

CONTACT: Nicole Chism Griffin / ncgriffin@thecontemporaryaustin.org
512 453 5312 x 119 (P) / 206 947 2312 (C)

SHARON MAIDENBERG NAMED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN

Longtime Bay Area arts leader brings strong experience working with international, multidisciplinary contemporary artists to Austin.

FEBRUARY 21, 2020– Austin, Texas

Valerie Armstrong, President of the Board of Trustees of The Contemporary Austin, announced today that Sharon Maidenberg has been named the museum's new Ernest and Sarah Butler Executive Director and CEO, following an international search. Maidenberg comes to The Contemporary Austin from Headlands Center for the Arts in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, north of San Francisco, where she has served as Executive Director since 2010. She will assume her position in Austin on September 1, succeeding Louis Grachos, who left the museum in June 2019.

"On behalf of the full Board of Trustees, I am thrilled to make this announcement, ushering in the next chapter for The Contemporary Austin," said Armstrong. "Sharon brings great energy and deep experience working with living artists, along with strong values-driven organizational leadership and mission-driven strategic thinking. I look forward to seeing what she will accomplish here in Austin."



Originally from the East Coast, Maidenberg has been an active member of the Bay Area nonprofit arts community for the past 20 years, where she has worked with some of San Francisco's most notable contemporary arts organizations, including Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Southern Exposure, and New Langton Arts. At Headlands, Maidenberg has supported more than 700 artists through artist residencies and awards, exhibitions, and public programs, including the launch of a thematic residency program, which brings artists and non-arts experts together to address the most pressing issues of our time. She led Headlands through a period of unprecedented organizational growth, more than tripling its budget, doubling its staff, and envisioning and overseeing the creation of The Commons, an outdoor visitor and programmatic space with [CMG Landscape Architecture](#). She also built a strong board of directors, strengthened the institution's governance practices, and cemented its financial health, setting it up for the successful completion of strategic plans through 2023.

"I am thrilled to take on my next professional opportunity in one of the country's most dynamic and rapidly evolving cities," said Sharon Maidenberg. "Like the Bay Area, Austin is one of the most innovative places in the country, and it's clear that culture, community, and creativity are deeply valued. I am eager to become part of the rich arts ecosystem in Austin at this critical time in the world—a time when the arts can and should play an integral role in society. During my tenure at Headlands I've worked with artists

The Contemporary Austin

directly, built a strategic culture of relevant and thought-provoking audience engagement, and invested deeply in cultivating meaningful relationships. I look forward to applying my experience and perspective to The Contemporary's already strong programs, and to working with the great staff and Board to write the organization's next chapter. "

THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN

As Austin's only museum solely focused on contemporary artists and their work, The Contemporary Austin offers exhibitions, educational opportunities, and events that start conversations and fuel the city's creative spirit. Known for artist-centric exhibitions and collaborations, The Contemporary invites exploration in both its urban and natural settings—downtown at the Jones Center (700 Congress Avenue), lakeside at the Laguna Gloria campus (3809 West 35th Street), and around Austin through the Museum Without Walls program.

Maidenberg joins The Contemporary Austin at an important time in the museum's history. Founded in 2013, The Contemporary quickly built a reputation for its strong program of exhibitions, public programs, and educational initiatives that highlight the work of preeminent contemporary artists from around the world and connect with the community. The museum expanded and renovated its downtown location in late 2016, increasing gallery space to more than 7,000 square feet, adding programming capacity on its rooftop, and updating crucial systems to bring the space in line with current museum standards. At that time, the museum also announced the long-term loan of Jim Hodges's large-scale, outdoor sculpture *With Liberty and Justice for All (A Work in Progress)*, 2014–2016, which stretches 144 feet across the building's roofline. The Contemporary is currently raising funds to purchase the sculpture.

In Spring 2019, The Contemporary reopened its fourteen-acre sculpture park at Laguna Gloria, with a new entrance experience featuring modern steel and glass buildings, landscaped terraces, and a newly commissioned sculptural installation by artist Jessica Stockholder. The new Moody Pavilions house a café, museum shop, and other visitor amenities. Laguna Gloria is home to the Betty and Edward Marcus Sculpture Park, which features thirty outdoor sculptures by artists from the US and around the world, as well as an Art School that serves more than 6,000 adults and children every year, with classes in painting, drawing, ceramics, wood and metal fabrication, photography, printmaking, and more.

The Contemporary Austin has also recently launched one of the largest unrestricted art prizes in the world, the biennial Suzanne Deal Booth / FLAG Art Foundation Prize, which awards a solo exhibition, scholarly publication, and \$200,000 to an artist selected by an independent advisory committee comprising leading curators and art historians from around the US and abroad. The museum celebrates the opening of its second Prize exhibition, *Nicole Eisenman: Sturm und Drang*, on February 27, 2020.

###