

Open Engagement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Open Engagement Three-Year National Consortium

September 2, 2015

Open Engagement (OE) is an annual, three-day artist-led conference dedicated to expanding the dialogue around and creating a site of care for the field of socially engaged art. Founded in 2007, OE has evolved into an unparalleled hub for practitioners and audiences of socially engaged art to assemble. The conference highlights the work of transdisciplinary artists, activists, students, scholars, community members, and organizations working within the complex social issues and struggles of our time. OE has presented seven conferences in two countries and four cities, hosting over 1,100 presenters and over 4,000 attendees.

OE is excited to announce the next phase of growth: a national consortium that will situate the conference in the Bay Area, Chicago, and New York. The three-year cycle will begin with the Bay Area in 2016 in partnership with the **Oakland Museum of California** and the **California College of the Arts**, Chicago in 2017 in partnership with **University of Illinois Chicago**, and in New York in partnership with the **Queens Museum** in 2018.

Each year will focus on a singular theme, exploring major issues at play and at stake in socially engaged art. The cycle of themes include POWER in Oakland 2016, JUSTICE in Chicago 2017, and SUSTAINABILITY in New York 2018. Annual programming will be chosen from an open call for proposals, under the direction of an appointed curator from the region and selection committee comprised of national consortium members, local partners, educators, students, community members, and organizations including New York-based non-profit **A Blade of Grass**.

Open Engagement 2016 – POWER will take place April 29–May 1, 2016 at the Oakland Museum of California and additional sites throughout the Bay Area. The conference theme will be guided by the curatorial vision of **René de Guzman** and feature keynote speakers **Angela Davis** and **Suzanne Lacy**.

OE works to honor multiple ways of engaging in dialogue, to foster the community surrounding socially engaged art, and to serve as a site that supports multiple forms of knowledge. OE is ADA and family welcoming, and encourages local, national, and international artists, activists, academics, cultural producers, administrators, curators, educators, writers, thinkers, doers, makers and non-artists of all ages to apply. The free, open call for proposals closes November 2, 2015.

Please visit www.openengagement.info for details.

Partnering Organizations

The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) brings together collections of art, history, and natural science under one roof to tell the extraordinary stories of California and its people. OMCA's groundbreaking exhibits tell the many stories that comprise California with many voices, often drawing on first-person accounts by people who have shaped and are shaping California's cultural heritage. Visitors are invited to actively participate in the Museum as they learn about the natural, artistic, and social forces that affect the state and investigate their own role in both its history and its future. With more than 1.9 million objects, OMCA is a leading cultural institution of the Bay Area and a resource for the research and understanding of California's dynamic cultural and environmental heritage. www.museumca.org

California College of the Arts educates students to shape culture and society through the practice and critical study of art, architecture, design, and writing. Benefitting from its San Francisco Bay Area location, CCA prepares students for lifelong creative work by cultivating innovation, community engagement, and social and environmental responsibility. The Center for Art and Public Life at CCA envisions a future where creative practitioners collaborate with a diversity of communities to manifest equitable and sustainable change. The Center believes engaging communities is the foundation of a practice focused on changing the world. We integrate this within CCA by facilitating and supporting mutually beneficial partnerships with the college and outside organizations. www.cca.edu

The **UIC School of Art & Art History** was founded on the principle that history, theory and practice are intimately entwined endeavors. Our programs ignite intellectual and creative curiosity, empowering students to expand the boundaries of what is possible. Gallery 400, a contemporary gallery committed to providing culturally transformative experiences, is an important resource for our community. www.artandarthistory.uic.edu

Located in Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Queens, New York City, the **Queens Museum** is dedicated to presenting the highest quality visual arts and educational programming for people in the New York metropolitan area, and particularly for the residents of Queens, a uniquely diverse, ethnic, cultural, and international community. Our deepest community engagement efforts reside in our surrounding neighborhoods where the Museum's community organizers work with select artists in extensive artistic engagements that address issues of neighborhood development and equity. In addition, the Queens Museum collaborates with Queens College's MFA program to offer a concentration in Social Practice, as well as offers a suite of artist services that pays particular attention to sharing socially engaged artists' methodologies and strategies for social impact and sustainability. www.queensmuseum.org

A Blade of Grass nurtures socially engaged art. We provide Fellowship resources to artists who demonstrate artistic excellence, work actively in dialogue with communities at ambitious scale, and enact social change. And we create events and content that foster an inclusive, practical discourse about the meaning and potential of this practice. www.abladeofgrass.org

Personnel Changes

Under the direction of founder **Jen Delos Reyes**, OE alums **Crystal Baxley** and **Kerri-Lynn Reeves** will serve as Assistant Directors. Social Media will be headed by **Gemma-Rose Turnbull** with support from **Alexandra Winters**. The design team of **Nicole Lavelle** and **Sarah Baugh** will grow to include **Taryn Cowart**, with **Alex Harris** as Webmaster. Conversation Series co-leaders **Ariana Jacob** and **Sheetal Prajapati** step into newly created roles as Analog Specialist and Expansion Specialist. Additionally in 2016, Bay Area artists **Lexa Walsh**, **Dawn Weleski**, and **Eliza Gregory** will provide local support leading up to and during the conference.

For inquires, please contact:

Crystal Baxley
Assistant Director

(602) 888-6736
crystal@openengagement.info