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Abby Chen Appointed Head of Contemporary Art Department at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco

Newly created position will manage museum's contemporary art team, oversee expanding contemporary art program, forge partnerships with local and international artists



San Francisco, Dec. 13, 2018 — The Asian Art Museum of San Francisco has named Abby Chen, an internationally recognized curator, educator, writer and community organizer, to be the museum's first head of department for contemporary art. Chen will report to the Asian Art Museum's chief curator, Dr. Laura Allen. Born in China, Chen holds an M.A. in visual and critical Studies from the California College of Arts. She will assume her new position at the Asian Art Museum on Jan. 7, 2019.

"We are thrilled to welcome Abby to the team because she is, above all, a bridge-builder. She builds bridges between audiences and art, between artists and institutions, and between institutions and important ideas and issues that we all confront today," says Dr. Jay Xu, director and CEO of the Asian Art Museum.

Since 2006, Chen has been the artistic director at the Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco (CCC), where she was given a platform to transform the organization through risk-taking exhibitions, process-driven practices, and impactful public art, including the multidisciplinary project *WOMEN我们* (2010–2013), *Chinatown Keywords School + Social Botany* (Xu Tan, 2014–2016), and *Sky Bridge* (Beili Liu, 2015), among others. Chen

maintains strong ties with experimental artist communities locally and internationally, which has contributed to her wide record of publications and presentations on the intersectionalities of race, sexuality, gender, nation, migration, and technology in both the United States and Asia.

“I am thrilled to join my colleagues at this incredible moment for the Asian Art Museum,” says Chen. “Investing in new platforms, new spaces and new artists is a bold statement from a storied institution about how critical contemporary art is when engaging with shifting demographics and evolving imaginations. I look forward to navigating these complicated issues that are relevant not only to a rapidly changing Asia and the wider world, but above all, here in the Bay Area.”

“We applaud Abby’s visionary leadership that has taken the Chinese Culture Center’s curatorial vision and brand to new heights. Her longstanding commitment has cemented CCC’s footprint on the cultural field,” says Cecilia Sze, board chair of CCC. “Together, we have created spaces for contemporary artistic voices, driven innovative dialogue, and told the untold stories. Asian Art Museum’s hiring of Abby signals the important role CCC has in nurturing diverse cultural leadership and pushing the boundaries of the creative movement. We enthusiastically congratulate Abby on this new chapter.”

The hiring comes as a key step in the Asian Art Museum’s ongoing \$90 million transformation, which includes the renovation of existing gallery spaces and the construction of the Akiko Yamazaki and Jerry Yang Pavilion, scheduled to be completed in 2020. A new emphasis on contemporary art, dedication to digital enhancement, and the enhanced presentation of the museum’s masterpieces in the renovated collection galleries are the pillars of the transformed experience that will define the future of the museum.

“The appointment of Abby comes at a crucial point in the Asian Art Museum’s Transformation Project, which will provide an opportunity for the Asian to refine its programming strategy, and its position in both the community and the art world,” says Akiko Yamazaki, co-chair, along with Lucy Sun, of the Asian Art Commission and Asian Art Museum Foundation. “With her tremendous talent for identifying vital new artistic voices across the globe, I know Abby will advance our museum’s reputation as a cultural thought leader and will put San Francisco at the forefront of contemporary cultural experiences,” says Sun.

“This is wonderful news for San Francisco!” says Director of Cultural Affairs for the City and County of San Francisco Tom DeCaigny. “As both a funder and a partner of the Chinese Culture Center, the San Francisco Arts Commission has had a front row seat to the incredible work Abby has done in the community and in helping to make Chinatown an international destination for contemporary art. We are thrilled that she will have the opportunity to move her amazing work forward at one of San Francisco’s most venerable visual arts organizations.”

When Chen starts in January, she will lead what will be the largest team in the museum's curatorial department, and the only one focused on pan-Asian and Asian American art. Chen will work closely with Dr. Karin G. Oen, Marc Mayer, and Megan Merritt in advancing the museum's dynamic record of innovative programming into the next era, ensuring that the museum is the go-to place for Bay Area audiences curious about how Asian art and culture from millennia past connects to the most cutting-edge artworks being created today.

Asian Art Museum

The Asian Art Museum—Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture is one of San Francisco's premier arts institutions and home to a world-renowned collection of more than 18,000 Asian art treasures from throughout Asia spanning 6,000 years of history. Through rich art experiences, centered on historic and contemporary artworks, the Asian Art Museum unlocks the past for visitors, bringing it to life while serving as a catalyst for new art, new creativity and new thinking.

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Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco

CCC's mission is to elevate underserved communities and give voice to equality through contemporary art and education. Rooted in San Francisco Chinatown, the CCC creates spaces for contemporary artistic work, education, and creative engagement that build thriving communities and advance a plurality of Chinese diasporic voices. CCC champions work that engages locally as a launching point to explore its intersections globally with transnational community, and the histories and cultural practices in other communities of color.

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