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The Kitchen

THE KITCHEN ANNOUNCES \$28 MILLION CAPITAL CAMPAIGN TO RENOVATE ITS HISTORIC CHELSEA HOME AND SECURE THE ORGANIZATION'S FUTURE ON THE OCCASION OF ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

More Than \$19 Million Has Already Been Pledged; Construction to Begin in Spring 2022

Campaign Launches as Legacy Russell Becomes the Institution's Executive Director and Chief Curator, Succeeding Tim Griffin

The Kitchen (**Legacy Russell**, Executive Director and Chief Curator; **Greg Feldman**, Chairman of the Board of Trustees; **Mila Tuttle**, President of the Board of Trustees) today announces a capital campaign for the organization's 50th anniversary to fund a renovation of The Kitchen's home in the Chelsea gallery district in New York City. The \$28 million, five-year campaign represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to honor and build upon The Kitchen's legacy and groundbreaking work in the arts. As part of the campaign, The Kitchen will also create an Artistic Innovation Fund, develop an operating and capital reserve, and increase its endowment. Construction on The Kitchen's building, designed by **Rice+Lipka Architects** (New York), is slated to begin in Spring 2022, made possible by the success of the campaign's quiet phase and completion of design development with the leadership of **Tim Griffin**, who concluded his 10-year tenure as Executive Director and Chief Curator last month.

Since 1971, The Kitchen has been a home for artists whose experimental work has changed the shape of art in all disciplines, from painting, photography, video, film, and literature, to music, dance, and theater. Over the decades, artists here have continually innovated while engaging the pivotal cultural questions of their times, utilizing the organization's gallery and theater in ways that forged an interdisciplinary path followed today by museums throughout the world. The Kitchen is a place where emerging artists have an unmatched opportunity to create their most convention-challenging work, exploring and realizing their visions to the fullest; and where even established artists return to take new risks and feel the rejuvenating power of a close-knit artistic community.

Legacy Russell, The Kitchen's Executive Director and Chief Curator, said, "The Kitchen, which has been both artist-driven and forward-looking from the start, is well equipped to navigate the myriad questions our field is confronting about the future of art and the role institutions should have in shaping it. Looking inward, too, during The Kitchen's 50th anniversary, we are asking ourselves not only, 'Who has been part of the organization's history, and how can we celebrate this presence and contribution?,' but also, 'Who has *not* been part of the history that brings us to this point—or the history we are building—and what are the ways in which this next chapter can make room for their stories to be told?' The renovation

of our building helps us support a broader spectrum of avant-garde artists, in new ways, as they lead the way.”



Modernizing The Kitchen facility and redesigning its interior without losing the historic industrial character of its building, the campaign will serve artists and audiences by increasing accessibility and enhancing the space’s infrastructure, while providing the necessary funds to secure the non-profit organization’s future decades as a financially stable,

durable institution where artists across disciplines can experiment freely and engage audiences in a direct way. At the same time, the project reaffirms The Kitchen’s ongoing investment in the Chelsea community and neighborhood, where the organization arrived in 1985 as one of the area’s very first arts organizations; and where it has remained even in the face of challenges posed by the area’s radical transformation and development during the past decade.

Greg Feldman, Chairman of The Kitchen Board of Trustees, said, “This is a very exciting point in The Kitchen’s 50-year history, as we welcome a sensational new Executive Director and Chief Curator, begin the revitalization of our building, and secure the financial stability to ensure our next 50 years. All of this momentous activity is in service of the mission that has always driven us: to support innovative artists in the creation and presentation of new work.”

Support for The Kitchen’s Building Renovation

More than \$19 million has already been pledged toward The Kitchen’s campaign for the 50th anniversary, with lead gifts coming from The Kitchen’s Board and foundations including Howard Gilman Foundation and Mertz Gilmore Foundation. Major support has come from the City of New York—including the Mayor’s Office, City Council, and Manhattan Borough President’s Office—which has pledged \$7.25 million, with an anticipated additional commitment of \$2.5 million from the City Council.

“For 50 years, The Kitchen has been an important space for New York’s downtown avant garde arts community, and it has helped make our city the epicenter of cutting edge music, performance, and multidisciplinary art,” said **NYC Cultural Affairs Commissioner Gonzalo Casals**. “This extraordinary milestone coincides with the culmination of Tim Griffin’s tremendous leadership, and with Legacy Russell’s exciting vision for the organization’s future taking shape. We’re proud to invest in a revitalized home for this vibrant institution; New York isn’t New York with the arts, and groups like The Kitchen are essential to fostering the creative energy that makes our city such an amazing hub for arts and culture.”

The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation also pledged a lead gift toward the establishment of a new space harkening back to The Kitchen's early photography exhibits, which featured shorter runs and were woven into the organization's administration and social loft space when the nonprofit resided in Soho. The Kitchen presented Mapplethorpe's very first institutional exhibition, "Pictures," in 1977. (In fact, the organization's history with photographers is remarkable, featuring the first New York showing of Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* and the earliest presentation of Nan Goldin's *Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, while more recently featuring prominent artists working in photography including Yto Barrada, Leslie Hewitt, Rodney McMillian, among many others.) Located on the renovated building's second floor, adjacent to administrative offices, this space's installations will be dedicated to artists working in photography.

Michael Ward Stout, President of The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, said, "The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation is honored to be able to support The Kitchen's exciting new chapter, as it moves forward through the 21st Century. The Kitchen has served the arts community for fifty years, providing 'cutting edge' artists with a center to gather, and to exhibit or perform innovative works. Robert Mapplethorpe was the beneficiary of The Kitchen's support forty-four years ago, and now his Foundation has the opportunity to show its appreciation for all that The Kitchen does to promote the arts."

The Kitchen Design

Constructed in the 1920s, The Kitchen's building was originally an icehouse before being converted decades later into a film sound stage and, finally, a working studio for well-known artists such as Robert Whitman. Through these various uses over time, the building was transformed from a cavernous empty volume to a multi-floor structure populated by large and small spaces—which themselves have had to be continually re-adapted to serve new purposes, from theater and gallery to dressing room and offices. While local, national, and international artists all treasure The Kitchen's unique industrial setting, the building itself presents numerous architectural challenges for both artists and audiences. At the same time, the surrounding neighborhood of Chelsea continues to change radically, putting The Kitchen's continued residency there at risk.

Central to this renovation is a re-imagined, renovated building that will realize greater technical and financial support for artists and, as important, greater accessibility for audiences. While retaining its current scale and rugged patina, The Kitchen will enhance its usability—maintaining its ethos and spirit, as well as its powerful intimacy. Rather than expanding the institution's footprint, this project will make fundamental improvements to the building's infrastructure—from the lobby and stairwells to the elevator, dressing room, and rooftop—while creating a new residency space for artists and education programs, and a new third-floor gallery.

Among the new features provided by this renovation are:

- An improved lobby for accessibility and with clearer entryways
- A new second-floor studio for artist residencies and expanded education programs
- An expansive third-floor gallery for hybridized artistic projects
- An enclosed rooftop area to allow for social exchange and gatherings before and after openings and performances, in addition to an outdoor area for special projects by artists
- A larger dressing room with direct access to the theater for artists

- Better organized and coherent administrative spaces
- Upgrading the infrastructure of all spaces, including comprehensive sound-proofing to ensure artists' projects, as well as neighbors, are not disturbed by noise
- Replacement of elevator, HVAC, and security systems
- A commitment to electric power, allowing the organization to go green
- Increased rentable space and capacity to diversify and increase income sources

Lyn Rice of Rice+Lipka Architects said, "The gritty heft of The Kitchen's building underpins the experience of working in and visiting it. Maintaining and further exposing this character is central to the renovation, which will create a sustainable foundation for the future, maximizing space, doubling capacity, and allowing artists to better leverage the former icehouse in cross-disciplinary experimentation."

Mila Tuttle, President of The Kitchen's Board of Trustees, said, "This is a thrilling time for The Kitchen. The renovated building is key to the future of the institution as the go-to venue for artists to work and present. Resolving the infrastructure challenges makes The Kitchen more accessible for artists to use, and for the public to experience. We are excited to have so much support from people in The Kitchen family, including the Mapplethorpe Foundation, and we are especially grateful for the incredible commitments from the Department of Cultural Affairs, the City Council, and the Manhattan Borough President's office, which have given this Campaign truly inspiring support that will sustain one of the most vibrant arts organizations in New York."

About The Kitchen at Its 50th Anniversary

As one of New York City's oldest nonprofit alternative art centers (founded as an artist collective in 1971 and formalized as a 501c3 in 1973), The Kitchen is dedicated to offering emerging and established artists opportunities to create and present new work within, and across, the disciplines of dance, film, music, theater, video, visual art, and literature. Recognizing its longstanding legacy for innovation, The Kitchen remains devoted to fostering a community of artists and audiences, offering artists the opportunity to make—and for audiences to engage with—work that pushes the boundaries of artistic disciplines and strengthens meaningful dialogues between the arts and larger culture.

Since The Kitchen was founded by video artists Steina and Woody Vasulka fifty years ago, it has served an essential function in providing a community and context for kinds of artmaking and discourse that could be housed nowhere else. From its original focus on video art to its groundbreaking embrace of interdisciplinarity, The Kitchen has strived to offer what Steina called "a home for the homeless" in art. Following this mandate, The Kitchen became a place for artists whose groundbreaking work demands an alternative institutional context whose very shape can answer directly to the desires and needs of an emerging artistic community.

The Kitchen took its name from its initial location in the former kitchen of the Mercer Arts Center at 240 Mercer Street. After operating in that space from 1971–1973, the organization moved to its own loft on the corner of Wooster and Broome Streets from 1973–1985. Noise complaints were common during the time in this Soho loft, and ultimately these neighborhood issues and other factors prompted The Kitchen to relocate to its three-story Chelsea space in January 1986.

In its early years, The Kitchen solidified its reputation as a place renowned for its firsts in art, music, and performance. To name just a few early examples: the first concert by Talking Heads in 1975; the first

performance of Philip Glass and Robert Wilson's *Einstein on the Beach* in 1976; Robert Mapplethorpe's first exhibition, titled *Pictures*, in 1977; Sherrie Levine's first solo exhibition and the legendary downtown concert series *New Music, New York* in 1979; the first presentation of Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills*, Julius Eastman's landmark *Crazy N****r*, and Laurie Anderson's *United States Part II* in 1980; the pivotal exhibition *Pictures and Promises* organized by Barbara Kruger in 1981; and Nam June Paik's *Good Morning, Mr. Orwell* and Adrian Piper's *Funk Lessons* in 1984, among so many other key moments for artists and for New York's cultural landscape.

This is only a fraction of those artists who have made groundbreaking work inside The Kitchen's walls in both Soho and Chelsea. The 19th Street building has been the site of numerous seminal events such as the first concert by Antony and the Johnsons in 1997 and, more recently, game-changing exhibitions and performances by artists like Chantal Akerman, Gretchen Bender (whose *Total Recall* first showed here in 1987), Meriem Bennani, Simone Leigh (whose first solo exhibition was at The Kitchen in 2012), Ralph Lemon, Rodney McMillian, Moor Mother (Camae Ayewa), Virginia Overton, Sondra Perry, Tyshawn Sorey, Danh Võ, and Anicka Yi. Additionally, The Kitchen has hosted in Chelsea a range of impactful group exhibitions such as *Besides, With, Against, and Yet: Abstraction and The Ready-Made Gesture* (2009), *From Minimalism into Algorithm* (2016), and our collaboration with The Racial Imaginary Institute, titled *On Whiteness* (2018). Among the other artists who have presented work across the decades at The Kitchen are (in no particular order) Steve Reich, Greg Tate, Arto Lindsay, Anthony Braxton, Arthur Russell, Beastie Boys, Brian Eno, Cecil Taylor, Charlemagne Palestine, Claudia Rankine, Dan Graham, Bill T. Jones, Debbie Harry, John Cale, Jazzy Jeff, Eliane Radigue, Jeff Koons, Fab Five Freddy, George Lewis, John Cage, Karen Finley, Keith Haring, Keith Sonnier, Kerry James Marshall, Kiki Smith, La Monte Young, Darius James, Laurie Spiegel, Lucinda Childs, Maryanne Amacher, Morton Subotnick, Muhal Richard Abrams, Wadada Leo Smith, Okwui Okpokwasili, Glenn Branca, Fred Moten, Richard Serra, Robert Ashley, Robert Gober, Rock Steady Crew, Sonic Youth, Steve Paxton, The Raincoats, Tony Conrad, Vijay Iyer, Urban Bush Women, Yuka C. Honda, Zeena Parkins, Jack Goldstein, and Vernon Reid.

Artist Simone Leigh, who will represent the U.S. at the 2022 Venice Biennale, said, "During this moment of terror and wild creativity I reflect on the ways in which I have been shaped by a radical and creative community, so much of which has traveled through, and in intersection with, The Kitchen and its history of centering experimentation. Reflecting on my 2012 solo show at The Kitchen, my first solo show in NYC, I was able to simply go off. And the wild experiments of that show started a body of work in which I am still engaged. The Kitchen gives us room to dream in, a space for artists to really engage a dynamic imagination of what this art world should be."

Artist Kevin Beasley, who organized *Assembly* at The Kitchen 2019 and returned as part of Ralph Lemon's *Rant #3* in 2020, remarked, "The Kitchen has always struck me as an organization that's responsive to the present—giving a platform to artists in their early stages and building those relationships. When The Kitchen invited me to create *Assembly* and activate the possibilities of an arts space stripped bare across three weekends, we were able to consider new approaches to how institutions can be shaped in deep collaboration with artists, around the publics they serve. It's exhilarating to think about what lies ahead for The Kitchen with their capital campaign, and how a reorientation of this space means a continued, evolving commitment to new forms of collectivity, experimentation, and access."

Artist Devin Kenny commented, "The Kitchen began for me as a mythic historical place I learned about in grimy photocopies, and it has become a place I could go to be inspired and see peers and colleagues

and folks that I had seen randomly around town, only to later learn about their astounding practices. At The Kitchen, artists create in a way that is without compromise, suitable for their potent and distinctive ways of working. I've been fortunate to perform and create at The Kitchen myself, while also being inspired by the other folks around me—right there in the same space and time. The Kitchen is one of the few institutions that has consistently made me think, feel, question, and be pushed. And it's truly exciting, for the next generation of artists and thinkers, that Legacy Russell is now guiding it."

About Rice+Lipka Architects

Rice+Lipka Architects (R+L) is a New York City-based design studio with a focus on creating cultural and public works with an enduring sense of place. Recognized for bringing a civic-minded intelligence and resourceful vigor to a range of building, planning and research projects, R+L embraces complex contexts and constraints, actively teasing out new design potential latent within everyday requirements.

The practice, directed by Lyn Rice and Astrid Lipka, has its roots in the art world. Rice served as a design architect and architect-of-record for Dia:Beacon, one of the world's largest museums of contemporary art. Internationally recognized for its expansive, daylit art spaces, the project set a new benchmark for the adaptive re-use of industrial space. R+L's range of cultural projects, from small-scale installations, artist collaborations, exhibition work, and gallery design, has extended to include influential performance venues such as Nuyorican Poets Cafe, Choirciati Cultural Center, and The Kitchen.

Committed to innovation in the public realm, R+L is actively rethinking the role of one of our last civic spaces—the public library—with new building and renovation projects in development for New York Public Library and Queens Public Library. R+L's Hamilton Grange Teen Center in Harlem, designed for NYPL, broke new ground as the first library floor dedicated to teens. The studio brings a civic sensibility to all its work, including nationally recognized works, such as the Sheila Johnson Design Center at Parsons, which breaks down barriers between public and institutional domains. Subsequent educational projects for Parsons/The New School include the Making Center, School of Constructed Environments and School of Art, Media & Technology. Ongoing institutional projects for NYPD include the award-winning new Bomb Squad headquarters building and 48-acre tactical campus masterplan at Pelham Bay Park in New York City.

Rice received both The Architectural League of New York's Emerging Voices and Architectural Record's Design Vanguard awards, with the studio receiving International ALA/IIDA Library and The Architectural Review Future Projects awards, multiple NYC Public Design Commission awards, as well as over a dozen AIA awards, including National AIA/ALA Library and National AIA Honor Awards.

For more information about the capital campaign, please visit thenext50.thekitchen.org.

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