

Helen Frankenthaler Foundation Announces Appointment of Elizabeth Smith as Executive Director

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The **Helen Frankenthaler Foundation (HFF)** has announced the appointment of **Elizabeth Smith** as the Foundation's first **Executive Director**, effective September 2013. Currently Executive Director, Curatorial Affairs, at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), Ms. Smith is an art historian, curator, author, and educator with special expertise in visual art, public art, and architecture from the mid-twentieth century to today. She has a strong record of curatorial accomplishment and significant leadership experience in institutional programming and administration.

The Helen Frankenthaler Foundation was established and endowed by the late renowned artist during her lifetime. The primary beneficiary of the artist's estate, it will soon inherit an extensive selection of her work in a variety of media, her art collection, and the other assets in the estate, at which time it will begin operating as a fully endowed foundation. Its mission will include supporting the artist's legacy through a variety of initiatives, including the publishing of a catalogue raisonné, organizing and encouraging significant exhibitions of the artist's work, and making grants in other areas of the visual arts, to be determined by the Executive Director and the Board in the months ahead. Since October 2012, the artist's estate has been represented by Gagosian Gallery, New York, where its acclaimed first exhibition of Helen Frankenthaler's works, from the 1950s, was presented earlier this year. It was curated by John Elderfield, art historian and consultant to the Gallery for special exhibitions.

Helen Frankenthaler (1928-2011) has long been recognized as one of the great American artists of the twentieth century. Often viewed as a Color-Field painter, she was a major second-generation Abstract Expressionist artist who advanced the methods of mid-century painterly abstraction. Deeply influential for her invention of the soak-stain technique, she worked with a counterpoise of painterly drawing and areas of affective color; at times with an ambiguous figuration, at others in a more sparsely abstract mode. In addition to painting, she also made sculptures, ceramics, and set designs, and was especially attracted to printmaking, for which she was esteemed almost as much as for her works on canvas. Her work is represented in the collections of major museums around the world, and has been the subject of numerous substantial publications. *(A biography, with a listing of major exhibitions and a select bibliography, is available on request.)*

The **Board of Directors** of the **Helen Frankenthaler Foundation** comprises three family members and two longtime associates of the artist: her nephews artist Clifford Ross, Chairman, and collector and businessman Frederick J. Iseman, President; and her stepdaughter Lise Motherwell, Vice President, a psychologist and the daughter of the late artist Robert Motherwell, to whom Ms. Frankenthaler was married from 1958 to 1971; together with Michael Hecht, Treasurer, Ms. Frankenthaler's close advisor and accountant of four decades; and Maureen St. Onge, Secretary, her assistant of thirty-eight years.

Clifford Ross said, "The Board of Directors of the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation is delighted to announce Elizabeth Smith's appointment to head the Foundation at this important and exciting moment in its development. We required a dynamic and thoughtful leader with a strong academic background and substantial curatorial and managerial experience to advance its mission. Elizabeth was our unanimous choice."

Elizabeth Smith stated, "Much of my curatorial work has centered on American art of the 1950s onward, and I've had the privilege to organize exhibitions of a broad range of artists working in various media, including Lee Bontecou, Jenny Holzer, Kerry James Marshall, Roberto Matta, Donald Moffett, and Cindy Sherman, as well as architects active in the post-World War II period. I have long been interested in the work of Helen Frankenthaler, and, after three decades in museums, I am thrilled with the opportunity to help shape the future of the Frankenthaler Foundation."

Since 2010, as Executive Director, Curatorial Affairs, at the AGO, one of North America's most distinguished art museums, **Elizabeth Smith** has been responsible for the Museum's artistic program as a whole, from conception to delivery. This has included directing five major curatorial divisions, plus collections management and conservation, exhibition services, and the research library and archives.

In 1999, she was appointed James W. Alsdorf Chief Curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, where in 2005 she was also promoted to the role of Deputy Director for Programs, a position that she held until her departure, in 2009. From 1983 to 1999, she held a succession of positions at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (Curator, 1990 to 1999; Associate Curator, 1988 to 1990; and Assistant Curator, 1983 to 1988), where she organized numerous exhibitions in the visual arts and architecture, many with national and international tours. Among additional roles, she was Visiting Professor and Graduate Advisor, Department of Painting, for the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2007 to 2009) and Adjunct Professor, Public Art Studies Program, School of Fine Arts, University of Southern California, Los Angeles (1992 to 1999). She is a Trustee of the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.

Elizabeth Smith earned her B.A. from Barnard College, Columbia University, in 1979, with concentration in language, literature, and the history of Spain; and her M.A. in art history from Columbia's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, in 1980, where her major field was nineteenth- and twentieth-century European and American painting and sculpture.

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For additional press information about the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation and Elizabeth Smith's appointment, please contact Jeanne Collins or Kyle Brown, info@jcollinsassociates.com, 646-486-7050.