



The Association of Art Museum Curators

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AAMC Welcomes its Fourth President, John Ravenal

The Association of Art Museum Curators announced today the election of John Ravenal as its fourth president. “John Ravenal is both a distinguished curator and a respected member of the larger museum community; we are fortunate to have him as our next president,” says Sally Block, Executive Director of the AAMC. Ravenal is the Sydney and France Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, a position he has held since 1998. Prior to that he was the Associate Curator of 20th-Century Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In 2006 Ravenal organized *Artificial Light*, featuring new light-based installations by young international artists. The exhibition traveled to the Miami Museum of Contemporary Art during Art Basel Miami Beach. Other recent exhibitions include the first survey of sculpture by Robert Lazzarini (2004), recognized by the International Association of Art Critics as one the year’s best shows; *Outer & Inner Space* (2002), which presented a history of video art and received an Emily Hall Tremain Exhibition Award; and *Vanitas: Meditations on Life and Death in Contemporary Art* (2000). Ravenal recently completed the book *Modern and Contemporary Art at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts* and is currently planning a complete redesign of the postwar galleries, a new 21st-century art gallery, and a new sculpture garden, scheduled to open in May 2010 as part of the largest expansion in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts’ history.

“John’s service to the AAMC has already been substantial,” says Block. “As AAMC conference committee chair for the past two years, John led two highly successful annual conferences, including our first non-New York-based meeting in Los Angeles in 2008 and this past May’s conference, which boasted our highest member attendance to date. As we enter our ninth year of operation, we are privileged to have John to lead us through this next important phase in our development.”

Ravenal succeeds George T.M. Shackelford, Chair, Art of Europe, and Solomon Curator of Modern Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Under George Shackelford, the AAMC saw a dramatic increase in membership - growing by over 20% since 2006 to over 900 members from across North America. The organization completed its first strategic cycle and distributed over \$35,000 in funds to support curatorial professional development. The AAMC held a regional program in St. Louis this past November entitled, “Managing Change,” a topic that became increasingly helpful as the economic downturn began to take its toll on art museums. In 2007, the AAMC published and distributed *Professional Practices for Art Museum Curators*, a handbook outlining ethics and best practices for art museum curators. “It is without question that the AAMC has flourished under George’s leadership,” Block says. “We have moved from an organization in its infancy to one of established reputation and esteem. The AAMC is a vital force in supporting the curatorial profession, and in turn, art museums as a whole. We are lucky to have had George’s rallying spirit and good humor to bring together the membership during these difficult economic times.”

Also elected to the AAMC executive committee are Carol Eliel, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and Helen Evans, Mary and Michael Jaharis Curator for Byzantine Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, who will serve two-year terms as co-Vice-Presidents of the AAMC.

“I’m honored to take on the leadership of the foremost professional organization for art museum curators in the United States,” says John Ravenal. “I look forward to working with the AAMC board to continue promoting and supporting the role of curators. Our profession is now more important than ever as we maintain the artistic vision of the museums we serve and engage ever broadening audiences.”

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