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Brandeis University names Luis A. Croquer new director of the Rose Art Museum

WALTHAM Mass. (May 12) – Brandeis University has named Luis A. Croquer as the Henry and Lois Foster Director of the Rose Art Museum, effective July 14. Croquer is currently the deputy director of exhibitions, collections and programs at the Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington in Seattle, and was previously the director and chief curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit.

A native of El Salvador who has lived and worked around the world, Croquer possesses deep curatorial expertise and knowledge of the national and international arts community. He combines intellectual rigor with boldness, and is regarded as a visionary thinker in the realm of contemporary art and ideas.

“With this important appointment, we celebrate the deep legacy and rich future of the arts at Brandeis,” said Brandeis President Ron Liebowitz. “The Rose has undergone a period of rebirth and renewal, and is now poised for even greater artistic prominence. Having a director with Luis’ extraordinary talents is a great gift, for our students and for the international art world.”

Founded in 1961, the Rose Art Museum is among the nation’s premier university museums dedicated to modern and contemporary art. Upholding Brandeis University’s mission to unite creative expression with academic inquiry, the Rose ensures its unparalleled collection of postwar art is an integral part of the university’s educational experience, fueling research by students, faculty and other scholars. The museum also stands as a significant civic institution, providing artistic programs of relevance to Waltham, Greater Boston and beyond.

“I am honored to join the Rose Art Museum and the wonderful and intellectually rich Brandeis community,” Croquer said. “The Rose’s superlative collection and the university’s inclusive history and focus on social justice deeply resonate with the work I have been conducting over the years. Museums must be more engaged with the fabric of their communities, to act as places for inclusive dialogue and valiant inquiry. I firmly believe that university museums will be the leaders in the next wave of artistic expression in the United States. I want the Rose to be a flagship for that transformation, through fearless and excellent exhibitions and relevant programs that are part of larger dialogues at the local, national and international levels.”

Croquer will lead all artistic and programming initiatives at the Rose as well as the museum's management. With a broad mandate to further integrate the Rose into the educational and cultural life of Brandeis, he will provide curatorial leadership regarding the growth, care, development and display of the museum's permanent collection, and advance national and international partnerships and scholarship.

"I am delighted to welcome Luis Croquer to the Rose Art Museum and to Brandeis University," said Chair of the Rose Board of Advisors, Lizbeth Krupp. "With his curatorial experience, managerial skills, warm and engaging personality, plus his ability to network with the international art world, Luis will lead the Rose from strength to strength. Under his leadership he will further integrate the Rose into the cultural and intellectual life on campus, embracing the university's values of academic excellence, social justice, engaged learning and global citizenship. I look forward to introducing him to greater Boston's vibrant cultural community."

"Luis has exceptional skills and a proven track record," said Provost Lisa Lynch, the Maurice B. Hexter Professor of Social and Economic Policy. "He also has a powerful appreciation for the values that fuel our campus and the fundamental role the arts have always played at Brandeis."

Lynch also thanked the search committee, comprised of faculty, students, staff and board members, for generously devoting their time to a careful, thorough search. The search committee was supported by the search firm Phillips Oppenheim.

In his current role as deputy director at the Henry Art Gallery, Croquer leads all of the museum's major artistic and creative areas, and integrates the activities of the curatorial, collections and education departments. Recent projects have included the first U.S. retrospective of Franz Erhard Walther, as well as solo exhibitions by Paul McCarthy, Katinka Bock, Pablo Helguera and Haegue Yang, and the last retrospective of Paul Laffoley, the visionary Boston-area artist. As part of his role at the Henry, he oversaw and created hundreds of multidisciplinary public, family and teen programs and a comprehensive strategy of academic engagement. Croquer focused on the growth of the collection, particularly in the area of contemporary art. He secured gifts of works by Paul Chan, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Tracey Moffatt, Paul Laffoley, Katinka Bock, Walead Beshty, Shannon Ebner, Liz Craft and Eve Sussman/Rufus Corp., among many others.

Before joining the Henry, Croquer was the first permanent director and chief curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit. During his three-year tenure, he established an international reputation for presenting ambitious contemporary exhibitions and drew a regional following through innovative community outreach. Earlier in his career, he was special projects assistant to the director at the Museo del Barrio in New York, where he laid the foundation for a program of traveling exhibitions and national and international collaborations. Before that, he

was senior curator at the American Federation of Arts in New York, and curator of historical exhibitions at the Drawing Center in New York.

The son of a Venezuelan diplomat and a Salvadoran-born mother, Croquer lived in Austria, El Salvador, England, Gabon, India, Italy, Lebanon, Switzerland, the U.S. and Venezuela in his youth. He studied anthropology and communications as an undergraduate at Goldsmiths, University of London, and earned a master's degree in modern and contemporary art history, theory and criticism at the State University of New York at Purchase. He has been the recipient of Fulbright, Guggenheim Museum, and Warhol Foundation fellowships.

Croquer succeeds former Rose director Christopher Bedford, who was named director of the Baltimore Museum of Art in May 2016. The Rose Art Museum and the Baltimore Art Museum are currently co-presenters of artist Mark Bradford at the U.S. Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, the world's premier showcase for contemporary art.

The Rose collection includes masterworks by Willem de Kooning, Jasper Johns, Marisol, Roy Lichtenstein, Ellsworth Kelly, Ad Reinhardt, James Rosenquist and Andy Warhol. Recently acquired works by Mark Bradford, Al Loving, Jack Whitten, Melvin Edwards, Sam Gilliam and Charline von Heyl build upon this strength, and reflect the museum's commitment to works of both artistic importance and social relevance.

The Rose is currently undergoing a period of significant growth. Extensive renovations funded by Gerald and Sandra Fineberg have enhanced the appearance of the original museum building, increased energy efficiency, and created an optimum physical environment for the collection. In 2014, the campus unveiled Chris Burden's "Light of Reason," a major work of public sculpture that serves as both an inviting gateway to the museum and a dynamic outdoor space for the Brandeis community.

Recent Rose highlights include the establishment of the New Media Arts Consortium; acquisitions of works by African-American artists, accompanied by robust programs on art, race and activism; and partnerships with national and international museums. Recent exhibitions of works by Rosalyn Drexler, Mika Rottenberg, Fred Eversley, Sarah Sze, David Shrigley, Tommy Hartung, David Reed and Lisa Yuskavage have garnered international acclaim. Jennie C. Jones was recently named the 2017 Ruth Ann and Nathan Perlmutter Artist-in-Residence at the Rose.

Architectural Digest lists the Rose as one of the top 10 university museums in the U.S.

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About Brandeis University:

Brandeis University is a highly-competitive private research university with a focus on undergraduate education. Founded in 1948 by the American Jewish community and named for

Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis, Brandeis embraces the values of academic excellence, critical thinking, openness to all, and making the world a better place. Brandeis is a member of the Association of American Universities (AAU), which represents the 62 leading research universities in the United States and Canada. Located just west of Boston in Waltham, Massachusetts, Brandeis' distinguished faculty are dedicated to the education and support of 3,600 undergraduates and more than 2,000 graduate students.

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