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THE SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO (SAIC) ANNOUNCES NEW MAJOR PUBLICATION EXPLORING CHICAGO’S DYNAMIC HISTORY OF MODERNISM

Reception and panel discussion coming to Graham Foundation November 19

Chicago, IL—The city of Chicago puts a new lens on its history of modern innovation this December as the University of Chicago Press publishes Chicago Makes Modern: How Creative Minds Changed Society, edited by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago Professor Mary Jane Jacob, Executive Director of Exhibitions and Exhibition Studies, together with Jacquelyn Baas.

Chicago Makes Modern applies the missions of a brilliant group of historic innovators to our own time. The book raises the questions, “Why is there a growing interest in twentieth-century modern art, architecture, and design today? What has been left undone that draws us back to the modern to reexamine and take it up again?” The two editors started this project to explore how modern minds manifest in the arts, and where it seeks to take us. “The notion of modernity as process,” according to Jacob and Baas, “encourages a multidimensional and multidisciplinary approach; ours became a joint task of scholarly, artistic, and curatorial research.”

This research is presented in the book in the form of essays and interviews with renowned artists such as Anna Halprin, Jittish Kallat, and Ai Weiwei. Other contributors to the anthology include SAIC faculty and alumni Amy Beste (Film, Video, New Media), Carla Duarte (MFA 2008), Michael J. Golec (Art History, Designed Objects), Charles Harrison (BFA 1954), Walter Hood (MFA 2013), Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle (MFA 1989), Ben Nicholson (Architecture), Helen Maria Nugent (Designed Objects), J. Morgan Puett (BFA 1984), Jan Tichy (MFA 2007), and Kate Zeller (Assistant Curator, SAIC Exhibitions), along with Art Institute of Chicago curators Zoe Ryan and Mahduvanti Ghose.

Chicago Makes Modern also includes a foreword by SAIC President Walter E. Massey. A notable educator and innovator in the field of physics, Massey discusses creative fluidity in both art and science in terms of radical ideas presented in modernism. “This book is fundamentally about creative individuals, creative acts, and the effects individuals and acts have on society,” he says. “This is a theme that certainly straddles the worlds of art and science.” The foreword also highlights Chicago as being an historic hub for innovative art production, which served as a “palette” for critiquing both social and artistic practices.

A reception at the Graham Foundation celebrates the book launch on November 19 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. The evening will include presentations by SAIC faculty member Ben Nicholson and alumnus Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle (MFA 1989) followed by a cocktail reception and book signing.

Book Launch Reception
Monday, November 19, 6:00–8:00 p.m.
Graham Foundation
4 West Burton Place
To RSVP visit chicagomakesmodern.eventbrite.com
About the Editors

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 SAIC. As Chief Curator of both the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago and Los Angeles, she staged some of the first U.S. shows of Magdalena Abakanowicz, Rebecca Horn, Jannis Kounellis, and Christian Boltanski, among others; as well as the first retrospective of Gordon Matta-Clark. Shifting her interest from the museum to the street, she has critically engaged the discourse around public space, organizing site and community-based programs around the US. Recently, she was awarded a $50,000 landmark Curatorial Research Fellowship from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts to study Chicago’s role in both historical and ongoing socially engaged art practices.

Jacquelynn Baas is Director Emeritus of the University of California Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. She previously served as Director of the Hood Museum of Art and is the author, coauthor, or editor of numerous publications.

About the Book

From the skyscrapers that punctuate its skyline to the spirited style that inflects many of its dwellings and institutions—from Hull House to the New Bauhaus—Chicago is dedicated to the modern. Despite this, the city has long been overlooked as a locus for modernism in the arts, its rich tradition of architecture, design, and education disregarded. With this in mind, Chicago Makes Modern boldly remaps twentieth-century modernism from our new-century perspective by asking an imperative question: How did the modern mind—deeply reflective, yet simultaneously directed—help to dramatically alter our perspectives on the world and make it new?

Returning the city to its rightful position at the heart of a multidimensional movement that changed the face of the twentieth century, Chicago Makes Modern applies the missions of a brilliant group of innovators to our own time. From the radical social and artistic perspectives implemented by Jane Addams, John Dewey, and Buckminster Fuller to the avant-garde designs of László Moholy-Nagy and Mies van der Rohe, the prodigious offerings of Chicago’s modern minds left an indelible legacy for future generations. Staging the city as a laboratory for some of our most heralded cultural experiments, Chicago Makes Modern reimagines the modern as a space of self-realization and social progress—where individual visions triggered profound change. Featuring contributions from an acclaimed roster of contemporary artists, critics, and scholars, this book demonstrates how and why the Windy City continues to drive the modern world.

Chicago Makes Modern: How Creative Minds Changed Society
University of Chicago Press
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Edited by Mary Jane Jacob and Jacquelynn Baas
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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. SAIC also enables adults, high school students, middle school students, and children to flourish in a variety of courses, workshops, certificate programs, and camps through its Continuing Studies program. 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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