



MEDIA CONTACT

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Daisy Nam Appointed Director of the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts



Portrait of Daisy Nam. Photo by Makenzie Goodman.

San Francisco, CA — February 27, 2024 — California College of the Arts (CCA) announced today Daisy Nam has been named as the new director and chief curator of the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts at California College of the Arts. Nam joins the Wattis from Ballroom Marfa, where she has been a curator since 2020 and the director since 2022. Nam is widely recognized for her extensive experience working with living artists curating and developing exhibitions, commissions, public and teaching programs, as well as in fundraising and donor cultivation. Nam will start at the Wattis on April 1. Later this year, the Wattis will reopen in its new gallery, located in CCA's new, Studio Gang-designed pavilions.

“CCA is thrilled to welcome Daisy Nam as the new director of the Wattis Institute. Her impressive track record, deep understanding of contemporary art, and commitment to artistic innovation align perfectly with the Institute's mission. I am confident that under her guidance, the Wattis will continue to be a pivotal space for artistic exploration and discourse. As the completion of our campus expansion project comes to fruition this fall, bringing the Wattis Institute back on CCA's campus will allow for even more opportunities to showcase the stellar programming and exhibitions shepherded by Daisy,” said David Howse,

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president of CCA. “I want to thank Jeanne Gerrity—who served as the Wattis’ interim director and who helped lead the search process—as well as the other staff, faculty, and trustees who participated in the search committee for their work on this process.”

“I am excited to join the California College of the Arts community and to lead the Wattis Institute, a cornerstone in the contemporary art world,” said Nam. “The Wattis has a remarkable history of presenting thoughtful and compelling work and nurturing artistic talent, with a presence in the field that reaches beyond its Bay Area location. I look forward to building on this legacy, and to be the first director working in the Wattis’ new exhibition spaces that are at the heart of the teaching and art-making community.”

Nam’s approach to curation and program development is noted for its focus on fostering dialogues with artists to develop new work that connects contemporary art with broader societal issues. Her tenure at Ballroom Marfa was marked by exhibitions and programs that engaged with critical themes and expanded the boundaries of artistic expression. Of particular note are the exhibitions *Guadalupe Maravilla: Mariposa Relámpago*; *Kenneth Tam: Tender is the hand which holds the stone of memory*; and *Tongues of Fire*, a group exhibition that included works by artists Jorge Méndez Blake, Jesse Chun, Adriana Corral, JJJJerome Ellis, and Nakai Flotte, which explored the ways in which language has been suppressed, silenced, or obscured. Nam has also led the process for the development of Ballroom Marfa’s forthcoming 20th anniversary publication, published jointly with Monacelli Press.

Prior to Ballroom Marfa, Nam served as the Assistant Director at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University from 2015 to 2019. In that role, she worked on a number of exhibitions including *Matt Keegan: Replicate* (2018), *We Just Fit, You and I* (2018), *Renée Green: Pacing* (2018) as well as performances including *Kerry Tribe: Critical Mass* (2015). Nam also collaborated with several widely recognized artists on residencies including Liz Magor, Phil Collins, Lorraine O’Grady and public programs, including Basma Alsharif, Charles Atlas, Morgan Bassichis, Douglas Crimp, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Jessi Reaves, and Aki Sasamoto.

Previous positions include Assistant Director of Public Programs at the School of the Arts at Columbia University (2008-2015) and Individual Development Coordinator, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (2005-2008). Nam holds an M.A. in Modern Art Curatorial and Critical Studies from Columbia University and a B.A. in Art History with a Cinema Studies minor from New York University. Additionally, Nam has served as an independent curator, writer, and lecturer, working on projects both around the U.S. and internationally. Among these projects is Co-editor of *BEST! Letters from Asian Americans in the arts*, published by Paper Monument, 2021; author of *To Whom it may Concern*, an essay developed for the exhibition *Haegue Yang: Cone of Concern*, 2021, at The Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD), Manila, Philippines; She was an Adjunct Lecturer at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in Spring 2020; a panelist in the MA Curatorial Practice Program titled *Model Minority and Model Majorities: Strangeness and Home*, at the School of Visual Arts (SVA), New York, in 2019; and has been a visiting critic/curator at a number of schools including University of Texas, El Paso, 2021; RISD, Sculpture MFA, 2021; New School, Design Thinking MA, 2020; School of the Museum of Fine Arts (SMFA), 2018–2019; Northeastern University, 2018; and School of Visual

Arts (SVA), 2015. She serves on the board of Voices in Contemporary Art (VoCA) is a non-profit organization that generates critical dialogue and interdisciplinary programming to address the production, presentation, and preservation of contemporary art.

About California College of the Arts

Founded in 1907, California College of the Arts (CCA) educates students to shape culture and society through the practice and critical study of art, architecture, design, and writing. Benefitting from its San Francisco Bay Area location, the college prepares students for lifelong creative work by cultivating innovation, community engagement, and social and environmental responsibility.

CCA offers a rich curriculum of 22 undergraduate and 10 graduate programs in art, design, architecture, and writing taught by a faculty of expert practitioners. Attracting promising students from across the nation and around the world, CCA is [one of the 10 most diverse colleges in the U.S.](#) This year, *U.S. News & World Report* ranked CCA as one of the [top 10 graduate schools for fine arts in the country](#) in 2020.

Graduates are highly sought-after by companies such as Pixar/Disney, Apple, Intel, Meta, Gensler, Google, IDEO, Autodesk, Mattel, and Nike, and many have launched their own successful businesses. Alumni and faculty are often recognized with the highest honors in their fields, including Academy Awards, AIGA Medals, Fulbright Scholarships, Guggenheim Fellowships, MacArthur Fellowships, National Medal of Arts, and the Rome Prize, among others.

CCA is creating a new, expanded college campus at its current site in San Francisco, spearheaded by the architectural firm Studio Gang. The new campus design will be a model of [sustainable construction and practice](#); will unite the college's programs in art, crafts, design, architecture, and writing in one location to create new adjacencies and interactions; and will provide [more student housing](#) than ever before. For more information, visit cca.edu.

About the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts

Founded in 1998 at California College of the Arts in San Francisco and located a few blocks from its campus, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts is a nonprofit exhibition venue and research institute dedicated to contemporary art and ideas. As an exhibition space, it commissions and shows new work by emerging and established artists from around the world. Recent solo exhibitions include *Rodrigo Hernández: with what eyes*, *Ana Jotta: Never the Less*; *Caitlin Cherry: The Regolith Was Boiling*; *Drum Listens to Heart*; *Hervé Guibert: This and More*; *Josh Faught: Look Across the Water Into the Darkness, Look for the Fog*; *Mirra Helen: Leaves 1992 2022*; *Maia Cruz Palileo: Long Kwento*; *Raven Chacon: Radio Coyote*; *Jeffrey Gibson: Nothing is Eternal*; *Lydia Ourahmane: صرخة شمسية Solar Cry*; *Cinthia Marcelle: A morta*; *Vincent Fecteau*; *Abbas Akhavan: cast for a folly*; *Akosua Adoma Owusu: Welcome to the Jungle (which traveled to the Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans)*; *Diamond Stingily: Doing the Best I*

Can; Rosha Yaghmai: Miraclegrow; Adam Linder: Full Service (which traveled to Mudam Luxembourg); Ken Lum: What's Old is Old for a Dog; Henrik Olesen: The Walk.

As a research institute, the Wattis dedicates an entire year to reflect on the work of a single artist, which informs a regular series of public programs and publications involving the field's most prominent artists and thinkers. The 2023–2024 season is dedicated to artist Anicka Yi; past seasons featured Lorraine O'Grady, Cecilia Vicuña, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Dodie Bellamy, Joan Jonas, Andrea Fraser, David Hammons, Seth Price.

The Wattis also hosts an annual Capp Street Artist-in-Residence, one of the earliest and longest-running artist-in-residence programs in the country, founded in 1983 by Ann Hatch as Capp Street Project, and incorporated into the Wattis Institute in 1998. Each year, an artist comes to live and work in San Francisco for a semester, teaches a graduate seminar at CCA, and presents an exhibition. Recent participants include Helen Mirra (2021-2022), Raven Chacon (2023-2021), Hồng-Ân Trương (2019-2020), Abbas Akhavan (2018–2019), contemporary (2017–2018), Melanie Gilligan (2016–2017), Carissa Rodriguez (2015–2016), Nairy Baghramian (2014–2015), Claire Fontaine (2013–2014). For more information, visit wattis.org.

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