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Contact

Louise Yingduo Liu/Beth Silverman

312.961.9290 (cell)

Louise@silvermangroupchicago.com

THE SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO HOSTS PANEL DISCUSSION SERIES
TOWARD AN ANTI-RACIST ART ECOSYSTEM

The discussion kicks off on Wednesday, April 28, and tackles the impact of segregation in Chicago, anti-racist work in the local art sector, and removing barriers to entry

CHICAGO—Amidst both a global pandemic that highlighted and exacerbated existing inequities and the powerful protests against police brutality last summer, the art world is undergoing a transformation that questions what art is presented to the public and who gets to make these decisions. Aiming to raise necessary questions and propose actions, the **School of the Art Institute of Chicago** (SAIC) is proud to announce ***Toward an Anti-Racist Art Ecosystem***, an important new dialogue series convening thought leaders from throughout the art industry on the topic of creating an anti-racist ecosystem of art, from the perspectives of formal art and design education, professional development and mentorship, and gallery/auction and museum practices.

The three-part series will kick off with a Chicago-focused virtual panel on Wednesday, April 28, 12:00–1:45 p.m. CT, followed by US and international focused installments in fall 2021 and spring 2022, respectively. All three programs are free and open to the public.

The April 28 discussion will wrestle with Chicago’s history of segregation; the importance of creating a pipeline for Black, Indigenous, and people of color starting from art school; and how to work toward creating an anti-racist art ecosystem in the city. As moderated by SAIC Associate Professor of Printmedia **Jina Valentine**, the expert panel of Chicago-based arts professionals includes: **Rashawn Griffin**, artist and SAIC visiting professor; **Kavi Gupta**, owner and director of Kavi Gupta Gallery; **Tracie D. Hall**, executive director of the American Library Association; **Jeffreen Hayes**, executive director of Threewalls; and **Felicia Mings** (MA 2015), SAIC alum and curator of the Art Gallery of York University.

“We’re honored to partner with these arts leaders to discuss how we can work together to create real change in Chicago,” said SAIC Associate Professor Jina Valentine. “Our panelists’ commitment to equity and inclusion through their respective practices is impressive and demonstrates the importance of BIPOC leadership in the arts. This conversation is critical and timely, given how many arts organizations have had to rethink their approach to engaging publics, supporting artists, and compensating staff.”

This free series of community dialogues is among the direct outgrowths of the work being done by SAIC’s Anti-Racism Committee, formed last summer to support and extend the work of the School’s existing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts and catalyze DEI and anti-racist work throughout all areas of SAIC.

“Art and design are for everybody, not for the few,” said SAIC President Elissa Tenny. “As a college of art and design, we fulfill our civic responsibility by fostering a conversation about anti-racism in the arts through the

Toward an Anti-Racist Ecosystem conference series while we work internally to create space for everyone at our own institution.”

As co-chaired by Delinda Collier, interim dean of graduate studies, and Jefferson Pinder, director of diversity, equity, and inclusion for academic affairs, SAIC’s Anti-Racism Committee’s charge includes identifying and implementing initiatives that will bring meaningful change in the short term as well as establishing a comprehensive, long-range plan to substantially improve the School’s operations and the lived experience of all of its community members.

The *Toward an Anti-Racist Art Ecosystem* conference series is generously supported by Hindman Auctions. Advance registration is required, and details can be found [here](#).

About the Moderator and Panelists

Full biographies and headshots are available [here](#).

Jina Valentine (moderator) is a mother, visual artist, writer, and associate professor of Printmedia at SAIC. Her independent practice involves language translation, mining content from physical and digital archives, and experimental strategies for humanizing data visualization. Her work has received recognition and support from the Graham Foundation, Joan Mitchell Foundation, and Art Matters, among others. She has recently co-authored essays for *Thresholds Journal* (MIT Architecture School); *Wikipedia @20* (MIT Press); and *Art21* magazine. Valentine cofounded Black Lunch Table (BLT) with Heather Hart; BLT has been hosted by cultural and academic institutions nationally and internationally. Valentine received her Bachelor of Fine Arts from Carnegie Mellon University and her Master of Fine Arts from Stanford University.

Rashawn Griffin uses diverse materials such as bed sheets, tassels, food, and flora to create large-scale sculpture, paintings, and installations that explore the relationship between architecture and painting. A Master of Fine Arts recipient from Yale University, Griffin’s work has been exhibited widely, including at the 2008 Whitney Biennial; *R.S.V.P.*, the Studio Museum in Harlem; *Freeway Balconies*, the Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin, Germany; and *THREADS: Textiles and Fiber in the works of African American Artists*, EK Projects, Beijing, China, curated by Collier Schorr and Lowery Stokes Sims.

Kavi Gupta is founder and owner of Kavi Gupta gallery, a leading contemporary art gallery focused on amplifying voices of diverse and underrepresented artists to expand the canon of art history. The gallery operates multiple museum-quality exhibition spaces in Chicago and in New Buffalo, Michigan. The gallery’s publishing imprint, Kavi Gupta Editions, designs and publishes high-quality books, exhibition catalogues, academic editions, and monographs. In addition to hosting more than a dozen major exhibitions each year and participating in international art fairs such as Frieze New York and London, Frieze Masters, Art Basel Miami Beach and Hong Kong, EXPO Chicago, and the New York Armory Show, Kavi Gupta hosts artist talks; facilitates programming in support of philanthropic causes; and regularly brings artists, curators, and collectors together with academics and experts in the contemporary art field.

Tracie D. Hall is the American Library Association’s (ALA) 10th executive director in its 143-year history, becoming the first African American woman in the role. In 1998, she was among the first cohort of ALA’s Spectrum Scholars, a grant program to diversify librarianship, and she served as the director of ALA’s Office for Diversity in the early 2000s. Highlighted as a “Mover and Shaker” by *Library Journal*, Hall recently directed the culture portfolio at the Joyce Foundation, developing grant programs designed to foster greater equity and diversity in arts administration and catalyze and scale neighborhood-based arts venues, cultural programming, and creative entrepreneurship. In 2020, Hall was appointed to serve on the City of Chicago’s Cultural Advisory Council. Hall holds a Master of Library and Information Science from the Information School at the University of Washington, a Master of Arts in International and Area Studies with an emphasis on Sub-Saharan Africa from Yale University, and dual bachelor’s degrees in law and society and Black studies from the University of California Santa Barbara.

Jeffreen M. Hayes, PhD, merges her administrative, curatorial, and academic practices into her

cultural leadership of supporting artists and community development. An advocate for racial inclusion, equity, and access, Hayes has extensive curatorial experience including *SILOS*; *Augusta Savage: Renaissance Woman*; *AFRICOBRA: Messages to the People*; *AFRICOBRA: Nation Time*, which was an official collateral event for the 2019 Venice Biennial; and *Embracing the Lens: BlackFlorida project*. Hayes also speaks and writes about art history, Black art, and arts activism. Under Hayes's leadership as executive director of Threewalls, the organization develops artistic platforms to manifest its vision of connecting segregated communities, people, and experiences.

Felicia Mings is curator at the Art Gallery of York University. At the core of her work is a focus on the intersections of curatorial practice and community-based arts education, as well as interpreting and presenting modern and contemporary art of Africa and the African diaspora. Previously, Mings held the position of academic curator in the Department of Academic Engagement and Research at the Art Institute of Chicago. She also helped lead several initiatives that fostered new approaches to training emerging museum professionals and artist and student engagement, including the Andrew W. Mellon Summer Academy and the Undergraduate Curatorial Fellowship Program. Mings earned her Master of Arts in Visual and Critical Studies from SAIC and her Honors Bachelor of Arts in Art and Art History from the University of Toronto and Sheridan College.

About the 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 ranked number two 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.