

50 ICI

"A new concept—at once 'museum without walls,' educational institution, and avant-garde representative—ICI places the combined resources of the curatorial and educational departments of a contemporary art museum at the service of other institutions." *Art Journal*, 1978

50 years of Defining Curating in Society	6
50 years of Championing Experimental Practice	16
50 years of Transformative Collaborations	30
50 years of Sharing Knowledge Globally, Regionally, and Locally	38
Support ICI	47

In 1975, curators Susan Sollins and Nina Castelli Sundell co-founded what was then known as Independent Curators Incorporated. The 1970s were a period of intense cultural upheaval in American contemporary art, which was centered on the New York City scene. As two curators working outside of New York, Sollins and Sundell shared a desire to expand the reach of innovative curatorial and artistic practices across the United States and beyond.

They founded ICI on a vision of collaboration, experimentation, and engagement, as well as a deep dedication to advancing the work of curators, and the organization quickly became a platform for sharing knowledge and resources among art communities.

Today, as in 1975, we stand inside of a period of intense cultural upheaval, facing new challenges alongside issues that have always compelled artists toward action.

And now, as then, ICI remains “a new concept,” animated by a visionary nature and a constant drive toward innovation, reinvention, and experimentation.

Where the job title of “curator” was once tied exclusively to museum collections and care for objects, the role has changed significantly in recent decades—in part, through the work of ICI and our many collaborators, who seek to redefine curating for today’s art and audiences.

Curators today are community leaders in every way...

They inspire audiences with the art of our times, fostering a sense of belonging, mutual understanding, and critical thinking. They care for artists and their legacies through relationships that can last decades, and put those artists’ work into context by generating meaningful scholarship and art histories. They advocate not only for individual artists, but also by using the arts as a vehicle to fight for the resources and policies their communities need. And they forge the new institutions, platforms, networks, spaces, and systems that shape future generations of creators.

But they don’t do it alone.

For 50 years, ICI has been one of the only organizations that focuses exclusively on supporting curators. We believe that the best way to build a stronger art ecosystem is to provide these community leaders with the connections and resources they need to innovate, build, and foster free expression. Taking on those responsibilities in one's community can be isolating and hard; in those challenging moments, it can make all the difference to have the support of people and institutions who understand.

At ICI, our relationships define what curating is and can become.

We are a home for 2,500 curators in 75 countries who are actively connected to our programs, and we support their capacity to create stronger communities by:

- Providing curatorial programs—such as our Curatorial Intensive, Seminar, and Forum—that offer meaningful professional development to curators at all stages of their careers
- Developing groundbreaking traveling exhibitions that realize new curatorial visions and present them to broad audiences
- Producing public talks, new knowledge, and advocacy work that defines and elevates the curator's role in art and in society

By helping curators realize their visions and grow their power, we build a more compassionate, thoughtful, and just global civic society. In the following pages, learn how ICI has supported curators over the past 50 years through our programs, exhibitions, and advocacy work.

50 Years of Defining Curating in Society

Being a curator is much more than a job title; it's a vital civic role, whose definition is as varied as our global network. We are of service to the tens of thousands of curators working to foster stronger communities around the world, whether in museums, other institutions, or independently. The curators we work with place an emphasis on global perspectives in contemporary art, and introduce their audiences to new ideas, artists, and practices that prompt critical conversations about the world today.

What is one artwork that

The curators in ICI's global network reflect an enormous diversity of experiences and perspectives. They drive change through their practice and expand the definition of curating. Our exhibitions and programs support and highlight their work.



Project 35

EXHIBITION 2010-2015

Project 35 drew on ICI's extensive network of curators to show how video is now one of the most responsive and far-reaching mediums for contemporary artists. 35 international curators each selected one video artwork that they believed should be seen today, tracing regional and global connections among practitioners from places as varied as Colombia, the Congo, and the Philippines. Taking advantage of video's versatility, *Project 35* became one of ICI's most widely-seen traveling exhibitions, bringing a truly global perspective to communities in 36 cities over its two "volumes."



is vital to be seen today?

Notes for Tomorrow

EXHIBITION 2021-2026

In 2020—a moment where collective crisis had to be managed through collective care—ICI once again asked the question “what is one artwork that is vital to be seen today?”, this time to our network of Curatorial Intensive alumni. 30 curators from across the globe each selected one artwork that, together, present a network of “notes for tomorrow” as inspiration towards new futures. Since it was first presented in 2021, *Notes for Tomorrow* has traveled to more than 15 cities worldwide, from Istanbul, Turkey to Taipei, Taiwan and across eight U.S. states.



Public Programs

ICI fosters new ideas and approaches in curating, which we present to broad audiences through our free public programs. These programs are also made available on our website whenever possible, offering accessible educational opportunities.



Curator's Perspective

PROGRAM 2009-TODAY

The Curator's Perspective series highlights the recent projects of established curators—including biennials, major exhibitions, institutions, publications, and more—to shed light on the models that are currently shaping curating.



Curatorial Research Fellowships

PROGRAM 2012–TODAY



Artist Kamala Ibrahim Ishag's garden in Sharjah, captured by Michelle Mlati during a visit and interview, 2023



Paula Nascimento in conversation with her Fellowship mentor Tumelo Mosaka, 2024

Fellow: Risa Puleo

Through her Fellowship research—under the Marian Goodman Gallery Initiative in honor of the late Okwui Enwezor and in the framework of ICI's Mississippi River Project—Independent curator Risa Puleo sought to challenge the medium of public art and envision Indigenous pasts, presents, and futures in and around St. Louis, Missouri. As a co-curator of the 2023 Counterpublic Triennial, she collaborated with Osage artists Anita and Nokosee Fields and artist group New Red Order on ephemeral installations centered around Sugarloaf Mound (the oldest

human-made structure in St. Louis), and developed a curatorial intervention addressing the deterritorialization written into the area's street signs. The project addressed the role of curatorial and artistic work in places marked by histories of violence and dispossession against Indigenous peoples. In 2024, Counterpublic and the Osage Nation announced a historic land transfer agreement for Sugarloaf Mound, returning its ownership to the Osage Nation following both Puleo's work and years of artistic and civic investment in the community.

ICI programs strengthen curators' practice with opportunities to share and create new knowledge, and to connect with peers around common values. For example, our Curatorial Research Fellowships empower curators to pursue their own research interests and embrace civic-minded and community-driven projects.



Echoes and Shifts at Positive Street Art, curated by Margaret Jacobs, 2024



Risa Puleo discusses her Fellowship research at the Curatorial Forum conference, 2024



'Ai Pōhaku, Stone Eaters, a multi-site exhibition curated by Drew Kahu'āina Broderick and Josh Tengan, 2023



OUR IMPACT

Curators who joined ICI's network at the very start of their careers are now creating new institutions and visions for the field, driving innovation, mentoring other practitioners, and creating sustainable change in their communities. The practices that we have championed are shaping the field and society every day, and will continue to do so far beyond our reach.

In 2010, Michele Horrigan—an artist-curator based in the small Irish town of Askeaton, County Limerick—participated in the second-ever ICI Curatorial Intensive in New York. She was seeking to grow the reach and impact of Askeaton Contemporary Arts, an organization she had recently founded to promote engagement with contemporary art in Askeaton, an area which had no formal arts support. Today, Askeaton Contemporary Arts has realized over one hundred artists' projects, many of which have gone on to travel worldwide, and introduced a global community of artists to Askeaton. With no “white-cube” gallery spaces, artists instead work in public spaces throughout the town, actively involving the local community and bringing forward the rich layers of daily life that further artistic practice. Horrigan's curatorial projects have also drawn attention to corporate “greenwashing” practices that have resulted in policy change, and connected international artists to Ireland in new ways; most recently, she curated the 22nd TULCA Festival of Visual Arts in Galway, called *The Salvage Agency*.



“After the Curatorial Intensive, I came back buzzing with ideas. To be involved in an organization like ICI, where you could be really supported and encouraged, was very formative at that point in my career. I became more clear about asking for what I needed as a curator, and in conversations with artists, there was a confidence that hadn't been there before. Now, in my organization we are always thinking about positioning each project within the community, how to situate the project for longevity, and forming other networks within and outside of Ireland.”

50 Years of Championing Experimental Practice

The world is rapidly and profoundly transforming, and contemporary art moves just as fast. To act as effective civic leaders in times of change, curators need to be ahead of the curve, and to do so, they need new knowledge, tools, and structures of support. ICI is deeply committed to supporting the next generation of curators, and we have proudly supported multiple generations in becoming the vanguard of the practice.

Since it was founded by and for curators, our traveling exhibition program has long supported cutting-edge curatorial concepts that show cultural change as it's happening.

ICI's mentorship and the support of our network has helped curators take risks, pioneer innovative exhibition formats and concepts, and encourage new relationships between curator, artist, and visitor.

The Presence of Absence

EXHIBITION 1989-1992

In this exhibition, curator Nina Felshin challenged the conventional relationship between conception and execution in "conceptual art." She placed artists such as Sol LeWitt alongside new works by contemporaries like Jenny Holzer that sought to revise conceptual art's strategies, asking both *how* and *why* to execute an artwork. In the spirit of those questions, hosting art spaces received the artists' written instructions, diagrams, and/or images for the artworks, which would then be created anew at each site by local artists, students, or museum staff, and exist only until the presentation closed.



do it

EXHIBITION 1997-2021

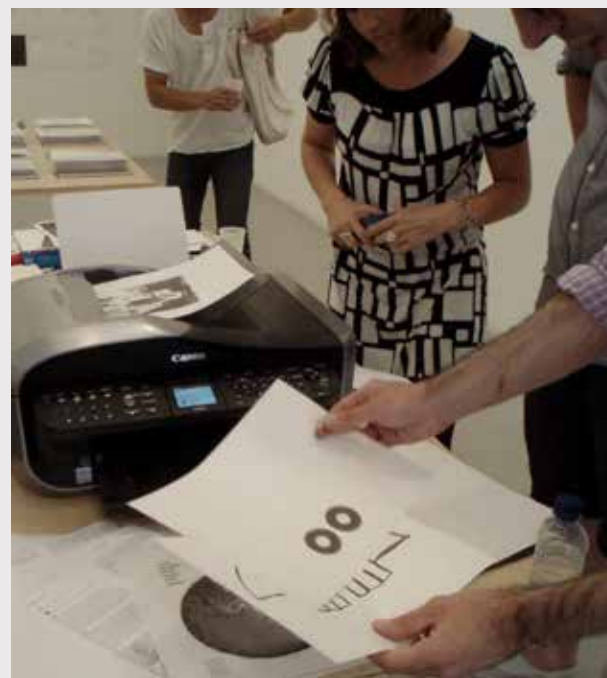
The landmark exhibition *do it*, curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, began as a curatorial thought experiment in 1993: What if all of an exhibition's artworks took the form of "do-it-yourself descriptions" or instructions from artists for others to follow? ICI joined forces with Obrist in 1997 for a 25-location North American tour of *do it*, which in turn led to more variants on the exhibition including *do it (TV)*, *do it (outside)*, and *do it (party)*. In 2013, ICI relaunched *do it* with 50 newly commissioned pieces and a publication that compiled 250 artists' instructions over two decades. Because the text-based scores are up to interpretation, each time a gallery presented *do it* was completely different and uniquely informed by local needs and interests. With every shift in culture and society, *do it* takes new shapes, and ICI developed additional contributions like *do it (in school)*—an art curriculum for middle and high school students—and *do it (home)* as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic featuring 55 additional artists' instructions available for free online. This innovative, ephemeral, and invigorating community-driven exhibition became a truly global phenomenon that continues to emerge around the world in new forms.

Seeing Sound



EXHIBITION 2020–2025

Curator Barbara London has long been at the forefront of the evolution of new media art, including founding the video collection of MoMA and working with early new media artists like Nam June Paik, Bruce Nauman, and Laurie Anderson. In *Seeing Sound*, she partnered with ICI to reimagine the presentation of sound art. There are no headphones in the exhibition; each artwork on view is an environmental sonic experience, taking shape as kinetic sculptures, audio-video installations, and visitor-responsive technologies. London shows how sound is an apt medium for today's culture, and reveals how "new" media opens opportunities to engage with current issues in society.



FAX

EXHIBITION 2009–2014

FAX highlighted the incredible artistic potential of a tool that, by 2009, had already become obsolete: the fax machine. Curator João Ribas envisioned an unruly, ever-changing meditation on the medium of drawing, inviting artists and non-artists alike to "think of the fax machine as a drawing tool" that often produces unpredictable results, and a unique method of communicating, reproducing, and circulating ideas. The first presentation of *FAX* featured nearly 100 artists, and each of the 20 hosting venues was encouraged to add additional artists to the show, in a participatory and generative process as vast as communication itself.

All of our learning initiatives bring innovative and experimental professionals together to advance curatorial practice. We provide critical professional development opportunities to emerging curators, and extend continued support for their growth throughout their careers.

The Curatorial Intensive

PROGRAM 2010–TODAY

Since it was established in 2010, ICI's Curatorial Intensive has become a leading program for curatorial professional development. Unlike any other program of its kind, the Curatorial Intensive provides global perspectives on curating and is centered on collaboration and civic practice. To date, 45 Intensives have taken place in 25 locations all over the world, each providing a unique learning context

that transforms curators' practices. Over a period of 1–2 weeks, participants gain critical new skills through seminars, discussions, site visits, and mentorship while workshopping their own proposal for an exhibition or project and, most importantly, building supportive peer relationships. The Intensives create strong local connections and help build cross-regional cohorts of emergent leaders who change the field together.



ACCRA, 2017



BANGKOK, 2018



TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU AUCKLAND, 2019



DERRY-LONDONDERRY, 2013



INHOTIM, 2012



BOGOTA, 2015



INDONESIA, 2024



DAKAR, 2016



NEW YORK, 2010



BUENOS AIRES, 2013



MARRAKECH, 2015



JOHANNESBURG, 2013



MANILA, 2017

Curators who become alumni of ICI's professional development programs go on to realize their curatorial visions in many ways. Our tight-knit alumni network is a powerful resource for curators as they go on to establish new arts organizations, take on leadership roles at institutions, further their independent practice and create new knowledge, become teachers and mentors to the next generations, and so much more. Additionally, ICI programs and opportunities for alumni create the conditions for curators to sustain and advance their practice over the long term.

Intensives in Action

In this series on our website, alumni show how their Intensive proposals have come to fruition through texts, exhibition tours, talks, and more, showing their work and process in detail.



Alumni Exhibitions

Many current ICI traveling exhibitions are curated by Intensive alumni, including *Actions for the Earth: Art, Care & Ecology* (curated by Sharmila Wood, alum New York 2014) and *Never Spoken Again* (curated by David Ayala-Alfonso, alum New York 2010).



Alumni Opportunities

In partnership with a diverse range of organizations, we offer fellowships, grants, and experiences that invite alumni to pursue research, explore new sites, and forge collaborations.



Curatorial Seminar

PROGRAM 2021-TODAY

The Curatorial Seminar evolved from our Curatorial Intensive and, since 2021, has been held in Chicago, Detroit, and New York as a flexible new model to address the needs and challenges impacting emerging curators in their local communities. Participants meet over a period of several months to share resources and knowledge, and workshop a proposal for an exhibition or project with the help of selected mentors. The expert-led seminars, site visits, and shared readings provide essential tools for curators just entering the field, and empowers them to realize their vision outside of traditional academic or institutional structures.



Like our Curatorial Intensive, Seminar participants also go on to create transformative new projects:

New York Curatorial Seminar 2024 alumni Andrea Sofia Matos and Xavier Robles Armas co-curated *Rican Visions*, a large-scale exhibition at The Latinx Project at NYU featuring the work of nineteen emerging and established artists from the contemporary Diasporican and Nuyorican community.

In summer 2024, Detroit Curatorial Seminar alum Amber Nax presented *Adler and Adler*, an exhibition in Chicago that brought her research at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History into conversation with Chicago-based artist Eli Greene. The exhibition was supported in part through a partnership with ICI and Chicago's South Side Community Art Center.



OUR IMPACT

In our programs, opportunities, and every day, ICI recognizes that fighting isolation and building connection—the resource that’s most needed in the field—is a vital part of how curators support one another, and we make it a large part of our own work. ICI alumni and collaborators have access to a global network of peers across 75 countries who recognize, support, and connect with one another. Across the world, ICI collaborators are thriving, advancing their practice, and changing the field.



Anne Collins Smith is Chief Curator at the New Orleans Museum of Art, and a major arts leader in New Orleans’s community and civic service

Intensive alum, New York 2010



Naz Cuguoglu co-curated the first American Pavilion at Gwangju Biennial 2024 as Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art and Programs at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco

Intensive alum, New Orleans 2017



João Laia became Artistic Director of the Department of Contemporary Art of the Municipality of Porto, Portugal, managing major municipal cultural projects

Intensive alum, Derry~Londonderry 2013



Caroline K. Ng is Executive Director of the Chinese American Museum of Chicago, expanding perspectives of the Chinese American identity

Curatorial Seminar alum, Chicago 2024



Daril Fortis recently curated the groundbreaking *La Performance Fronteriza* and is Director of Museums and Galleries, Culture Secretariat of Baja California, Mexico

Intensive alum, Mexico City 2018



Jorell Legaspi is Deputy Director-General for Museums of the National Museums of the Philippines, which recently opened a brand-new building in Davao

Intensive alum, Manila 2016



Fadzai Veronica Muchemwa curated Zimbabwe’s Venice Biennale pavilion in 2022 and 2024, and was appointed Curator of Contemporary Art, National Gallery of Zimbabwe in 2022

Intensive alum, Dakar 2016; Mentor, East Africa mentorship program 2024–25



Mia Lopez is the first Curator of Latinx Art at the McNay Museum in San Antonio, expanding its representation of Latinx artists

Intensive alum, New Orleans 2018



David Ayala-Alfonso curated the ICI exhibition *Never Spoken Again*, and his recent project *Multiples Metonimias Materiales* was awarded the Colombia Ministry of Culture’s National Museology Research Grant

Intensive alum, New York Fall 2010; Faculty, New Orleans 2019



Wassan Al-Khudhairi is co-curator of the Hawai’i Triennial 2025, with Binna Choi and Noelle M.K.Y. Kahanu

Intensive alum, New York Spring 2014



Amanda de la Garza Mata is Artistic Deputy Director of Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid, Spain

Intensive alum, Derry~Londonderry 2013



Ross Stanton Jordan curated the major touring exhibition *Freedom in Form: Richard Hunt* in 2024, continuing his *Presidential Library Project* research, accompanied by a new catalog

Intensive alum, New Orleans 2016

50 Years of Transformative Collaborations

Connection and collaboration are vital qualities in both art and the world, and they are core values in all that we do at ICI. We are always working in partnership, whether with individual curators, hosting institutions, fellow arts organizations, governments, or communities, and all of our work seeks to build bridges and connections among the art ecosystem. ICI has been a steward of many long-lasting collaborations, and we continue to foster long-term relationships through our work.

All curatorial work is a collaboration, often involving many individuals and institutions and balancing competing priorities. Since our founding, ICI has had a proud tradition of producing co-curated exhibitions, and we intentionally create opportunities for curators to collaborate with one another.

Team Spirit

EXHIBITION 1990–1991

Susan Sollins and Nina Castelli Sundell helped build ICI into the global network it is today by organizing a wide range of exhibitions through hands-on direction, with Sollins serving as ICI's Executive Director from its inception until 1996. In 1990, the two curators joined forces to celebrate this long-running collaboration and assemble *Team Spirit*. The exhibition sought to undo the idea of art coming from a single mind or the individual artist-genius, and instead celebrated artistic collectives, artist teams, and partnerships like their own. At the cusp of a new era of collaborative practice ushered in by practitioners like Colab, Guerrilla Girls, and General Idea, the exhibition drew a genealogy of international collaborations as a mode of production going back to the mid-1960s, and an ethic that continues to this day.



“Through this project we propose a queer curatorial model that is both fluid and speculative... looking back to the work of an unsung creator to bolster a future suffuse with experimentation, play, and collaboration—the ideas that animated Sandoval’s life and work.”

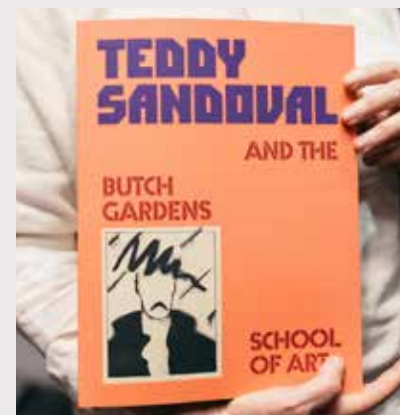
C. Ondine Chavoya and David Evans Frantz



Teddy Sandoval and the Butch Gardens School of Art

EXHIBITION 2023–2027

Teddy Sandoval is the second ICI-supported collaboration between co-curators C. Ondine Chavoya and David Evans Frantz. This expansive survey assembles works by the prolific though overlooked artist Teddy Sandoval (1949–1995), who was a central figure in Los Angeles’s queer and Chicana artistic circles, and reflects Chavoya and Frantz’s ongoing efforts to share the work of queer Latinx artists. The curators’ cooperative practices are built on values of collectivity and deep scholarship, as well as relationship-building with artists and their friends and families, through which they preserve the legacies of those who have been largely neglected by mainstream art historical narratives.



EN MAS'

EXHIBITION 2015–2018

Curated by Claire Tancons and Krista Thompson, *EN MAS': Carnival and Performance Art of the Caribbean* considered performance art not solely through its limited art history, but from the broader perspective of Carnival production and its open-air performances across the world. The exhibition was developed through the commission of nine performances that first took place during the 2014 Carnival season across multiple cities in the Caribbean, U.S., and Europe. Then, the commissions were presented anew in the exhibition with material remnants and multimedia interpretations, which opened at the New Orleans Contemporary Art Center and traveled to five more cities in the Caribbean and the U.S. At each stage, the exhibition prompted artists, publics, and hosting spaces to reflect on artistic expression and Carnival celebrations, their histories, contemporary manifestations, and future possibilities.



Mud + Corn + Stone + Blue

EXHIBITION 2024–2027

Told through the work of artists from the U.S. Corn Belt and from Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras, *Mud + Corn + Stone + Blue* traces the entangled lands of the U.S. and Central America. Curator Laura Augusta weaves a history of major conflicts that have scarred the region since the 1960s with American agriculture through the corn industry, a narrative drawn in part from her own family history. For the artists (many of whom have witnessed these events firsthand), it is important that their work helps to make visible the connections between the natural

world, agricultural reform, economic recession, military intervention, civil war, genocide, and mass migrations. Augusta's curatorial methodology of *convivencia* (shared living) is a central part of the exhibition's tour, as she visits each location to engage in research with artists, activists, and community groups to understand each place's ties to this complex history.



Community Collaborations

As they travel to art spaces globally, ICI exhibitions also become unique opportunities to collaborate with hosting curators and their communities. We intentionally develop exhibitions that go beyond museum walls and change over time. These meaningful partnerships not only generate new scholarship and new experiences for visitors, but create dialogue that can change how hosting art spaces present future exhibitions and work within their own communities.

Soundings

EXHIBITION 2019–2025

Soundings: An Exhibition In Five Parts began with a question from curators Candice Hopkins and Dylan Robinson to the artists: How can a score be a call and a tool for decolonization? The resulting musical scores, performances, videos, sculptures, and sound artworks on view activate and assert Indigenous resurgence, and are reinterpreted at each location as the exhibition travels. *Soundings* invites audiences and the institutions that hosted the exhibition—to listen to and deeply engage with Indigenous communities, knowledge, lived experiences, and histories. In doing so, *Soundings* troubles the colonial imaginary and confronts the place of an exhibition within it.



"Hosting *Soundings* has been an important experience and journey for KCAI and the communities we serve. The curatorial framework and approach is demanding, generous, and groundbreaking, held and presented with the utmost care. Its sonic wake will resonate through our campus, academics, city, and region."

—Michael Schonhoff, Director, Kansas City Art Institute Gallery

OUR IMPACT

Through our collaborative approach, ICI has helped to center the voice of curators in their own practice, and support the emergence of a movement of curating “in the first person.” Such an approach is often discouraged in more traditional institutions, but it produces exhibitions and projects that highlight their lived experiences and, in turn, create more open dialogues about art and society.



“ICI was the first hands-on curatorial training I ever had, and I would not be where I am without it. There are so many people with brilliant minds who never had the opportunity or means to begin this training, and programs like the Curatorial Intensive are so important because in one week, it gives participants direction and confidence that their ideas are possible and that they can make them happen.”

After participating in the 2014 Curatorial Intensive in Addis Ababa, Fitsum Shebeshe pursued new career opportunities and, in 2016, moved from Ethiopia to Baltimore, Maryland. Confronted with a different society, Shebeshe encountered a wide range of questions that reshaped his relationship to institutions, culture, and ideas of identity and assimilation. He found kinship with artists and others from the African Diaspora who shared his experience, and those curatorial and personal explorations became the ICI traveling exhibition *States of Becoming*. Each of the 17 featured artists has had a unique relationship with the U.S. context, which is reflected in their work, and all are engaged in a perpetual process of identifying, redefining, and becoming themselves.

50 Years of Sharing Knowledge Globally, Regionally, and Locally

ICI's initiatives prioritize local communities and their contexts, and connect them in an international framework of knowledge-sharing. Our traveling exhibitions provide hosting institutions a greater diversity of ideas to share with their communities, connecting them to relevant global art movements. Our programs have sparked critical conversations and laid the groundwork for ongoing exchange among curators, artists, and communities.

Global in scope, but human in scale.

Since our founding, we have fostered collaborations that expand local perspectives and further the regional art discourses that make sense of our globalized world. Working with ICI also gives curators flexible support as they develop new projects with peers around the world, with approaches to curating that can express the complexities of local communities.

VIDEOART U.S.A.

EXHIBITION 1975-1978

ICI's first traveling exhibition premiered at the 13th São Paulo Bienal, and defined a common language of video as artistic medium and powerful witness. Based on a 1973 exhibition initially curated by Suzanne Delehanty at the ICA Philadelphia, *VIDEOART U.S.A* was reconfigured

by curator Jack Boulton for ICI and served as the American representation in the Brazilian biennial in 1975. *VIDEOART U.S.A.* included an early international showing of work by pioneering video artists such as Lynda Benglis, Nam June Paik, Keith Sonnier, and Vito Acconci, and went on to travel across Latin America becoming influential in the development of artistic practice and new media across the continent.



Sunlight on the Sea Floor

EXHIBITION 2024-2029

This exhibition begins from the paintings of Clément Siatous, whose work memorializes the struggles and triumphs of the people of the Chagos Islands in a rich counternarrative to military history. Co-curators Paula Naughton and Marina Reyes Franco pair his works with those of eleven other artists from Barbados,

the Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe, Jamaica, Mauritius, Panama, and Puerto Rico, and their U.S. and U.K. diasporas. Together, they create cross-regional connections among shared experiences of history, identity, colonialism, and displacement, and articulate the importance of radical imagination and collective memory.



Marina Reyes Franco: "The Visitor Economy Regime"



Marina Reyes Franco (Curatorial Intensive alum, Mexico City 2014) orients her curatorial approach around the impact of what she terms "the visitor economy regime": tourism and the constructed ideas of paradise that permeate the arts, culture, politics, and lands of places like her hometown of San Juan, Puerto Rico. In 2017, she received ICI's CPPC Travel Award for Central America and the Caribbean to study the "brand identity [of] paradises" across the region, and "[how] cultural workers deal with the neo-colonial impositions brought on by the tourism trade." This research has informed several curatorial projects, including her groundbreaking exhibition *Tropical Is Political: Caribbean Art Under the Visitor Economy Regime* in 2022-23 and ICI's exhibition *Sunlight on the Sea Floor*.



The Mississippi

Though we work globally, our approach is always local and regional, to ensure that we're helping curators create the infrastructures they need. ICI is one of the only arts nonprofits to have worked in all 50 U.S. states as well as Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico, and through our sustained approach, we've helped build regional knowledges and foster a unique understanding of the U.S. context.



Beginning in the 2010s, ICI frequently collaborated in New Orleans and Chicago, and partnered on a variety of projects in the South and Midwest. We held annual Curatorial Intensives in New Orleans from 2014 to 2019, and since 2016, the annual Curatorial Forum has connected curators from across the U.S. in partnership with EXPO CHICAGO.

In 2020, we began offering a Curatorial Research Fellowship focused on the region. Inaugural Fellows Lydia Y. Nichols and Brandon Alvendia mapped the physical, economic, and spiritual connections between the many cultural hubs that the river touches, and how its flows cross both geographic and political divides.



River Basin

In 2024, we opened the Curatorial Forum—which had previously consisted of closed-door sessions—to include a public conference. “Curating and the Commons” featured a keynote lecture by Miguel López and three panels that explored the civic nature and civic possibilities of art and curatorial practice.



In 2022, we established a full-time office in Chicago, a hub from which we hold ICI programs, build new cross-regional connections, and empower curators directly in their communities.



Building upon the Curatorial Research Fellowships, we created a knowledge-exchange program, the Curatorial Assembly, to strengthen new regional narratives and build peer support structures.



The Mississippi River Basin—an area that encompasses 40% of the U.S. and touches 32 states through the River and its watersheds—is both a metaphor for a global cultural space and a rich ecosystem through which to understand artistic expression in the U.S. Our projects in this initiative support curatorial and artistic investigations that study overlooked histories and create new narratives about American culture.

OUR IMPACT

Our approach to global and regional work is unique: It is formed by listening and adapting to local contexts, supporting curators as they become leaders in their communities, and empowering them to forge new pathways for curatorial practice in their own way. Through these meaningful, personal connections, we create long-term partnerships with cultural hubs worldwide.



“There are many lessons that I took with me from the Curatorial Intensive, which I will forever cherish. Singular of all these lessons is Raphael Chikukwa’s on the significance of tactics, of a systematic approach in which to divide operations, all focused on a singular goal. I might have taken a lifetime to figure this solution [on my own].”

After several years of promoting the work of women artists working in Uganda and the surrounding regions, and after participating in the 2019 Curatorial Intensive in Cape Town, curator and art historian Martha Kazungu developed a plan. In 2021, she founded Njabala Foundation in Kampala, Uganda to facilitate opportunities for women artists to be seen and thrive, and to campaign against gender inequality in the art world. The following year, Kazungu and Njabala Foundation collaborated with ICI to hold our 2022 Curatorial Intensive in Kampala, where 13 emerging curators furthered their own practices drawing from the vibrant artistic and intellectual production in East Africa. In 2024, ICI collaborated again with Martha and Njabala Foundation on a six-month mentorship program with six women curators who are based in East Africa, to support a new generation of cultural workers in the region.

OUR FUTURE

Advocating for a More Caring Art Ecosystem

At the core of ICI's approach is an ethic of care. We envision a future where communities around the world are more cohesive, united, and open-hearted as a result of their engagement with the art of their times—contemporary art that reflects their lived experience and provides them with a sense of belonging.

In the last 15 years especially, ICI's initiatives have successfully promoted new approaches to curating that are focused on community-building, with projects that use first-person narratives and a person-first understanding of what art can do. ICI's learning initiatives, exhibitions, and public programs have expanded the minds of curators, introduced a new vanguard of curators from the global majority, and supported projects that more effectively reflect their communities.

In the coming years, we look forward to expanding even further the opportunities available to curators and their communities. Join us at an ICI exhibition or public program near you, and find out more about our work on our website or by following us on social media. Thank you for 50 years of building new platforms for contemporary art together!

Support ICI

Every year, individuals who share ICI's mission and global outlook for the arts come together to make our programs possible. They believe in the transformative power of contemporary art and recognize the vital role that curators play in shaping our understanding of the world.

ICI's supporters help us empower curators through our Learning Initiatives—providing curators with the tools and global connections they need to serve their communities effectively—and our Traveling Exhibitions, which reflect the dynamic nature of curating today. In turn, our supporters gain a unique perspective on art by connecting with our global network of collaborators, and help build stronger communities by advancing the critical work of curators worldwide.



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On behalf of ICI's Board of Trustees, thank you to all of the individuals whose generous contributions continue to make our work possible worldwide.

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