

The Museum of Modern Art

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART APPOINTS CARSON CHAN AS THE FIRST DIRECTOR OF THE EMILIO AMBASZ INSTITUTE FOR THE JOINT STUDY OF THE BUILT AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

NEW YORK, June 10, 2021—The Museum of Modern Art announces the appointment of Carson Chan as the first director of the Emilio Ambasz Institute for the Joint Study of the Built and the Natural Environment. Mr. Chan will also serve as a curator in the Museum’s Department of Architecture and Design, where he will lead initiatives focused on ecology and sustainability in collaboration with all six of the Museum’s curatorial departments. In his role as director of the Ambasz Institute, he will develop a robust and diverse roster of exhibitions, along with digital and onsite programs that address the interconnectedness of architecture and ecology. He will also create a strategy for the collection that focuses on works dealing with sustainability. Mr. Chan will begin in his new role later this summer, and will organize and present a major exhibition focused on the emergence of ecological thinking in architecture, scheduled for 2023.

“A core part of the mission of The Museum of Modern Art is based in the belief that art makes a difference in the world,” said Glenn D. Lowry, the David Rockefeller Director of The Museum of Modern Art. “The Ambasz Institute gives us a unique opportunity to fulfill our mission by addressing critical issues in the built environment through the lens of sustainability. We look forward to welcoming Carson, who I know will address the urgent issues of climate change with imagination and intelligence.”

“I am thrilled to appoint Carson Chan the inaugural director of the Emilio Ambasz Institute,” said Martino Stierli, the Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design at The Museum of Modern Art. “Carson comes to MoMA with an impressive curatorial and scholarly track record at the intersection of architecture and ecology. I am confident that he will help establish the Emilio Ambasz Institute as a global leader in the ecological recalibration of architecture, one of the most urgent issues in the field today.”

The goals of the Ambasz Institute, through a range of curatorial programs and research initiatives, are to foster dialogue, promote conversation, and facilitate research around the relationship between the built and the natural environment—making the interaction between architecture and ecology visible and accessible to Museum visitors and the wider public while highlighting the urgent need for an ecological recalibration. The Ambasz Institute will focus in particular on digital initiatives in order to both advance a global conversation on this crucial issue and ensure that the Institute reaches a diverse audience. The Institute, to be located on MoMA’s Midtown Manhattan campus within the Department of Architecture and Design, will specifically study creative approaches to design at all scales of the built environment—buildings, cities, landscapes, and objects—in order to work toward an ecologically sustainable future and environmental justice. The Emilio Ambasz Institute is an integral part of the Department of Architecture and Design, and will contribute to its wide-reaching programs and activities.

“I look forward to challenging MoMA’s current and future audiences with new ways to define architecture in the midst of our ecological crisis,” said Carson Chan. “My vision for the Ambasz Institute is to allow MoMA’s audiences to see architecture beyond the object and to understand the ways in which it is ecologically and socially embedded in the world.”

Before arriving at MoMA, Mr. Chan worked internationally as a curator, writer, and educator. Recently he was an adjunct professor at the Weitzman School of Design at the University of Pennsylvania, where he taught a graduate seminar called Architecture's Ecology. In 2006, together with Fotini Lazaridou-Hatzigoga, he founded PROGRAM, a project space and residency program in Berlin that sought to find the disciplinary boundaries of architecture through exhibitions, talks, and publications. Chan curated the 4th Marrakech Biennale (with Nadim Samman), and in 2013 he served as executive curator for the Biennial of the Americas in Denver. His writing on art, architecture, and contemporary culture appears frequently in books, catalogues, and periodicals, including *O32c*, where he is former editor-at-large. His doctoral research at Princeton University tracks the development of the architecture of public aquariums during the rise of environmentalism in postwar USA. Together with Daniel A. Barber and Dalal Musaed Alsayer, Mr. Chan is a founding editor of *Current: Collective for Architecture History and Environment*, an online resource and scholarly journal focused on the intersection of architecture, environment, and justice.

PRESS CONTACTS:

Meg Montgoris, meg_montgoris@moma.org
Press Office, pressoffice@moma.org

For downloadable high-resolution images, visit moma.org/press.