

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE / January 7, 2022

San José Institute of Contemporary Art Appoints James G. Leventhal as Executive Director

The San José Institute of Contemporary Art announces the appointment of James G. Leventhal as Executive Director. Leventhal will begin his new role on January 17, 2022.



“James’ arrival times perfectly with our current needs,” says Board President Gordon Yamate. “The ICA is coming off a year of growth and change, and we need to focus strategically to build upon this momentum. The Board sought an Executive Director with vision, experience, and a strong desire to serve various communities within San José and the Greater Bay Area, including collaboration with various local cultural organizations. I look forward to seeing all that the ICA can accomplish under James’ leadership.”

Leventhal is a seasoned arts professional and leader, with significant experience in fundraising, and organizational and program development. With over 30 years in the field, he has worked at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Contemporary Jewish Museum, and most recently as the Interim Director of the Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) in San Francisco, where he helped to raise contributed income significantly; elevated its annual fundraiser, the Afropolitan Ball; and put a world-class program in place. Leventhal has significant knowledge of San José and its surrounding communities. Before accepting the position at MoAD, James was the Director of Development at the San Jose Museum of Art (SJMA).

“James Leventhal is a thoughtful, capable, and enthusiastic leader who knows the arts and culture ecosystem in Silicon Valley,” says Anjee Helstrup-Alvarez, Executive Director at Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana (MACLA). “It will be exciting to have him back in San José, building upon the ICA’s tremendous work over the last several decades and advancing the role of a contemporary art space in our community.”

Leventhal sees incredible potential for the ICA as an incubator for new art and ideas. He believes the ICA can serve as a destination for inspiration and a laboratory of experience:

a space for civic dialog and action—both onsite and online, to engage new and existing audiences in the San José area and beyond.

“I am looking forward to seeing the new direction James Leventhal will be taking the ICA San José,” artist and Stanford lecturer Ala Ebtakar notes. “With an artist centered approach, he works to connect different organizations and institutions in the community. The city of San José will be enriched by a center that advocates for and supports artists and encourages collaborations between local institutions.”

Leventhal will build on the ICA’s support of site-specific installations, media arts projects, and exhibitions. His desire is to build a deeper collaborative model at the ICA, both with local artists and other nonprofits, and by leveraging his national and international networks. “Every new appointment should be seen as an opportunity to expand the reach and relevance of a great institution, an essential moment to embrace community. It is a new opportunity for experimentation, growth, and long-term stabilization for the ICA’s newly renovated building and beyond,” says Leventhal. “It’s about working with the Board, supporters, and larger community to invest in and care for a more equitable, responsive, engaged, and meaningful arts institution in the 21st century. I cannot wait to get the work underway.”

Leventhal holds an undergraduate degree from NYU where he studied art history, studio art, and anthropology. His graduate work was at City College of New York (CUNY) in art history and museum studies; with an MBA from John F. Kennedy University (JFKU), with a minor in museum studies. He has served on the Boards of the Museum Computer Network (MCN) and the Western Museums Association (WMA). He is presently on the programs committee at the Berkeley Art Center, and the Community Committee at SF Camerawork.

ABOUT the San José Institute of Contemporary Art

Founded in 1980, the ICA is a non-collecting contemporary art organization committed to examining pressing issues through the lens of artistic practice through innovative visual art exhibitions and public programs. The ICA is equally committed to reflecting the diversity of its audiences and offering engagement with the best contemporary art practice for free.

Located in SoFA, San José’s arts and entertainment district, the ICA attracts nearly 20,000 visitors each year. Following current COVID protocols, the ICA is open Thursday-Sunday, 12-5pm. For more information <https://www.icasanjose.org/visit/>