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PAINTER ERIC FISCHL TO DELIVER THE SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS SUNDAY, MAY 13 IN MILLENNIUM PARK

Chicago, IL—Internationally acclaimed American painter and sculptor Eric Fischl will deliver the commencement address to the 2012 graduating class of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) on Sunday, May 13, at the Frank Gehry-designed Jay Pritzker Pavillion in Chicago’s Millennium Park. Along with philanthropist and civil rights activist Beatrice “Buddy” Mayer and world-renowned cartoonist Gahan Wilson (SAIC BFA 1952), Fischl will receive an honorary doctorate from SAIC to recognize his achievements and commitment to the arts.

One of the leading American figurative painters of the late 20th and early 21st century, Fischl is also founder, president, and lead curator of America: Now and Here, a collaboration among visual artists, playwrights, filmmakers, musicians, and poets who are sharing their work to inspire civil dialogues about America and to foster positive community engagement and action. Fischl will be one of several commencement speakers this year at institutions in the Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design (AICAD) addressing the theme of America: Now and Here, engaging in a national dialogue about the diverse social and political contexts of artists today. The work of these commencement speakers will be compiled in a forthcoming publication.

"Eric Fischl’s figurative painting has left an indelible mark on America and the world," says Lisa Wainwright, SAIC Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty. “The sheer bravura of his style and the underlying psychological dimensions of his work have served as startling commentary on the history of American culture. Eric Fischl’s art represents a major contribution to the history of American painting. Together with his work organizing the America: Now and Here project, Fischl depicts America’s consciousness in fascinating detail. Akin to the SAIC curriculum, I believe he will empower the artists, designers, and scholars in this year’s graduating class to participate in a vital exchange of ideas."

“The idea is simple,” says Eric Fischl. “Let’s explore a theme that everybody shares and build a dialogue around it: America. We’ll start by sharing our idea and experiences through the art that we make. Now, it’s your turn. Let’s use art to have a dialogue about America."

About Eric Fischl
Eric Fischl (b. 1948) work is represented in such prestigious museums as the Museum of Modern Art in New York City and the Whitney Museum of American Art. The artist is a Fellow at both the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Science. A New York City native, Fischl has lived in different cities across the country over the years, including Chicago, where he worked as a security guard at the Museum of Contemporary Art in the 1970s and was exposed to the bizarre and provocative works of SAIC alumni Ed Paschke (BFA 1961, MFA 1970) and Jim Nutt (BFA 1967). The newest exhibition of Fischl’s work opened February 11 at Mary Boone Gallery, New York City.
About Beatrice “Buddy” Mayer
Beatrice “Buddy” Mayer (b. 1921) has dedicated her life to supporting philanthropic causes and the power of art in education as a generator of change. Mayer is president of the Robert & Beatrice C. Mayer Foundation, trustee emeritus of the Nathan Cummings Foundation and Kenyon College, and a life trustee of the Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Contemporary Art. She also sits on the University of Chicago’s Social Services Administration (SSA) Visiting Committee. Mayer holds three honorary doctorates and has received countless awards for her selfless work on behalf of social welfare, health education, and the arts.

About Gahan Wilson
Gahan Wilson (b. 1930 in Evanston, IL) is a cartoonist for the National Lampoon, Playboy, and the New Yorker and former president of the Cartoonists Guild. He is known for his cartoons depicting horror-fantasy situations and is often compared to Charles Addams and Edward Gorey. In 2005, Wilson was recognized with Lifetime Achievement from the World Fantasy Awards. He received the World Fantasy Convention Award in 1981 and the National Cartoonists Society’s Milton Caniff Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005. Wilson is married to the author Nancy Winters (née Nancy Dee Midyette) and resides in Sag Harbor, Long Island. His mother, Rose Marion Gahan, also attended SAIC (1912–15) and studied illustration, lettering, modeling, history of painting and sculpture, and perspective.

About the School of the Art Institute of Chicago
A leader in educating artists, designers, and scholars since 1866, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) offers nationally accredited undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate programs to nearly 3,200 students from around the globe. Located in the heart of Chicago, SAIC has an educational philosophy built upon an interdisciplinary approach to art and design, giving students unparalleled opportunities to develop their creative and critical abilities, while working with renowned faculty who include many of the leading practitioners in their fields. SAIC’s resources include the Art Institute of Chicago and its new Modern Wing; numerous special collections and programming venues provide students with exceptional exhibitions, screenings, lectures, and performances. For more information, please visit saic.edu.

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