

The Amistad Center for Art & Culture

AT THE WADSWORTH ATHENEUM MUSEUM OF ART

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Frank Mitchell Appointed Executive Director of the Amistad Center for Art & Culture

Today, the Amistad Center for Art & Culture announced that following a national search and consideration of over 60 candidates the Board of Trustees voted unanimously to appoint Frank Mitchell as its next Executive Director. Mr. Mitchell will assume the role on July 1, 2016. He succeeds former Executive Director Olivia White, who stepped down after 11 years of successful leadership last October.

"The Amistad Center Board of Trustees is thrilled that Frank Mitchell will be our next Executive Director," said Board President Medina Jett. "Frank's extensive knowledge of African American art and history, his historical knowledge of the Amistad Center's collection and his passion and vision for the Amistad Center make him the perfect choice to lead our organization toward the national stage. Frank has the full support of our talented staff and the full confidence of our Board of Trustees."

Mr. Mitchell adds, "My mother and father were married at my maternal grandparents' home in the North End neighborhood of Hartford and so this great city has always represented history and culture for me. It is an honor to follow Olivia White and build on the Amistad Center for Art & Culture's three decades of success in documenting, interpreting, and celebrating the arts and culture of people of African descent. It is particularly exciting to lead this institution at a time of renewal in Hartford powered by a vibrant network of cultural organizations, including the extraordinarily renovated Wadsworth Atheneum that is our home, and at a time of increasing interest in the nation about the value of history to illuminate

the challenges and opportunities of contemporary society. I look forward to working with center staff, trustees, supporters, and partners to increase the impact our collections, exhibitions, and educational programs have for Hartford, for Connecticut, and beyond.”

Nikki DeJesus Sertsu, Project Consultant at Arts Consulting Group said, “The Amistad Center for Art & Culture is a vibrant cultural resource with a dynamic team and diverse educational programming. ACG congratulates the Board of Trustees and other stakeholders involved in the executive search process who will benefit from Frank’s expertise and passion for African American art and history.”

Mr. Mitchell began his career as a Community Programs Coordinator at the Studio Museum in Harlem, and completed projects at The Schomburg Center, the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, and The Anacostia Museum. While at the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale University, he introduced a Martin Luther King Day celebration that still draws thousands to the Museum annually. Most recently as the Consulting Curator for the Connecticut Audubon Society Birdcraft Museum, Mr. Mitchell led the design planning process for a \$1 million renovation to the national historic landmark.

Since 2013, Mr. Mitchell has been the Assistant Director and Curator of The Amistad Center after serving as Curator-at-Large for six years. As the Center’s longest-serving curatorial presence, he redefined the exhibition program from a collection-based focus on historical timelines, to a topical exhibition program that integrates collections material and loans of contemporary art and partnerships with leading artists. The Amistad Center has traveled large survey shows of historical and contemporary photography, recognized anniversaries of American phenomenon like Hurricane Katrina and historical milestones like Abraham Lincoln’s bicentennial. He also curated The Amistad Center’s current and very successful exhibition, *40 Acres: The Promise of a Black Pastoral*.

Mr. Mitchell has curated and organized exhibitions for multi-year national tours and produced exhibitions and programs with the University of St. Joseph Art Gallery, Capital Community College, the International Festival of Arts & Ideas, the Hill-Stead Museum, the Hartford Public Library, the Connecticut Historical Society, the Old State House and other regional partners.

He earned a Ph.D. in American Culture from the University of Michigan, an M.A. from Yale University in African-American Studies, and an A.B. from Bowdoin College.

The Search Committee for the new Executive Director was chaired by Board President Medina Jett and included five other trustees: Richard Alleyne, Emilie de Brigard, Greg Deavens, Ellen Nurse and JoAnn Price. The Search Committee was assisted by Arts Consulting Group, a leading provider of executive search and other services for the arts and culture industry.

About The Amistad Center for Art and Culture:

Mission: We celebrate art and culture influenced by people of African descent, through education, scholarship and social experiences.

Vision: Minds are opened, lives are changed.

The Amistad Foundation was created in 1987 when a handful of local visionaries joined forces with private foundations, corporations, the Wadsworth Atheneum, and the State of Connecticut to purchase and provide public access to an extraordinary collection documenting more than 300 years of the Black experience in America. The collection includes paintings and prints of important artists such as Hale Woodruff, Romare Bearden, Jacob Lawrence, Herbert Gentry, and the recently discovered Connecticut folk artist Ellis Ruley. More than two decades after acquiring the collection, The Amistad has evolved into a major cultural resource which has created and presented over 50 exhibitions, has a growing membership, and provides a multitude of educational program offerings. www.amistadcenter.org

About Arts Consulting Group:

Arts Consulting Group is the leading provider of hands-on interim management, executive search, revenue enhancement consulting, facilities & program planning, and organizational development services for the arts and culture industry. The firm is located in New York, Washington DC, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Diego, Portland, Seattle, and Denver with consultants in other communities throughout North America to best serve the needs of its clients. www.artsconsulting.com