

Disjecta Has a New Executive Director, the Art Gym's Blake Shell

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Blake Shell Courtesy of Disjecta

Photo by: Blake Shell Courtesy of Disjecta

Take a break from panicking at your Twitter timeline, I've got art news: Disjecta has a new executive director, Blake Shell, most recently of Marylhurst University's wonderful Art Gym, where she curated a number of shows, including this Heidi Schwegler show, which is singed into my brain forever.

Salient details from Disjecta's official release, sent today:

Disjecta Contemporary Art Center has named Blake Shell as its new Executive Director. Recognized for her acclaimed exhibitions, publications, and work championing artists, Shell is currently the Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Director and Curator of the Art Gym and Belluschi Pavilion at Marylhurst University in Oregon.

In making the announcement, Disjecta's board of directors stated, "Blake Shell's passion for supporting artists at every stage of their career, her knowledge of the challenges presented by risk-taking programming, and her ability to increase resources will complement Disjecta's innovative Curator-in-Residence and Biennial exhibition programs. She brings energy and experience to us at a time when contemporary art centers need passionate, dedicated and articulate leaders to advance their work."

Shell is a contemporary art administrator, curator, and artist with over fifteen years of experience in directing nonprofit galleries. As its Eichholz Director and Curator, Shell provided the artistic direction and leadership of the Art Gym, working on strategy and development to increase funding through contributed income and grants to double the operating budget, establish a brand identity, increase art programming and publications, and certify the organization to pay W.A.G.E. (Working Artists and the Greater Economy) level honorariums and provide art production support for artists.

"I am thrilled to join Disjecta, an organization that thrives on ambitious contemporary art programs. I look forward to bringing my experiences to an organization that brings new curatorial voices to the region, supports the creation and exhibition of new and engaging artwork, and partners with many

other organizations in support of cultural events in Portland. Disjecta is one of the most valuable resources for artists and the arts community in Portland and I am excited to lead the organization during a new era of growth,” said Shell.

She began her career as Gallery Manager of the Oglethorpe Row Gallery, a fine art non-profit cooperative gallery in Savannah, Georgia. From 2004-2008 in Tucson, Arizona, Shell served as Executive Director of Dinnerware Contemporary Arts, a non-profit gallery, and then Gallery Curator and Director of the University of Arizona’s Joseph Gross and Lionel Rombach Galleries, where she also served as an Adjunct Professor of Art and Public Art Coordinator.

After her move to the Northwest in 2008, Shell served as Director of the Archer Gallery at Clark College in Vancouver, Washington, curating exhibitions while also an Adjunct Instructor at Clark College and at Washington State University’s Vancouver campus.

At the Art Gym at Marylhurst University, Shell curated exhibitions including a retrospective of the late Kartz Ucci, national group exhibitions, and solo exhibitions and projects by Heidi Schwegler, Michelle Ross, Ben Buswell, Jen Delos Reyes, and Jack Ryan.

Shell’s current professional activities include the Marketing Committee of the Association of Art Museum Curators; membership in the Northwest Art Council of the Portland Art Museum; and Visual Chronicle Panelist for the Regional Arts and Culture Council Public Art Collections Committee. Most recently she was a panelist for the Arlene Schnitzer Visual Arts Prize Jury at Portland State University and a presenter of a Curatorial Slam at the Association of Art Museum Curators Annual Conference in Houston, Texas.

Blake Shell succeeds Bryan Suereth, Disjecta's founder, who guided the organization for 15 years at several locations throughout Portland, before it settled into its current home in the vibrant Kenton neighborhood of North Portland.

Disjecta's founding executive director, Bryan Suareth, was ousted by the organization's board back in November.