

WHITNEY

Whitney Museum
of American Art
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PRESS RELEASE

THE WHITNEY MUSEUM ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT OF INDEPENDENT STUDY PROGRAM DIRECTOR RON CLARK AFTER OVER FIFTY YEARS



New York, NY, August 4, 2023 — The Whitney Museum of American Art announced the retirement of Ron Clark after an extraordinary 54-year tenure as the founding director of the Museum's celebrated Independent Study Program (ISP). 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. Clark will be succeeded by renowned artist, writer, teacher, activist, and ISP alumnus Gregg Bordowitz, who began his tenure at the Whitney in February 2023.

Under Clark's visionary leadership, 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.

Alumni of the program during Clark's directorship 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, among many others.

In his capacity as director, Clark served as an indefatigable scholar, whose commitment to study required the constant renewal of ISP curriculum. A gifted organizer, Clark identified and recognized many other talented practitioners, drawing them into the community of study that constitutes the ISP, which remains a unique program leading the way for participants—artists, curators, scholars—to establish their methodologies well beyond their time in the program.

“We are enormously appreciative of Ron Clark’s elemental role in the founding and flourishing of the Whitney’s Independent Study Program,” said Adam D. Weinberg, the Alice Pratt Brown Director of the Whitney Museum. “During his fifty-plus years leading the Independent Study Program, Ron developed one of the most unique, radical, and influential models of artistic pedagogy of our time that assembled artists, curators, and critical theorists in a year-long, unified program of study, a model that has been imitated in programs internationally. We look forward to continuing his life’s work in the ISP’s next chapter with its move to Roy Lichtenstein’s former studio space this fall and under the leadership of this successor, artist, curator, writer, and activist Gregg Bordowitz—a fitting bookend to Ron’s career that helps ensure the enduring significance and relevance of the Program.”

“The great number of groundbreaking, influential, and distinguished alumni is a testament to Ron Clark’s singular vision, talent, and integrity as a teacher,” said Gregg Bordowitz, the incoming director of the Whitney’s Independent Study Program. “Clark is one of the most influential educators of several generations of arts professionals. That his pedagogical skill matched his administrative acumen resulted in the most visionary of educational experiments that started at the end of the twentieth century and continues well into the twenty-first.”

PRESS 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.

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.

In fall 2023, the ISP will 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.

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.

Image caption:

Ron Clark in his office at the ISP space at 384 Broadway, circa 1996

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