

# WHITNEY

Whitney Museum  
of American Art  
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# PRESS RELEASE

## RENOWNED ARTIST, WRITER, TEACHER, AND ACTIVIST GREGG BORDOWITZ NAMED DIRECTOR OF THE WHITNEY MUSEUM'S INDEPENDENT STUDY PROGRAM



Photograph by Justin Bettman

***Bordowitz—an alumnus and long-time visiting faculty member of the Independent Study Program (ISP)—will begin his tenure at the Museum on February 1***

**New York, NY, January 19, 2023** — The Whitney Museum of American Art has appointed Gregg Bordowitz, highly recognized artist, writer, and teacher, as director of its celebrated Independent Study Program (ISP).

Bordowitz is a committed teacher who, among many other accomplishments, has spent years as a visiting faculty member with the ISP. For the last 25 years, Bordowitz has also taught at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, acting first as a professor and then chair of the Film, Video, New Media, and Animation department. Since 2013, Bordowitz has served as the founding director of the school's Low-Residency Master of Fine Arts program.

Bordowitz, an ISP alumnus from the 1985/86 class, succeeds founding ISP director Ron Clark, who is retiring in June following a 54-year tenure. Clark's leadership and vision over five

decades have made the ISP one of the most respected and coveted programs in the world, supporting generations of artists, curators, and critics. Bordowitz's tenure at the Museum will begin on February 1, but he will officially take over the program after Clark's retirement. Clark will remain the director until then.

"It is so important to have an artist lead the ISP, which has long focused its program on next-generation creators," said **Adam D. Weinberg, the Alice Pratt Brown Director of the Whitney Museum**. "Gregg is an ideal successor to help launch the ISP into an exciting new chapter, given his deep knowledge of critical theory, art history, and curatorial work. Moreover, he has an established history with the program, as both a participant and educator."

A New York City native, Bordowitz is a renowned filmmaker, writer, and activist whose work has been exhibited at the Whitney, The New Museum, Artist Space, MoMA, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, and TATE Modern, among others. His work is the subject of a traveling retrospective spanning 30 years of activity—*Gregg Bordowitz: I Wanna Be Well*—first organized by the Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College, in 2018.

In the 1980s, Bordowitz focused his creative practice on responding to the AIDS crisis. He organized and documented a number of protests against government inaction and advocated for health education and harm reduction as a member of the groundbreaking AIDS activist group ACT UP. He also served as a founding member of the 1980s video/film collectives Testing the Limits and Diva TV.

"My engagement with the ISP, as a participant and then faculty for over 30 years, shapes my ongoing education as an artist and a teacher. Study is a way of life," **Bordowitz** said. "Teaching is the art of learning. The teacher teaches learning, as learning teaches the students; as learning teaches the teacher to teach. This is an ongoing process of continually renewing amazement."

The ISP has been a core component of the Whitney's role as a champion of American contemporary art and artists since 1968. The program has nurtured more than two generations of artists, curators, art historians, and critics, providing participants with the instruction, space, and support needed to pursue their artistic endeavors.

In addition to Bordowitz, alumni of the program include artists Jennifer Allora, Tony Cokes, Danielle Dean, Mark Dion, Andrea Fraser, LaToya Ruby Frazier, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Renée Green, Jenny Holzer, Emily Jacir, Glenn Ligon, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Julian Schnabel; critics and art historians Huey Copeland, Miwon Kwon, Pamela M. Lee, and Roberta Smith; and curators Carlos Basualdo, Naomi Beckwith, and Sheena Wagstaff.

Cokes and Beckwith were part of the advisory committee in charge of the search for the new director, along with the ISP faculty member and art historian Benjamin Buchloh, and Whitney Trustee Joanne Cassullo.

Bordowitz will take the reins at an exciting and historic period for the program. In 2023, the ISP is expected to move into its first permanent home at artist Roy Lichtenstein's renovated and expanded former studio space, blocks from the Whitney at 741/745 Washington Street. The project, made possible through an extraordinary act of generosity by Dorothy Lichtenstein, the president of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, will preserve the legacy of a remarkable, historic space in the heart of Greenwich Village while adapting it as a hub of artistic creation, research, programming, and discussion for participants now and in the future.

"In its new home, the ISP will be a house of study anchored in a curriculum generated by artists—as it was first conceived," said **Bordowitz**. "Our primary aspiration will be to continually reinvigorate the ISP's ongoing investigation into how art challenges what appears to us as 'ordinary.'"

"Gregg Bordowitz and I are both alumni of the Whitney's ISP and it played a seminal role in our artistic trajectories," said **artist and ISP alumnus Glenn Ligon**. "Gregg agreeing to be the program's new director is an indication of its continuing importance and relevance and an opportunity for him to build upon the amazing legacy that the current director Ron Clark has left."

"I am glad to hear that Gregg Bordowitz is the new director of the ISP," said **artist and ISP faculty member Yvonne Rainer**. "As a former ISP student and long-time visiting artist and consultant there, he is more than well equipped for the job. And with his Art Institute teaching experience, brilliance, and good nature, I have no doubt that Bordowitz will do the program proud."

"Gregg is an exceptional educator and artist whose remarkable work lives at the intersection of art and activism," said **T. Camille Martin-Thomsen, Dean of Faculty and Vice President of Academic Affairs at SAIC**. "In addition to his two decades of teaching, for the last ten years, he served as the inaugural director of SAIC's seminal Low-Res MFA program, shaping the program and setting it up for long-term success. We are deeply grateful for his creativity, passion, and dedication to our students."

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## PRESS CONTACT

For press materials and image requests, please visit our press site at [whitney.org/press](https://whitney.org/press) or contact:

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## **ABOUT THE WHITNEY**

The Whitney Museum of American Art, founded in 1930 by the artist and philanthropist Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875–1942), houses the foremost collection of American art from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Mrs. Whitney, an early and ardent supporter of modern American art, nurtured groundbreaking artists when audiences were still largely preoccupied with the Old Masters. From her vision arose the Whitney Museum of American Art, which has been championing the most innovative art of the United States for ninety years. The core of the Whitney's mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit American art of our time and serve a wide variety of audiences in celebration of the complexity and diversity of art and culture in the United States. Through this mission and a steadfast commitment to artists, the Whitney has long been a powerful force in support of modern and contemporary art and continues to help define what is innovative and influential in American art today.

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## **ABOUT THE ISP**

The Independent Study Program at the Whitney Museum of American Art consists of three interrelated areas of study: the Studio Program, Curatorial Program, and Critical Studies Program. The ISP provides a setting where students pursuing art practice, curatorial work, art historical scholarship, and critical writing engage in ongoing discussions and debates that examine the historical, social, and intellectual conditions of artistic production. The program encourages the theoretical and critical study of the practices, institutions, and discourses that constitute the field of culture. Each academic year fifteen students are selected to participate in the Studio Program, four in the Curatorial Program, and six in the Critical Studies Program. Curatorial and critical studies students are designated as Helena Rubinstein Fellows in recognition of the substantial support provided to the program by the Helena Rubinstein Foundation. The program begins in early September and concludes at the end of May. Many participants are enrolled at universities and art schools and may receive academic credit for their participation, while others have recently completed their formal studies.

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## **VISITOR INFORMATION**

The Whitney Museum of American Art is located at 99 Gansevoort Street between Washington and West Streets, New York City. Public hours are: Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 10:30 am–6 pm; Friday, 10:30 am–10 pm; and Saturday and Sunday, 10:30 am–6 pm. Closed Tuesday. Visitors eighteen years and under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 7–10 pm. COVID-19 vaccination and face coverings are not required but strongly recommended. We encourage all visitors to wear face coverings that cover the nose and mouth throughout their visit.

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