FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 26, 2012
Images and Interviews Available on Request

Executive Director of Exhibitions Receives Grant from Warhol Foundation, Funding for Major Research Initiative on Socially Engaged Art in Chicago

Chicago, IL—SAIC faculty member Mary Jane Jacob has been awarded a landmark Curatorial Research Fellowship from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts to study Chicago’s role in the development of socially engaged art practices, both ongoing and historical. The $50,000 fellowship—the maximum Curatorial Research Fellowship amount awarded by the Warhol Foundation—is the first grant that SAIC has received from the Warhol Foundation since 1995, and is also the largest that the school has ever received from the foundation. The research supported by the fellowship will result in a future exhibition, as well as a series of think tanks, project-based classes, and new writing by artists, scholars and other thinkers, and a local survey of current projects.

Professor Jacob, who is Executive Director of Exhibitions and Exhibition Studies, will lead fellowship work from an initial perspective of Chicago as a “crossroads” for socially conscious art—a fluid, generative place whose experiments have, to date, largely resisted art branding. “The research that SAIC generates from this grant could well change how we look at Chicago’s role in the art world,” says Jacob. “Our city is both a current hub and a historical pioneer for the explosion of socially conscious work in the last two decades. This project will bring together Chicago’s great minds to probe and celebrate that tradition.”

Research will trace a genealogy of arts and social projects and institutions beginning in the 1900s with Jane Addams’ Hull House, John Dewey’s Lab School, and László Moholy-Nagy’s New Bauhaus, and will go on to examine long-term community projects such as Dan Peterman’s Experimental Station, Jim Duignan’s Stockyard Institute, Laurie Jo Reynolds’s Tamms Year Ten, and collectives and projects like Haha, Incubate, Mess Hall, and Temporary Services.

The projected exhibition will be a joint effort with New York–based artist and educator Pablo Helguera (SAIC BFA 1993), who works with installation, sculpture, photography, drawing, socially engaged art, and performance. Helguera is known for his work on The School of Panamerican Unrest, a three-year long “nomadic” forum and subsequent exhibition generating connections between different regions of the Americas through discussions, performances, screenings, and other collaborations. He is Director of Adult and Academic Programs in the Department of Education at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City, and the author of Education for Socially Engaged Art (2011). To prepare for this exhibition, Jacob and Helguera plan to engage groups of artists to develop pilot projects that will explore modes of display and organization, as well as use this opportunity to develop a curatorial lab for looking at the presentation of social-practice art. The culminating show will be shaped by the exhibition’s inaugural space—SAIC’s Sullivan Galleries—but will find resonance with audiences beyond as they locate a rootedness in Chicago for social art that is burgeoning on both coasts and Europe.
SAIC President Walter E. Massey says, “The Warhol Foundation, like SAIC, is a vital advocate for studying and sustaining the visual arts in society, and this grant represents a historic partnership for our two organizations. This project will examine work that is experimental, under-recognized, and challenging. It is an ideal case for significant cultural philanthropy that is responsive to the changing needs of today’s artists and scholars.”

“The Warhol Foundation is very pleased to be able to support Mary Jane Jacob’s research into the origins of today’s socially engaged art practices with a special emphasis on the role played by the city of Chicago itself,” says Rachel Bers, Program Director, Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. “It is the Foundation’s belief that the research—with its emphasis on think tanks, study groups and other convenings of artists and scholars—will yield new insights into not only historical precedents but the wide array of current artistic strategies of engagement.”

**About Mary Jane Jacob**
Mary Jane Jacob is a curator who holds the positions of Professor in the Department of Sculpture and Executive Director of Exhibitions and Exhibition Studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. As chief curator of the Museums of Contemporary Art in Chicago and Los Angeles, she staged some of the first U.S. shows of American and European artists, including Magdalena Abakanowicz, Rebecca Horn, Jannis Kounellis, and Christian Boltanski, as well as the first retrospective of Gordon Matta-Clark. Shifting her workplace from the museum to the street, she has critically engaged the discourse around public space, organizing such site and community-based programs as “Places with a Past” and “Places with a Future” in Charleston, “Culture in Action” in Chicago, and “Conversations at The Castle” in Atlanta.

At the Sullivan Galleries, she spearheaded the citywide program “Studio Chicago” (2010-11) that included exhibitions and the publication of *The Studio Reader: On the Space of Artists* (University of Chicago Press, 2010), and a major research program on modernism with the Mies van der Rohe Society at IIT (2008-10) leading to *Chicago Makes Modern: How Creative Minds Changed Society* (University of Chicago Press) to be released this fall. She has also brought international artists to do special projects for Sullivan—Omer Fast, Kimsooja, Wolfgang Laib, J. Morgan Puett (BFA 1981, MFA 1984) and others—while invigorating the curatorial training offered to SAIC students. In 2010, she was awarded the Women’s Caucus for Art Lifetime Achievement Award and the Award for Achievement in the Field of Public Art from Public Art Dialogue.

**About the Sullivan Galleries**
Comprising 30,000 square feet, the Sullivan Galleries are the largest single contemporary gallery space in Chicago’s Loop, and are located in the recently renovated Sullivan Center, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Buildings. The building was originally designed by architect Louis Sullivan and was home to the flagship store for Carson Pirie Scott and Company for more than a century.

**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 and graduate degrees 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.