Yaddo

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Yaddo Names Cyra Levenson as Next President

An innovative arts leader, scholar, and advocate for creative communities will succeed Elaina Richardson, who has led the preeminent artists' retreat for 26 years.

SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY — Yaddo, the nation's foremost artist residency program, announced the appointment of Cyra Levenson as its next President. Levenson, currently Deputy Director of Learning and Engagement at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation, will assume the role on November 16, 2026, succeeding Elaina Richardson, who is stepping down after 26 years of leadership.

"For 100 years Yaddo has been dedicated to creative people, to practice and to the magic that happens in community," Levenson said. "Artists have a unique ability to see what doesn't yet exist and to metabolize what is happening in the world in ways that others can digest and gain nourishment from. It is an honor and a privilege to support that effort as the next leader of Yaddo."

Levenson brings extensive experience in organizational leadership, fundraising, interdisciplinary programming, and partnership with artists. At the Guggenheim, where she serves on the Executive Team, she has helped shape public engagement across the institution's global constellation, developing initiatives that connect artists and audiences across disciplines. Her

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work has included establishing the museum's first poet-in-residence program, welcoming new audiences to the museum through dynamic public programs, and collaborating with artists including Rashid Johnson, Nick Cave, and Cecilia Vicuña to create opportunities for musicians, dancers, actors, and poets to engage with the museum as a creative platform.

"Cyra Levenson brings to Yaddo a rare combination of strategic leadership, intellectual depth, and hands-on program experience," said Peter Kayafas, Yaddo Board Co-Chair. "She is also a visual artist, and she understands, from the inside, what a place like Yaddo means to the artists and writers who work here. We could not be more delighted to have her lead Yaddo into its next century."

Before joining the Guggenheim, Levenson served as a Deputy Director at the Cleveland Museum and as Curator of Education and Academic Outreach at the Yale Center for British Art. Levenson has curated exhibitions on topics ranging from flying mystics in Tibetan painting to slavery in 18th century British portraiture. Her interdisciplinary scholarship on creative practice has appeared in publications including *British Art Studies, Pedagogy as Practice* published by Vernon Press, and *The Lancet*. She has also served as a visiting critic and lecturer at leading academic institutions including Yale University, Parsons School of Design, Columbia University, Harvard University, and Princeton University.

Levenson studied visual arts and Asian art history at Oberlin College, where she earned her B.A., and holds an Ed.M. from Teachers College, Columbia University. Levenson has a particular interest in poetry, public space, and participatory practice.

"Cyra was our first choice on many fronts, including her commitment to art and artists and her intelligent leadership style," said Janice Y.K. Lee, Yaddo Board Co-Chair. "Our search was broad and rigorous, and it was guided at every step by a deep commitment to Yaddo's mission. On behalf of the Board, I also want to thank Elaina for her extraordinary tenure and for her generosity in supporting a smooth transition."

The appointment follows a broad national search conducted in partnership with Russell Reynolds Associates, a global leadership advisory firm. The search was co-chaired by Yaddo Board Members Ann Chen and Alexi Worth under the leadership of Board Co-Chairs Kayafas and Lee.

"We considered more than 200 candidates from across the country, and the finalists were an impressive and diverse group," said Chen and Worth. "Cyra rose to the top because she pairs institutional and fundraising experience with a true artistic sensibility."

In concert with the Yaddo Board Search Committee, Michael S. Singleton and Katherine Armstrong, Co-Heads of Russell Reynolds Associates' Global Arts & Culture Practice, conducted the national search. Russell Reynolds Associates is a global leadership advisory firm.

"I am so grateful to the Search Committee for the great care, intelligence, and rigor they brought to the process of selecting Yaddo's next President, and I am thrilled by the result," said current

Yaddo President Elaina Richardson. “Cyra Levenson is a wonderful choice, and I am sure she will do much to increase Yaddo’s impact and ability to support artists in these challenging days. After leading Yaddo for 26 years and knowing the many unforeseens that can arise in today’s world, it is a joy to know our second century begins brightly.”

Yaddo will be honoring Richardson’s tenure at the Yaddo Centennial NYC Benefit on Oct. 5.

ABOUT CYRA LEVENSON:

A thought leader and dynamic force in the arts, Cyra Levenson has been a tireless advocate for creative communities and for artists of all disciplines who make new ideas possible. Levenson is coming to Yaddo from her most recent role as Deputy Director of Learning and Engagement and member of the Executive Team at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation. At the Guggenheim, Levenson has played a significant role in increasing public engagement across the foundation’s global constellation. She established new initiatives including a first ever poet in residence and worked with visionaries like Rashid Johnson, Nick Cave and Cecilia Vicuña to share the museum as a creative platform for musicians, dancers, actors, and poets of all ages. Levenson has worked with global brands such as Van Cleef and Arpels, Ornellaia winery, and Converse on creating programming for an international audience. Previously, Levenson served as a Deputy Director at the Cleveland Museum and as Curator of Education and Academic Outreach at the Yale Center for British Art. She was also the Co-Executive Secretary of the Yale-Smithsonian Partnership and was responsible for developing and leading the academic and public engagement initiative between the two institutions. Levenson has curated exhibitions ranging from a survey of flying mystics in Tibetan painting, to an extensive survey of slavery in 18th century British portraiture. Levenson has passions for poetry, public space, and participatory practice and has been a visiting critic and presenter at Yale, Parsons, Case Western Reserve University, Columbia University, Harvard School of Design, and Princeton School of Architecture. Her interdisciplinary scholarship on creative practice has been published in academic journals ranging from *British Art Studies* to *The Lancet*, one of the foremost medical journals. Levenson is also a practicing visual artist.

ABOUT YADDO:

Yaddo is a nonprofit retreat for artists in Saratoga Springs, New York. Its mission is to nurture the creative process by providing an opportunity for writers and artists to work without interruption in a supportive environment.

Yaddo offers residencies to professional creative artists working in the following disciplines: literature, choreography, film, musical composition, painting, performance art, photography, printmaking, sculpture, and film/video. Artists apply individually. They are selected by panels of professional artists without regard to applicants’ financial means.

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In addition to the core mission, Yaddo builds an engaged audience for the work of Yaddo artists and shares arts programming, educational opportunities, and other resources with the local community and beyond. Yaddo is committed to a sustainable future.

More than 7,000 artists have worked at Yaddo, enriching the world's cultural landscape with their contributions. Collectively, Yaddo artists have won 90 Pulitzer Prizes, 37 MacArthur Fellowships, 73 National Book Awards, 76 Emmy honors, 50 Grammy Awards, 14 Oscars, 19 Tony Awards, and a Nobel Prize in Literature.

For more information, visit Yaddo.org.

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