

**JOAN MITCHELL FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENT OF
SARAH ROBERTS AS SENIOR DIRECTOR OF CURATORIAL AFFAIRS**

NEW YORK, NY—May 14, 2024—The Joan Mitchell Foundation announced today the appointment of curator Sarah Roberts as its Senior Director of Curatorial Affairs, a newly created position that will support the Foundation’s stewardship of Joan Mitchell’s legacy as one of the most celebrated artists of the 20th century. This role includes overseeing the Foundation’s significant Artwork and Archival Collections and the Joan Mitchell Catalogue Raisonné project. Roberts—who co-curated the recent traveling retrospective of Mitchell’s work and co-authored its accompanying catalogue—joins the Foundation from the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), where she has worked since 2004. She will start at the Foundation in June.

“I worked with Sarah over the course of several years during the development and tour of the Joan Mitchell retrospective and appreciate her deep expertise and love of Mitchell’s work, and strong commitment to sharing Mitchell’s work and life with wider audiences,” said Christa Blatchford, Executive Director of the Joan Mitchell Foundation. “Her collaborative approach and scholarly knowledge align with the Foundation’s own focus and values, making her an outstanding fit for this new position. Moreover, she has both the clear vision needed to convey Mitchell’s impact, and the professional and academic backgrounds necessary to oversee and implement our critical research work. As we approach Mitchell’s centennial anniversary, we are excited to have her as part of our team.”

The new Senior Director of Curatorial Affairs position brings together several different elements of the Foundation’s work in its Legacy department: Artwork and Archival Collections, Digital Assets, Rights and Reproductions, and the Joan Mitchell Catalogue Raisonné. As part of her work, Roberts will ensure that the Legacy team continues to serve as a central knowledge source for researchers of Mitchell’s work and life. Roberts will be responsible for fostering the Foundation’s relationships with scholars, curators, museums, and critics as they pursue new lines of inquiry and opportunities to expand audiences for Mitchell’s work. She will also take a leadership role in the strategic development of the artist’s catalogue raisonné, guiding the approach, scholarship, and completion milestones for this important publication focused on Mitchell’s paintings.

In addition, Roberts will ensure strong and productive connections between the Foundation’s focus on Mitchell’s legacy and its other major area of activity: robust, ongoing programs that provide financial and other types of support to artists working today. This includes serving as a resource for the Artist Programs team and, in particular, the Creating a Living Legacy (CALL) program, which provides guidance to living artists on how to organize, catalogue, and archive their work.

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“After having had the privilege of co-organizing the artist’s retrospective in 2021-2022, I am thrilled to join the Joan Mitchell Foundation and deepen my commitment to Mitchell’s work and impact,” said Roberts. “While it is bittersweet to leave SFMOMA after nearly 20 years, moving into a position that works directly with an artist’s legacy is a rare opportunity, and one I could not pass up. I look forward to thinking creatively with the excellent team at the Foundation, and with curators, art historians, and conservators in the field to develop new research and scholarship on the many facets of Mitchell’s work that remain underexplored. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to steward and further Mitchell’s profound ongoing legacy as one of the foremost painters of the 20th century, including by shaping the direction of research and writing for the forthcoming catalogue raisonné.”

Roberts brings over two decades of curatorial experience to her new position at the Foundation. Since 2004, she has served in progressive leadership roles in the Department of Painting and Sculpture at the SFMOMA, and since 2020 as Andrew W. Mellon Curator and Head of Painting and Sculpture. In this capacity, she led the curatorial department in further developing its acquisitions and exhibitions programs as part of the museum’s overall strategy, while remaining active as a curator.

A specialist in post-war American art, Roberts has organized many significant exhibitions at SFMOMA, including major presentations of the work of Robert Rauschenberg (2017), Louise Bourgeois (2017-19), and Frank Bowling (2023). She is also the curator of SFMOMA’s upcoming exhibition *Amy Sherald: American Sublime*, the first mid-career survey of the painter’s work, which opens at SFMOMA in November 2024, and will then travel to the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Roberts co-curated, with Katy Siegel, the major Joan Mitchell retrospective that opened at SFMOMA in September 2021 before traveling to the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris. She also served as research director and primary author of SFMOMA’s Rauschenberg Research Project, an award-winning digital publication.

Prior to joining SFMOMA, Roberts held curatorial positions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, and the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). Roberts earned her B.A. in Sculpture and Metalsmithing from the University of Texas at Austin and her M.A. in History of Art and Architecture from Brown University, where she also achieved ABD status as a Ph.D. candidate with research focused on abstraction and nationalism in modern British art.

In addition to her curatorial work, Roberts has contributed to numerous publications, including a text in *Frank Bowling’s Americas*, published by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and essays on paintings and prints by Mitchell in *The Keithley Collection at the Cleveland Museum of Art*, both in 2022. Her essay “Quietness in the Ordinary” appeared in the

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exhibition catalogue *Robert Rauschenberg*, published by Tate Modern and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 2016, and the essays “Ellsworth Kelly,” “Sol LeWitt,” “Agnes Martin,” and “Cy Twombly” were included in the 2015 publication *Icônes Américaines*, published by SFMOMA and Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux. She authored the institutional chronology and co-edited *San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: 75 Years of Looking Forward*, 2010. She co-authored and co-edited *Joan Mitchell* (Yale University Press, 2021), a companion to the Mitchell retrospective, for which she and co-author Katy Siegel conducted extensive research in the Joan Mitchell Foundation’s artwork and archives collections. She has lectured widely on topics related to post-war American art at institutions such as the Blanton Museum of Art, the University of California at Davis, and the College Art Association, on topics ranging from the work of specific artists to broader themes like digital publishing in art history and oral history strategies for artist archives.

ABOUT THE JOAN MITCHELL FOUNDATION

The Joan Mitchell Foundation cultivates the study and appreciation of artist Joan Mitchell’s life and work, while fulfilling her wish to provide resources and opportunities for visual artists. As the chief steward of Joan Mitchell’s legacy, the Foundation manages a collection of Mitchell’s artwork and archives containing her personal papers, photographs, sketchbooks, and other historical materials. The Foundation administers copyright and reproduction requests related to Mitchell’s artwork, and regularly partners with institutions to ensure that a wide audience has access to Mitchell’s work through exhibitions, educational activities, and public programming. In 2015, the Foundation established the Joan Mitchell Catalogue Raisonné project, a long-term research project that will result in a scholarly publication documenting the artist’s paintings. Fulfilling Mitchell’s mandate to “aid and assist” living artists, over the past 31 years the Foundation has evolved a range of initiatives that have directly supported more than 1,300 visual artists at varying stages of their careers. The Joan Mitchell Fellowship gives annual unrestricted awards of \$60,000 directly to artists working in the evolving fields of painting and sculpture, with funds distributed over a five-year period alongside learning, peer engagement, and network-building opportunities. The New Orleans-based Joan Mitchell Center hosts residencies for national and local artists, complemented by professional development offerings, open studio events, and other public programs that encourage dialogue and exchange with the local community. The Creating a Living Legacy (CALL) initiative provides free and essential resources to help artists of all ages organize, document, and manage their artworks and careers. Together, these programs actively engage with working artists as they develop and expand their practices. For more information, visit joanmitchellfoundation.org.

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