

## **P.S.1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR ALANNA HEISS TO RETIRE ON DECEMBER 31**

**New York, December 29, 2008**—Alanna Heiss, the founding director of P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, who over the course of the last 37 years oversaw the transformation of a turn-of-the-century public school building in Long Island City, Queens, into a space that reflected the originality and independence of hundreds of artists, will retire from P.S.1 on December 31, 2008. An internationally recognized champion of contemporary artists for more than three decades, Ms. Heiss is also hailed as a visionary curator of adventurous exhibitions—more than 800 during her tenure—and as an arts leader whose support has nurtured the careers of young artists and curators around the world.

“P.S.1 was founded with a particular mission, which was to allow for the discovery of many different points of view under one roof,” said Ms. Heiss. “Its special gift to those who appreciate art is its ability to mobilize artists both young and old, known and unknown, to explore their dreams and visions. The experiences I’ve had working with great curators and artists have been a tremendous honor.”

Glenn D. Lowry, Director of The Museum of Modern Art, which became affiliated with P.S.1 in 2000, said: “Alanna Heiss is a creative and visionary leader whose efforts brought the originality of contemporary artists to a worldwide public and built a landmark center for the visual and performance arts. Literally hundreds of artists from around the world have felt the impact of her tireless efforts over the last 37 years, and that impact will continue to resonate with artists for years to come.”

“It has been an incredible experience and honor to have served on the board of P.S.1 with Alanna since the 1970’s,” said Agnes Gund, who in addition to serving on P.S.1’s board is also President Emerita of MoMA. “She has had an extraordinary effect on the art world and created an institution that is unique, both in dealing with older, mid-career artists and younger, emerging artists. Her unerring ability to know everyone in and connected to the art world is truly amazing. She is a real impresario of international contemporary art.”

Following her retirement from P.S.1, Heiss will launch Art International Radio (AIR), an organization that will be devoted to artistic, musical, performance, and experimental programs, in early 2009. Taking its lead from Heiss’s brainchild Art Radio WPS1.org, Art International Radio will bolster a tradition of bringing thought-provoking conversations with noteworthy artists, curators, and academics to a listening audience.

A search committee will be established in early 2009 to lead the search for the next director of P.S.1.

P.S.1 was originally founded by Ms. Heiss in 1971 as part of the Institute for Art and Urban Resources, with the mission of transforming underutilized and abandoned spaces across New York City into accessible artists’ studios and exhibition venues. The effort to establish P.S.1 in a deserted, turn-of-the-century Romanesque Revival public school building in Queens was spearheaded by Ms. Heiss and a

turn-of-the-century Romanesque Revival public school building in Queens was spearheaded by Ms. Heiss and a group of dedicated trustees, including the late Brendan Gill, legendary writer for *The New Yorker* magazine. Today it is recognized by artists, curators, critics, and arts organizations around the world as one of the most innovative and respected exhibition spaces in New York City.

From the inaugural *Rooms* exhibition in 1976, which included artists Vito Acconci, John Baldessari, Bruce Nauman, Richard Serra, and Lawrence Weiner among many others, Ms. Heiss led three decades of some of the most provocative and diverse exhibitions and happenings in the art world. P.S.1 introduced emerging artists such as Richard Artschwager, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Cai Guo-Qiang, Donald Judd, Kim Sooja, Richard Nonas, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Richard Serra, Katharina Sieverding, James Turrell, Jackie Winsor, and Zhang Huan to a wider public.

P.S.1 fostered the vision of its curators by presenting landmark group exhibitions such as *New York, New Wave* (1981, Diego Cortez), *Theatergarten Bestiarium* (1989, Chris Dercon), *David Hammons: Rousing the Rubble* (1990-91, Tom Finkelpearl), and *Disasters of War: Francisco de Goya, Henry Darger, Jake and Dinos Chapman* (2001, Klaus Biesenbach). Throughout the late 1970s and 1980s, it became a home for video and performance art, including legendary performances by Gordon Matta-Clark and Dennis Oppenheim. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, P.S.1 expanded its reach into dance, film, and music while maintaining its reputation as one of the most lively and unconventional organizations in New York.

After a building-wide renovation in the mid-1990s, P.S.1 reopened in 1997. It was then further invigorated by Ms. Heiss with three acclaimed projects: Warm Up (est. 1998), an annual summer event that brings a roster of experimental musicians and D.J.s to the museum's courtyard each Saturday, drawing an audience of thousands; the Young Architects Program (YAP) (est. 1999), a collaboration with MoMA that awards annual commissions to young architects for new projects in P.S.1's courtyard; and Art Radio WPS1.org (est. 2004), which produced thousands of hours of musical and cultural programs and special events around the world, including those at Art Basel Miami Beach and the Venice Biennale.

In 1999, Ms. Heiss and Mr. Lowry announced a formal affiliation between their two organizations that would extend the reach of both institutions and combine P.S.1's contemporary mission with MoMA's strength as one of the greatest collecting museums of modern art. Their combined resources and vision resulted in new collaborations and fostered the important exhibitions *Greater New York 2000* and *Greater New York 2005*, each of which showcased the work of over 150 emerging artists representing New York City and State, some of whom have become internationally prominent contemporary artists. The two institutions also joined forces in organizing major single-artist retrospectives, notably those exploring the careers of Dieter Roth (2004) and Olafur Eliasson (2008).

Under Ms. Heiss's direction, P.S.1 has continued to evolve into a source for budding artists and avant-garde exhibitions such as this year's *Arctic Hysteria*, *Gino De Dominicis*, and *Leandro Erlich*. Its public programming has included some of the most prolific figures in the contemporary art world while maintaining Ms. Heiss's vision of keeping art readily available to an ever-expanding and diverse audience.

In 1982, P.S.1 was designated by Henry Geldzahler, the City of New York's Commissioner of Cultural Affairs, as a member of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG), and in 1980 was presented with the Mayor's Award for Contributions to the Artistic Viability of New York City by Mayor Ed Koch. The City of New York and the Borough of Queens have been instrumental in P.S.1's continued prosperity, including the major renovation in 1998 by architect Frederick Fischer.

The recipient of numerous awards and recognitions in the United States and abroad, Ms. Heiss received honorary doctorates from the San Francisco Institute of Art and Lawrence University, the French Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres, the Swedish Order of the Polar Star, and the Bard Award for Curatorial Excellence.

## **Alanna Heiss**

In addition to her role as Founder and Director of P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Alanna Heiss has curated and/or organized over 800 exhibitions at P.S.1 and elsewhere. At P.S.1, her shows include: *Gino De Dominicis*, *Leandro Erlich: Swimming Pool, Arctic Hysteria, Tunga, Not for Sale*, *Peter Young*, *Ron Gorchov: Double Trouble*, *Jon Kessler: The Palace at 4 A.M.*, *John Wesley: Paintings 1961-2000*, *Greater New York* (selecting curator) in 2000 and 2005, *Alex Katz Under the Stars: American Landscapes 1951-1995*, and *Rooms*, the inaugural show which opened at P.S.1 in 1976. Heiss also organized numerous landmark shows, including *New York, New Wave* (1981); *Michelangelo Pistoletto* (1988); *The Aesthetic Arsenal: Socialist Realism under Stalin* (1993-94); *Jackie Winsor* (1997), and *John Coplans* (1997).

Heiss served as the Commissioner of the 1986 American Pavilion at the Venice Biennial, (Isamu Noguchi, curated by Henry Geldzahler). Among other international shows are the Yokohama Triennial (panelist) in 2005, the 2002 Shanghai Biennale (curatorial director), and the 1985 Paris Biennial (Commissioner). The same year, with Achille Bonito Oliva and Kasper Koenig, Heiss organized *Quartetto* with Joseph Beuys, Bruce Nauman, Enzo Cucchi and Luciano Fabro. She served as Chief Curator of the *Tribute for John Cage*, organized for the 1993 Venice Biennial, and in 1995 she co-curated the *Lausanne Textile Biennial*, with Toni Stooss (Director of The Kunstmuseum, Bern), and Christian Bernard (Director of Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland).

Heiss has edited and written texts for numerous catalogs and anthologies. She frequently lectures and participates in symposiums in the United States and abroad on the re-use of existing urban structures and on developments in contemporary art, particularly installation art. Heiss received the Mayor's Award for Contributions to the Artistic Viability of New York City, as well as France's prestigious Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres in the Légion d'Honneur. She is on the Board of Directors for the Asian Elephant Art & Conservation Project. She is also a member of the Royal Swedish Order of the Polar Star for her contributions to the promotion of the arts in Sweden, and is a recipient of the Skowhegan Award for outstanding work in the arts. More recently, she was honored with the 1998 Women of Distinction Award by the Girl Scout Council of Greater New York and was recognized as New York's 100 Most Influential Women by *Crain's New York Business*. In 2007, Heiss received the CCS Bard Award for Curatorial Excellence.

Heiss is recognized as one of the most influential curators and organizers of exhibitions in the world, and she continues to champion innovative, experimental contemporary art. P.S.1 is one of the oldest and largest non-profit centers solely devoted to contemporary art in the United States, and one of the largest in the world.

Alanna Heiss lives in a loft in Tribeca with her husband Fredrick Sherman, a lawyer.

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