



## LETTERS FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Dear ICA community,

This fiscal year was one of powerful and thought-provoking exhibitions and performances, engaging programs, expanding partnerships, and new audiences. In total, we served over 300,000 people on site at the ICA this fiscal year, with digital audiences generating an additional 18 million impressions and audiences to traveling exhibitions organized by the ICA adding another 200,000. Millions of people experienced the ICA and the art and artists we present.

For this, and all these successes, we count on the generosity of time, talent, and resources of our boards, supporters, members, partners, and staff, and I, along with the entire board, am ever grateful for your talent and commitment.

**Charlotte Wagner**

President, Board of Trustees

Dear Friends,

As I look backward over almost 27 years in this, my last annual report, what is clear is that we, the ICA, always face forward. The campaign to build the ICA on Fan Pier in 2006 was called *What New Is*. The campaigns that we have completed during my tenure — that one, as well as our Campaign for Leadership & Legacy, our Funds for the Future, and our new Fund for Art and Civic Life — have each defined a need and an opportunity. Each set out to shape a better future for our museum, our city, and our society with a focus on beauty, justice, art, artists, audiences, and building a strong community.

Some of our needs were physical: to build a new art museum in Boston—the first in nearly a century—helping shape an entire new neighborhood in the Seaport, and resurrecting a condemned space with an adaptive reuse of the Watershed in East Boston. With the Watershed, we created an unprecedented free, immersive, and monumental resource in East Boston.

Some of our needs were programmatic. We raised the funds to support such major, canon-changing exhibitions and performances as *Fiber: Sculpture 1960–present*, *Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College, 1933–1957*, and our boundary breaking presentation of Simone Leigh at the 2022 Venice Biennale, the first Black woman to represent the United States. We organized survey shows of artists such as Josiah McElheny, Amy Sillman, Arlene Shechet, and Deana Lawson and performances by Jason Moran, Bill T. Jones, Faye Driscoll, Trajal Harrell, Okwui Okpokwasili, and so many more. We invested in



teens and teen programs, expanding our impact, staff, and space, responding to the needs of students and teachers and deepening our partnership with Boston Public Schools.

Some of our needs were internal: adding new staff as our institution grew; addressing inequities in the field through compensation and benefits and securing fair pay for interns (a change we are proud to have seen adopted nationally by art museums since 2019); as well as expanding training and opportunities for professional development. Since 2015, we have been guided by *A Radical Welcome*, the title of our widely distributed and emulated strategic plan, always with thanks to the great Anna Deavere Smith, from whom we adapted the title.

And finally, some of our needs were long-term: to look ahead and build a permanent endowment and to care for our iconic building. Along the way, the world has changed dramatically, and the idea of “What New Is” has evolved. What hasn’t changed, however, is the centrality of artists, staff, boards, teens, and audiences at our museum. We are an organization that cares about people, art, and ideas — we are a place, a platform, and a partner. Over the last quarter century plus, many hundreds of people have worked here, shown here, or served on our boards, and millions of people have been our audiences, visitors, and participants in Boston, across the nation, and around the world, on site, through traveling exhibitions, and online.

With outstanding staff and Boards, we shepherded a scrappy institution through its adolescence to become one of the top contemporary art museums in the world, presenting artists who span geographies, backgrounds, media, genres, and formal and thematic concerns.

In fiscal year 2024, the focus of this report, we continued this trajectory of depth and breadth, and I am thrilled to share with you the highlights of the year.

We started off this fiscal year with the final months of Simone Leigh’s survey exhibition before it began its national tour to the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C., followed by a joint presentation at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and California African American Museum in Los Angeles. Then, we dove into the Caribbean, first, with *Forecast Form: Art in the Caribbean Diaspora, 1990s–Today* and then with *Firelei Báez*, the artist’s first North American survey, accompanied by a publication already in its second printing. This was Ruth Erickson’s first full year as Barbara Lee Chief Curator and Director of Curatorial Affairs, and under her leadership, we realized these exhibitions among others, in addition to adding 16 works to our collection, including works from internationally born artists we’ve shown — Ingrid Mwangi Hutter, Guadalupe Maravilla, Aliza Nisenbaum, Didier William, and Wu Tsang — works from Boston-born or -based artists we’ve shown — Josephine Halvorson, Rania Matar, Zoe Pettijohn Schade, Wu Tsang, and Yu-Wen Wu — and works from ICA newcomers Woody De Othello, An-My L., and Kathleen Ryan.

Across the Harbor, Guadalupe Maravilla filled the Watershed with sculpture and sound, and then this past May, we opened Hew Locke’s *The Procession*, a visual feast of 140 hand-crafted figures donned in bespoke, history-rich fabrics, costumes, and baubles — and perhaps the most fully realized Watershed installation yet!

These exhibitions were the springboard for a host of programs from an ICA Forum (and celebration) titled “A Caribbean Boston”



to popular “Let’s Dance” Caribbean Dance lessons to a showcase of East Boston care collectives.

In our East Side galleries, the James and Audrey Foster Prize exhibition presented new work from Boston-area artists Cicely Carew, Venetia Dale, and Yu-Wen Wu, while *Wu Tsang: Of Whales* took audiences on a dynamically generated plunge into the depths of the sea inspired by *Moby Dick*, and *Wordplay* explored how artists in the ICA Collection use text to different effects in their work.

Our Sandra and Gerald Fineberg Art Wall was filled with an interpretation at once delicate and magnificent of the desire lines running through the Cape Town neighborhoods where artist Igshaan Adams grew up during Apartheid, a commission that bursts forth from the walls to bring joyful color, texture, and glimmer to the entire space.

The range of presentations in our Barbara Lee Family Foundation Theater was just as impressive: concerts by celebrated musicians Joshua Redman and Vijay Iyer, a multimedia performance by serpentwithfeet directed by Wu Tsang, a rousing Saturday night and Sunday afternoon with the legendary Sweet Honey and the Rock with Jazz Urbane Cafe, dance with 2024 MacArthur Fellow Shamel Pitts, an immersive study of sound by experimental documentarian Sam Green, and a celebration of Max Roach’s music on the occasion of his 100th birthday with dancers Ayodele Casel, Rennie Harris, and Ronald K. Brown.

In the Bank of America Art Lab, local artists Lily Xie and Mithsuca Berry ( an ICA teen program alum) each presented original artwork and art-making activities. In the Seaport Studio Teen Gallery, teens organized two exhibitions from concept to finished

project, working with teaching artists, ICA staff, and peers: From the *Ground Up: Nature and the Man-Made* and *As You Are: Beauty and the Human Form*.

Other highlights in fiscal year 2024 included the launch of BPS Sundays, a program providing free admission for Boston Public School families two Sundays a month, and the beginning of sponsorships for our Open Doors Initiative of free admission and broad access. We now have six free holiday admission days in addition to Free Thursday Nights, Play Dates, Free Admission for Youth, and free +1 Membership for 18 and under: our doors are truly open.

We also launched Vinyl Nights, which joined Harborwalk Sounds and Summer Stages Dance as a signature summer program on our grandstand. And another year of Red Bull’s Cliff Diving World Series once again brought tens of thousands to our backyard.

Our spaces were filled with partners and participants from across the city, with collaborations that brought Little Amal, a one-of-a-kind community street performance featuring a 12-foot puppet of a Syrian refugee child, to East Boston, along with a Day of the Dead celebration and the East Boston Holiday Bazaar, while the museum itself saw full houses for Halloween, Juneteenth, First Fridays, Black Joy Day, and more.

Partners also included the committee who helped elevate the Women’s Luncheon, which was our signature fundraising event this year, and it was a true thrill to honor arts leader and former director of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum Anne Hawley and activist and community organizer Frieda Garcia, in the company of so many.



## 2023–2024 HIGHLIGHTS

Talks, tours, and member programs bring audiences closer to the work and the creative process, helping people learn to look, and this year was no exception. Amazing voices on our stage included Firelei Báez; our Foster Prize winners artists Cicely Carew, Venetia Dale, and Yu-Wen Wu; Teresita Fernández, and Wu Tsang, who each shared their perspectives on creativity as part of our The Artist’s Voice series.

We also organized an ICA Forum focused on “A Caribbean Boston” with poet Danielle Legros Georges, artists and educators Anthony Febo and Gabriel Sosa, Caribbean Fashion Week producer Althea Blackford, and Boston City Councilor Julia Mejia. Former Barbara Lee Chief Curator Helen Molesworth returned for a spirited author talk about her new book, *Open Questions: 30 Years of Writing About Art*. We partnered with AIGA Boston to present the designer Brian Collins. And our teams of curators, lecturers, and visitor assistants educated visitors through gallery talks, tours, and everyday one-on-one conversations.

Our exhibitions and artists enjoyed a knockout year in the press, with features, previews, and reviews in the *New York Times*, the *Boston Globe*, PBS News Hour, WBUR, GBH, *W Magazine*, and many, many more. As with almost every area of the ICA, in this space we punch well above our weight.

I know we have built a strong foundation for the next chapter, which I count on the entire ICA community to champion as we continue to embody “What New Is” for generations to come.

With gratitude,

**Jill Medvedow**

Ellen Matilda Poss Director