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SBMA Welcomes New Curator of Photography and New Media Charles Wylie Joins Santa Barbara Museum of Art

April 15, 2016—The Santa Barbara Museum of Art (SBMA) has named Charles Wylie as Curator of Photography and New Media. A curator of international stature, Wylie is known for his role in establishing the Dallas Museum of Art's (DMA) contemporary collection as one of the most important in any encyclopedic museum. Wylie served as The Lupe Murchison Curator of Contemporary Art at the DMA for fifteen years and has since been an active independent curator, writer, and consultant for the past five years. Wylie's curatorial experience encompasses a wide array of contemporary art media, and he has curated numerous projects with artists whose work centers on photography and photographic practices and ideas. He is due to begin his formal duties at SBMA on June 1. Wylie joins the SBMA curatorial staff after the passing of Karen Sinsheimer in July of last year. She was the Museum's first full-time Curator of Photography and served in that position for the past 25 years.

Larry Feinberg, SBMA's Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Director, states, "The Museum board, staff, and I feel very fortunate to welcome as a colleague someone of Charles' wide range of knowledge and experience, and international stature as a scholar. His interests in contemporary art and culture extend well beyond photography itself to inform his important photography exhibitions and publications. Under Charles' leadership, the SBMA's photography program will continue to be dynamic, cutting-edge, informative, and inspiring. He will also do much to build the Museum's programs concerning video and other, newer, technological media, occasionally in collaboration with Julie Joyce, SBMA's Curator of Contemporary Art. Charles is also a very affable, community-oriented person, who will do much to engage our visitors and members through his work, lectures, and other forms of outreach."

Wylie comments, "I am extremely excited to be joining the Santa Barbara Museum of Art's team to contribute to the Museum's rich history in the field of photography. Building on the great foundation established by my predecessor Karen Sinsheimer, I look forward to extending her stellar achievements joined with my own interests and vision, and to engaging with Santa Barbara's community of artists, curator colleagues and collectors. With the new expansion under Larry Feinberg's direction, the SBMA is poised for even greater things. This important curatorship is truly an extraordinary opportunity for me, professionally to take part in the Museum's very promising next chapters, and personally to return to Southern California."

Wylie received his BA from the University of Notre Dame and his MA from Williams College. He served as a graduate intern and research assistant in the J. Paul Getty Museum's Department of Photographs under the direction of Weston Naef and Judith Keller. At the Getty, Wylie catalogued over 1,000 works by the 20th-century German photographer August Sander. His interest in German art was deepened by assisting on the presentation of Gerhard Richter: 18 Oktober 1977 while at Lannan Foundation in Los Angeles. This interest was continued during his four years as Assistant Curator at The Saint Louis Art Museum where he organized one of Thomas Struth's early American museum exhibitions, which was part of an overall series of exhibitions featuring work by Willie Cole, Roni Horn, Joyce Pensato, Mike Kelley, and Raymond Pettibon.

At the DMA, Wylie organized 32 exhibitions, including the major traveling exhibitions Brice Marden: Work of the 1990s; Thomas Struth: 1977-2002; Sigmar Polke: History of Everything (with his director, John R. Lane), Ellsworth Kelly in Dallas, and Felix Gonzalez-Torres/Joseph Beuys. He also organized the singular presentation of On Kawara: 10 Tableaux and 16,952 Pages, one of the artist's rare American museum solo exhibitions. Wylie oversaw the Museum's program in post-World War II art that included all media, and along with associate curator, Suzanne Weaver, initiated a concerted strategy to collect and exhibit works in new media. This included his exhibition Willie Doherty: Requisite Distance, which featured Ghost Story, an acclaimed video work he acquired for the DMA; and the acquisitions and presentations of the important media works, Eija-Liisa Ahtila's Talo/The House, and Yinka Shonibare's Un Ballo in Maschera.

Wylie's many major acquisitions of photographs for the DMA include works by Nic Nicosia, Lynn Davis, David Armstrong, Gordon Parks, Uta Barth, Matthew Barney, Hannah Collins, Kelli Connell, James Casebere, Zoe Leonard, David Wojnarowicz, Stan Douglas, Misty Keasler, Robert Mapplethorpe, Allison V. Smith, Ted Kincaid, George Platt Lynes, Charlie White, and James Welling, among many others. Two of his most prescient installation acquisitions were the time-based, gallery-scaled commission Counter Ground by Tatsuo Miyajima, and The Eye, a monumental sculpture by David Altmejd, both of which have come to be considered signature pieces of the DMA. Wylie's publication record is particularly distinguished and he has continued to write and publish actively since his time at the DMA, including important essays on Gary Simmons, Roman Opalka and Giorgio Griffa.

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