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THE SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO TO HONOR CITIZEN ARTISTS MEL CHIN, AFRICOBRA AND KATHERINE SHERWOOD AT ITS 2020 COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

CHICAGO—The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), a global leader in art and design education, will welcome renowned multidisciplinary artist Mel Chin to deliver the School's Commencement address on Saturday, May 16, as part of the School's virtual ceremony. Chin will receive an honorary doctorate from the School, along with esteemed honorees Jae Jarrell (SAIC 1959–61), Wadsworth Jarrell (DIPLOMA 1958), and Gerald Williams (SAIC 1966–67), all alums and founders of the influential, Chicago-based artist collective AFRICOBRA, and artist and disability advocate Katherine Sherwood.

Since 1938, SAIC has awarded honorary degrees to an elite group of individuals who have made significant contributions to art, design, and scholarship. Past recipients include Albert Oehlen, Jeff Koons (SAIC 1975–76), Tania Bruguera (MFA 2001, HON 2016), Yoko Ono, David Sedaris (BFA 1987), Theaster Gates, Patti Smith, Marina Abramovic, and Jeanne Gang.

"These visionary leaders' commitment to their craft, diverse modes of working, and artistic ambition make them an inspiration to our graduates," said SAIC President Elissa Tenny. "Like them, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago's artists, designers, and scholars pursue the questions that expand our understanding, increase our compassion, and help make our shared society better."

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 ceremony will take place via Zoom at 8:00 p.m. CT on Saturday, May 16. It will bring together more than 1,000 undergraduate and graduate students receiving their degrees and post-baccalaureate certificates, who will be watching from across the world, representing over 50 different countries.

This dynamic new format allows for greater engagement with the full SAIC community, as the stream will be accessible to anyone who wants to celebrate the School's graduates. In addition to remarks from President Elissa Tenny and honorary degree recipients, it will include video messages from faculty and alums and student-created animations, all in honor of the class of 2020.

About the Honorees

Mel Chin

Mel Chin conveys complex ideas and themes through a mutative strategy, working alone or employing multiple disciplines and people, compelled by researched concepts. From such critical means, actions, films, and objects are realized. His *Revival Field* (1991) was at the forefront of "green remediation," using plants to remove toxic metals from the soil. From 1995-1998 he formed the collective the GALA Committee, which produced *In the Name of the Place*, a public art project conducted on American prime-time television. His actions for the *Fundred Project* (2008-2020) to end childhood lead-poisoning activated mass public engagement. He has produced original films such as *9-11/9-11* (2007), *L'Arctique est Paris* (2015), and most recently, *She's Not There* (2020). In 2018 he filled New York's Times Square with *Wake*, on the ground,

and *Unmoored*, in the air, creating an experiential portal into a past maritime industry and a future of rising waters. Chin exhibits internationally and is the recipient of many awards, grants, and honorary degrees, including a MacArthur Fellowship in 2019.

AfriCOBRA

The African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists (AfriCOBRA) is a Chicago-based group of artists who defined the visual aesthetic of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 70s. Founded in 1968 by artists Jeff Donaldson, Jae Jarrell (SAIC 1959–61), Wadsworth Jarrell (DIPLOMA 1958), Barbara Jones-Hogu (BFA 1964), and Gerald Williams (SAIC 1966–67), the collective was dedicated to empowering Black communities and creating functional art that expressed statements of truth, action, or education. AfriCOBRA formed after several of the artists worked together on the *Wall of Respect*, a mural on Chicago's South Side depicting celebrated Black leaders that sparked a community mural movement across the country. The work of AfriCOBRA has been exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami, the Broad museum in Los Angeles, and the 2019 Venice Biennale.

Katherine Sherwood

Katherine Sherwood is a mixed media artist whose work investigates where art, medicine, and disability intersect. A professor emerita at University of California, Berkeley in the Art Department and the Disability Studies Program, Sherwood is also the artist-in-residence at the Helen Wills Neuroscience Institute and the co-founder of the art and disability collective Yelling Clinic. She is the recipient of many grants and awards including the Guggenheim Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grant, a Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant, and a Joan Mitchell Foundation grant. Her work is represented in the collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Ford Foundation, New York; the de Young museum, San Francisco; the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive; the Crocker Museum, Sacramento; and the San Jose Museum of Art, among others. She is represented by the George Adams Gallery in New York, the Walter Maciel Gallery in Los Angeles, and the Anglim Gilbert Gallery in San Francisco.

School of the Art Institute of Chicago

For more than 150 years, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) has been a leader in educating the world's most influential artists, designers, and scholars. Located in downtown Chicago with a fine arts graduate program consistently ranking among the top programs in the nation by *U.S. News and World Report*, SAIC provides an interdisciplinary approach to art and design as well as world-class resources, including the Art Institute of Chicago museum, on-campus galleries, and state-of-the-art facilities. SAIC's undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate students have the freedom to take risks and create the bold ideas that transform Chicago and the world—as seen through notable alumni and faculty such as Michelle Grabner, David Sedaris, Elizabeth Murray, Richard Hunt, Georgia O'Keeffe, Cynthia Rowley, Nick Cave, Jeff Koons, and LeRoy Neiman.

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