



OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

Dear Friends,

Fiscal year 2023 was a year of building — one that saw audiences in our theater and galleries rebound to nearly record levels. It was a major year in exhibitions, acquisitions, and performance; and we witnessed our growing impact on communities — on both sides of the harbor, across the country, and abroad.

In July 2022, audiences were flocking to the 59th International Art Exhibition at the Venice Biennale and our commission of Simone Leigh for the United States Pavilion — an expansion of the ICA's global footprint that broke Biennale attendance records with nearly 650,000 visitors over eight months. The final artwork of the exhibition was realized in October with *Loophole of Retreat: Venice*, a convening of scholars, artists, and activists from around the world centered on Black women's intellectual and creative labor. We are honored to have brought forward the first Black woman to represent the United States at this storied Biennale and to have opened a major touring exhibition of Leigh's work in Boston.

Back at home, the year began with a range of exhibitions demonstrating a global scope: *A Place for Me*, exploring new directions in contemporary figurative painting; Barbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca's *Swinguerra*, presenting queer communities of color in Brazil; a 50-year survey of Boston-based artist Napoleon Jones-Henderson; photographic works by the Ukrainian photographer Boris Mikhailov; and, at the ICA Watershed, with *Revival: Materials and Monumental Forms*, featuring the work of important Ghanaian artists El Anatsui and Ibrahim Mahama

alongside U.S. artists Madeline Hollander, Karyn Olivier, Ebony G. Patterson, and Boston-based Joe Wardwell.

Our fall exhibitions included explorations of intergenerational exchange, with two contemporary artists drawing on centuries of matrilineal knowledge passed down from one generation to the next. Rose B. Simpson, based in New Mexico, combines ancient Native American methods of producing clay pottery with contemporary concerns in haunting figurative sculptures. Jordan Nassar, based in New York, works in traditional Palestinian *tatreez* needlepoint, collaborating with craftswomen in the region to create imagined landscapes investigating ideas of home, land, and memory.

The major group exhibition *To Begin Again: Artists and Childhood* investigated the influence of children and childhood on a diverse group of 40 visual artists from the early 20th century to today, including Francis Alÿs, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Jordan Casteel, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Paul Klee, Glenn Ligon, Oscar Murillo, and Faith Ringgold. Contributing to the exhibition's historical importance were unique spaces for drawing and reading together that fostered an intergenerational visitor experience, as well as a fully illustrated catalogue. ICA publications and artist collaborations with Barbara Kruger, Jordan Nassar, and Dr. Woo were well received by audiences..

Spring and summer featured two prominent sculptors working today: Simone Leigh's first museum survey combined a



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homecoming of the works made for Venice with key works from throughout the artist's practice, while Guadalupe Maravilla's major commission at the ICA Watershed was a large-scale site-specific installation with sculptures and sound works exploring ideas of healing and community.

We are all so excited that several ICA projects have new audiences in communities outside of our own, exponentially increasing our audience and our impact and deepening exchange with partners across the country. *Simone Leigh* follows its ICA premiere with stops at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C., and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and California African American Museum in Los Angeles. *Mariposa Relámpago*, the vibrational healing sculpture from the Watershed, will make three appearances in Texas, at Marfa Ballroom, the Contemporary Austin's Betty and Edward Marcus Sculpture Park at Laguna Gloria, and the Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston.

Two other ICA exhibitions also toured this year: Deana Lawson's first museum survey travelled to MoMA PS1 in New York and the High Museum in Atlanta (we co-organized *Deana Lawson* with PS1), and Firelei Báez's commissioned work for the 2022 Watershed to the Momentary at Crystal Bridges in Arkansas.

We ended our fiscal year with curatorial offerings that reflects the different textures that visitors can experience at the ICA. A major commission from Barbara Kruger greeted visitors as they enter the museum, while our first ever artist-curated rotation of the ICA Collection welcomed Boston's own Taylor Davis to share her unique point of view on our collection. Recent additions to the museum's permanent collection also went on view shortly after their acquisition in *New on View*, while stunning large-scale

paintings in *María Berrío: The Children's Crusade* used watercolor and collaged Japanese paper to create stunning scenes tackling issues of mass migration.

More than 311,000 people visited our museum campus to experience these offerings: to make art in our Bank of America Art Lab; take the water shuttle over to the Watershed; enjoy a performance on our stage or outside on the plaza; enjoy the view from our new wine and coffee bar; and celebrate at a First Friday, exhibition opening, Women's Luncheon, or Teen Night.

Access for young people, Boston Public School students and their families, and teachers remains a top priority of our museum. More than 130,000 people received free access to the museum through community days, Free Admission for Youth, Play Dates, member admission (including +1, our free membership program for youth 0–18), and Free Thursday Nights. Post-pandemic, we are the only art museum in Boston to still offer a free night each week, ensuring access for everyone!

Performing arts returned in full force this year, with presentations by new, unique voices and celebrated masters alongside our ever-popular annual music and film events.

The summer saw thousands of visitors on the Waterfront for Harborwalk Sounds, featuring standout artists from the Berklee College of Music, and Summer Sessions, highlighting Boston's best and brightest musical talent, for lively outdoor evenings where visitors reveled in the music, the view, the setting, and one another.

Our mainstage season was once again full of exciting music, dance, and theater presentations that reminded us all of the pleasure of live performance, including three major ICA commissions.



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We opened with a new work by choreographer Liz Gerring featuring newly commissioned music by celebrated composer John Luther Adams and performed live by the intrepid JACK Quartet. Bold and athletic, Gerring's *Harbor*, created in two residencies at the ICA, thrillingly combined movement, music, and sumptuous lighting designed by Jennifer Tipton.

In November, we presented the world premiere of *Family Ball*, a moving and intimate collaboration by husband-and-wife creative duo pianist and composer Jason Moran and mezzo-soprano and composer Alicia Hall Moran that was commissioned by the ICA and conceived during the pandemic.

In Suzanne Bocanegra's *Honor*, the artist subverted expectations of a stuffy, overly formal artist lecture by bringing wry wit, pathos, and a dizzying array of subjects to her discussion of a famed 15th century Dutch tapestry. Educational and entertaining, the work featured the actor Lili Taylor performing the role of Suzanne Bocanegra for a sold-out crowd.

Our season closed with the world premiere of Okwui Okpokwasili and Peter Born's newest work, *adaku pt. 1: the road opens*, commissioned by the ICA. Featuring a remarkable cast of eight women, this stunning piece combines dance, storytelling, and music to tell the story of a pre-colonial village on the verge of social upheaval.

Throughout the season, audiences once again flocked to ever-popular film series including Sundance Film Festival Shorts and the Oscar-Nominated Short Films, as well as special presentations of new releases such as Laura Poitras's award-winning documentary *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed* about artist Nan Goldin.

Audiences of all ages continued to deepen their understanding of art, art making, and the creative process through our educational offerings.

This fiscal year we welcomed more than 12,000 teens to the museum through free admission, Teen Nights, WallTalk, and dozens of other workshops, events, and programs. Seaport Studio, opened in Fall 2021, has become a bustling hub and home for Boston teens. The Teen Exhibitions Program organized two exhibitions, including *Sides of Me: Exploring Connections*, featuring artwork made by young people in our programs.

This year we made teachers a special focus, kicking off the year with a four-day workshop in Venice for 24 area educators. The first of its kind, this extraordinary event, organized with the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in conjunction with the Venice Biennale, brought contemporary art and the methodologies we use in our longstanding WallTalk program to Venetian educators.

Back in Boston, our work with Boston Public Schools (BPS) educators and students deepened as we rolled out numerous engagement initiatives. Informed by educator feedback, these included more online resources, a bus transportation fund, and the distribution of classroom kits. By the end of the school year, we were able to reach 85% of BPS high schools and more than 4,400 students.

Monthly Play Dates drew 4,700 to the museum, while in the Bank of America Art Lab, a collaboration with Boston artist Elisa Hamilton resulted in the installation and artmaking activity *Can You See Me?* in which visitors used a photo transfer process to reflect on their individual identities. Well over 8,000 individuals participated in the project on weekends this fiscal year.



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For adults, we offered tours, gallery talks, and opportunities to hear artists speak on their influences and creative process in Artist's Voice talks. This year, we presented four talks: Rose B. Simpson, Deborah Roberts, Sharon Hayes, and Simone Leigh with Rashida Bumbray.

Partnerships are key to our strategic goals of access and engagement, to strengthening the connection of art and civic life in Boston, and to ensuring that the ICA is both a place and a platform. This past year we strengthened ties with existing community partners while building and expanding collaborations with organizations and individuals around the city.

Two of our most popular recurring events were Juneteenth and Black Joy Day, with more than 3,000 in attendance this year. For Juneteenth, we partnered with Boston Ujima Project on celebration packed with films, music, and activities that highlight the Black experience, while for Black Joy Day the Black Joy Project founder, photographer, and community activist Thaddeus Miles spearheaded a day highlighting Black music and poetry.

Boston Caribbean Fashion Week has been a First Friday partner since 2014, drawing thousands of visitors to beautiful music-and-fashion-filled evenings on the grandstand each year. This year our grandstand was also the site for two Boston Public School graduation ceremonies, full of families bursting with pride.

In East Boston, we continued to deepen ongoing partnerships while exploring new collaborations. Our strong relationship with the Veronica Robles Cultural Center anchors our annual Watershed Block Party as well as new programs like the East Boston Holiday Bazaar. Our Watershed exhibition *Guadalupe Maravilla* presented opportunities for more intensive community engagement in

collaboration with the East Boston Neighborhood Health Center and practitioners from the East Boston Community Healing Center Project over the course of eight months. This is the first time an artist has so directly embedded with our community partners, and all parties found the collaboration fruitful and rewarding.

New partnerships this year include exciting collaborations with Boston While Black and The Teacher's Lounge at First Fridays that not only welcomed new audiences to the museum but also present future opportunities for our free +1 Membership program for youth and teens.

A major focus of the fiscal year was to build knowledge and representation so we can better serve our publics; this focus not only drives our programmatic strategies but also our staff initiatives and internal Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, Inclusion, and Belonging goals.

In governance, we welcomed three new Trustees and nine new Advisory Board members in 2022–23 — widening and strengthening our community inside and out. Internally, we introduced ICA WEB — Wellness, Equity, and Belonging. Taking inspiration from the Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing, this framework highlights five essential components to foster employee wellbeing through internal equity and belonging. We are using these categories to prioritize initiatives for the coming year in addition to those already in motion.

We are committed to building a forward-looking collection that reflects our rigorous exhibition program and the museum's commitment to diversity and equity. The ICA collection now includes 387 works by 215 artists, with strong representation of women artists (58%) and artists of color (38%). Of the 16



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artworks we brought into the collection this year, 15 are from artists entering the collection for the first time; seven countries are represented, adding to the geographical diversity of our collection.

Among this year's acquisitions are works by artists Firelei Báez, Ingrid Mwangi Hutter, Shirin Neshat, Rivane Neuenschwander, Zineb Sedira, and Haegue Yang. Simone Leigh's magisterial *Jug*, a work created for her presentation in Venice and prominent in her exhibition at the ICA, forever marks the ICA's historic commission and adds another major work by this renowned artist to the collection, building on our strengths in ceramic work, women artists, and artists of color.

Another notable acquisition is *Flag* by Jeffrey Gibson, created for the artist's first museum exhibition, at the ICA in 2013. Gibson was recently selected to represent the United States at the forthcoming 60th Venice Biennale, succeeding Simone Leigh; the acquisition of Gibson's early work reflects both the prescience of the ICA's curatorial program and the ways artists and museums work together to inform the broader histories of art.

We are incredibly proud of all that we have collectively achieved this year. From the moment we began to plan our Simone Leigh exhibition in Venice, we have stayed laser focused on combining local impact with national and global influence, and the results are clear. Our thanks to our boards, partners, supporters, members, audiences, and staff for making possible a year of unprecedented reach and impact.

With our gratitude,

Jill Medvedow
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Charlotte Wagner
President, Board of Trustees