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Olivia Lahs-Gonzales appointed Executive Director of SF Camerawork

Respected curator of photography and gallery director from St. Louis takes the helm of San Francisco’s premier center for new photography

(San Francisco, CA, July 20, 2021) — SF Camerawork announces the appointment of Olivia Lahs-Gonzales as Executive Director. Lahs-Gonzales will begin in her new role August 15, 2021.

Lahs-Gonzales comes to SF Camerawork from St. Louis, where she was Director and Curator of The Sheldon Art Galleries for almost 20 years, overseeing a program of up to fifteen exhibitions annually within six gallery spaces. Drawing from international, national, and local collectors, museums, galleries, and artists, she developed an acclaimed exhibition program focused on photography and the visual arts that included major traveling exhibitions such as *Bea Nettles: A Harvest of Memory* (2019); *Ralston Crawford and Jazz* (2011); *Larry Fink: Attraction and Desire - 50 Years in Photography* (2011); and *Josephine Baker: Image and Icon* (2006), which traveled to the National Portrait Gallery, Washington D.C. Lahs-Gonzales also contributed to and oversaw the production of The Sheldon’s many publications and catalogues, developed and managed its education programs, and successfully raised funds in support of its programs and operations, among her many responsibilities.

“We’re thrilled to write the next chapter of SF Camerawork’s story with Olivia,” says Michelle Branch, Board President, SF Camerawork. “As we emerge from the pandemic and approach the organization’s 50th anniversary, we’re thinking not only about how the needs of photographic artists have changed, but also explicitly acknowledging how, in this new era, photographic artists are essential to exposing the most challenging issues of our time. Olivia will lead our strategic thinking as we adjust our models for exhibitions and workshops and create new community partnerships to better serve the needs of our diverse photographic communities.”

Previous to her time at The Sheldon, Lahs-Gonzales was Assistant Curator of Prints, Drawings and Photographs at the Saint Louis Art Museum for nine years, where she was hired as the department photography specialist. There, she curated many exhibitions including *Defining Eye: Women Photographers of the 20th Century* (1997) and *Photography in Modern Europe* (1996) and helped build the museum’s collection of photographs.
Most recently, Lahs-Gonzales was working as Associate Director of Artist Programs for The Regional Arts Commission St. Louis. Lahs-Gonzales has a broad knowledge of the history of photography, with an emphasis on Between-the-Wars photographers, the New Topographics and related artists, and contemporary photography. She holds an MFA in Photography from Columbia College, Chicago.

“I am so happy to welcome Olivia Lahs-Gonzales to the San Francisco photo community,” says Sandra Phillips, Curator Emerita of Photography at SFMOMA. “She has long worked wonders in St. Louis and is an experienced and innovative arts person. I look forward to seeing what she will do at SF Camerawork!”

“Olivia is an energetic and visionary photo historian who comes to SF Camerawork after many years as an esteemed museum director, curator, writer, and educator,” says Jim Ganz, Senior Curator of Photographs, The J. Paul Getty Museum. “I am as thrilled for her to take the helm of this great organization, as I am for SF Camerawork to engage such an outstanding arts professional to lead its varied activities and programs.”

“I am excited to be joining SF Camerawork, which I have known throughout my career as a great resource for those who love photography,” says Lahs-Gonzales. “Through exhibitions, publications, and programs, my priority will be to represent all voices, and show the true diversity, richness, and possibilities of the medium in the 21st century. I look forward to inspiring the SF Camerawork team in its pursuit of excellence in the field, so that it may continue to be a leader in the promotion of photography locally, nationally, and internationally.”

Amongst Lahs-Gonzales’ priorities as she begins her work in San Francisco will be to integrate the success of SF Camerawork’s pivot to online programming during the pandemic; maximize the impact of planned pop up exhibitions within the community this coming year; secure a new home for its gallery; lead multi-year equity and education initiatives; and plan for the organization’s 50th anniversary in 2024.

About SF Camerawork

Founded in 1974, SF Camerawork provokes discovery, experimentation, and exchange through exhibitions and experiences for all who value new ideas in photography. For more than 45 years, SF Camerawork has provided a launching pad for many artists' careers, supplying invaluable financial support, exhibition space, curation, and patronage. In its early years, SF
Camerawork was the first organization in the Bay Area to host exhibitions and lectures by controversial but ultimately highly influential artists such as Sally Mann, Robert Mapplethorpe, Susan Meiselas, and Joel-Peter Witkin. More recently, the organization has presented the first West Coast exhibitions for John Chiara, Binh Danh, Erica Deeman, Jennifer Karady, Jason Lazurus, Chris McCaw, Wang Ning De, and Meghann Riepenhoff—artists who have emerged as leaders of a new generation gaining international prominence. The organization also offers a rich array of programming beyond artist exhibitions. An annual calendar of critiques, workshops, lectures, panel discussions, and curator-led museum and gallery tours offer unique insight and access to San Francisco’s local photography network.

For more information, visit sfcamerawork.org.

**For media information or images, contact:**
Nina Sazevich
Public Relations
415.752.2483
nina@sazevichpr.com

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