art seems more profound and necessary than ever, and MCA DENVER provides a lasting home for this discourse. I am proud to have created a legacy for contemporary artists in Colorado."

Payton continues: "With the museum's environmentally sustainable building now open, having achieved record attendance, as well as critical acclaim for both the building and the exhibitions, I look forward to exploring possibilities for the next decade of my career. I'm confident that the trustees under the leadership of new board president, Mark Falcone, are poised to build on all that we have accomplished."

***What's It To You?*TM**

Part of Cydney Payton's ongoing legacy is the creation of MCA DENVER as a platform for artists, students, and visitors of all ages to ask themselves the question: *What's It To You?*TM, or, what is art and what does the art presented mean to each individual who experiences it? To that end, Payton mandated that MCA DENVER's new facility features three education spaces: The Fox Family Idea Box, The Library, and The Whole Room, allowing the Museum to more than double its education programs for children and adults. Since its inauguration in October 2007, more than 5,000 individuals have participated in MCA DENVER's education programs.

Curatorial Legacy

MCA DENVER is the city's first institution devoted entirely to contemporary art. Following in the European tradition of the *kunsthalle*, MCA DENVER is a non-collecting institution acting as an incubator for art and ideas, artistic exchange and dialogue and a place for exploration. In the conceptual brief for the new building, Payton called for five distinct exhibition spaces, in which to exhibit single-artist presentations. At MCA DENVER Payton has curated nearly 45 exhibitions for the artist-centered program, and has presented more than 320 artists.

Exhibitions Payton curated for the Museum include: the first U.S. exhibition of new photography from China, *Over One Billion Served* (2004), including artists Zhang Dali, Zhu Fandong, Wang Jinsong, and, Wang Qingsong; *Pillish: Harsh Realities & Gorgeous Destinations* (2005), which

was one of the first international exhibitions to bring to together ideas about drug culture from recreational to pharmacological, and including artists Glen Brown, Larry Clark, Barnaby Furnas, Nan Goldin, Carston Höller, Roxy Paine, and Thomas Ruff; and, *Truss Thrust: The Artifice of Space* (2006) featuring the following artists each in their U.S. museum show debut—Blue Noses Group, Sergio Prego, and Peter Welz. Also in 2006, Payton curated the highly acclaimed *Decades of Influence: Colorado 1985–Present*, which featured seventy-two contemporary Colorado artists, who have been instrumental in shaping the creative region and beyond over two decades. Additionally, Payton published a 240-page accompanying catalog.

For the inaugural exhibition in MCA DENVER's new permanent home, Payton curated *STAR POWER: Museum as Body Electric* featuring emerging and established international artists each presented in one of the galleries of the new MCA DENVER. Artists included: Carlos Amorales, David Altmejd, Candice Breitz, Rangi Kipa, Wangechi Mutu, Chris Ofili, and, Collier Schorr.

Timed with MCA DENVER's inauguration, Payton commissioned four permanent works of art for the Museum. The June S. Gates Garden, designed by landscape architect Karla Dakin is a climate-sensitive garden furthering MCA DENVER's commitment to sustainability. The MCA DENVER CAFÉ includes ceramic topiary sculptures by Kim Dickey. Clark Richert designed a pattern for the Lane alongside the Museum turning it into an activated plaza. The British team Tim Noble and Sue Webster created a site-specific work, *Toxic Schizophrenia / Hyper Version*, the first public project Noble and Webster have realized in the U.S. and is the largest representation of their infamous heart and dagger image.

Distinctions and Awards

MCA DENVER and Cydney Payton's curatorial work have received recognition in hundreds of articles and publications including: *5280*, *Architectural Record*, *Art + Auction*, *Art in America*, *ARTnews*, *The Art Newspaper*, *Artforum*, *Artnet.com*, *Bloomberg*, *Bloomberg TV*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *Condé Nast Traveler UK*, *The Daily Telegraph London*, *The Denver Post*, *The New York Times*, *T: The New York Times Style Magazine*, *Rocky Mountain News*, *Town & Country*, *Travel & Leisure*, *USA Today* and *Westword*.

Payton has served on numerous public art panels including the Fifth Taishin Arts Award Exhibition, Taipei, Taiwan; the World Affairs Conference, University of Colorado; Art in Public Places Program for the City of Denver; and, Creative Capital, New York. She has taught at the University of Colorado at Denver and has been a frequent guest critic at the Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design as well as the Denver University School of Planning and Architecture.

Since opening, MCA DENVER has received the 2007 Denver Metro Convention & Visitor's Bureau Tourism Star Award, and the 2007 Downtown Denver Partnership Award. In June 2008, David Adjaye received the RIBA International Award for design excellence in a building done outside of Great Britain for his design for MCA DENVER.

About MCA DENVER

Founded in 1996, MCA DENVER was created to provide Denver with its first and only museum devoted exclusively to contemporary art. Since that time, MCA DENVER has grown substantially in budget size, attendance, and membership. Community demand for increased exhibitions, programs and educational opportunities fueled the museum's commitment to creating a permanent home for contemporary art in Denver.

In 2003, current Board President Mark Falcone and Ellen Bruss, members of MCA DENVER's

Board of Trustees donated a gift of land valued at \$1.5 million in Lower Downtown. In that same year, under the leadership of former Board President, Karl Kister, MCA DENVER launched the Contemporary Campaign for the building and endowment.

In 2006, on its 10th anniversary, MCA DENVER broke ground on its new permanent home designed by Adjaye, and opened the award winning building in October 2007, that is on track to achieve its goal of Gold LEED certification. Following in the European tradition of a *kunsthalle*, MCA DENVER is a non-collecting institution acting as an incubator for art and ideas, artistic exchange and dialogue and a place for exploration. In addition, it serves as a vanguard institution for educating the community through its MI 5™ educational program based on psychologist Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences.

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