

**Joan Mitchell Foundation Names Toccarra A. H. Thomas  
As Director of Joan Mitchell Center in New Orleans**

**New York, NY—October 8, 2019**—The [Joan Mitchell Foundation](#) announced today the appointment of Toccarra A. H. Thomas as Director of its [Joan Mitchell Center](#) in New Orleans. Thomas has previously served as the inaugural general manager of [Pioneer Works](#) in Brooklyn, NY, and inaugural managing director of [SPACE](#), a contemporary multidisciplinary art organization in Portland, ME. In her new role, she will oversee the Center’s expansive artist residency program, develop public programming and special projects to support community engagement with the Center’s artist residents, and manage the day-to-day operations of the Center. She will also work closely with leadership at the Joan Mitchell Foundation in New York to further develop artist-centered resources and programming. Thomas will begin her position on October 14, 2019, taking the helm from Veronique Le Melle, who has served as Interim Director since January 2019.

“Toccarra brings an incredible range of experience and knowledge to the Center. As a media and performance artist herself, she understands deeply the needs of today’s artist community and the impact that a residency can have on a creative practice,” said Kay Takeda, Senior Director of Artist Programs at the Joan Mitchell Foundation. “At the same time, as an arts administrator, she has the vision and leadership skills needed to ensure that the Joan Mitchell Center residency program continues to thrive as a meaningful resource for artists.”

“We are excited to welcome Toccarra to our team and to introduce her to our national artist community and our community in New Orleans. We look forward to working with her to continue to make the Joan Mitchell Center a vibrant artistic platform and know that her expertise will be invaluable to the Center’s future,” added Christa Blatchford, CEO of the Joan Mitchell Foundation.

The Foundation opened the Joan Mitchell Center in 2015 to complement its grant programs and deepen its relationships with artists through a residency program. The decision to locate the residency center in New Orleans grew out of direct connections and support provided to local artists and arts organizations in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, as part of the Foundation’s Emergency Grants program. The Center sits on a two-acre campus in the Seventh Ward, and features artist studios, spaces for public programming, and on-site housing for resident artists. The Center provides residencies for local artists, as a critical aspect of the Foundation’s continued commitment to the city and surrounding area, as well as to artists from across the United States that have previously been awarded grants by the Foundation. It also offers a roster of public events, including Open Studios and Community

Coffee, that are developed to spur critical dialogue between artists and the public. The Center supports the Foundation's wider mission, as envisioned by artist Joan Mitchell in her will, to provide artists with the time, space, and financial support to further existing projects and create new work.

"In concert with my own artistic practice, I have dedicated my career to elevating the practices of fellow creatives. Serving as the Director of the Joan Mitchell Center is an incredible opportunity to continue to have a positive impact on the lives and work of the many talented artists that are currently and will yet become part of the Foundation's community," said Thomas. "Joan Mitchell's vision to help support the generations of artists that have come after her is a powerful legacy to stand in, and I am honored to be a part of it."

In her leadership role at SPACE (2018-2019), Thomas was responsible for overseeing the success of the nonprofit's wide-ranging operational activities, including its annual fundraiser and membership program, external communications and website relaunch, outreach and community engagement, visitor experience, and the planning and management of the organization's multi-purpose facilities. During her tenure at Pioneer Works Art Foundation (2015-2018), Thomas, who, in her most recent role, led operations, was responsible for a redevelopment of the organization's human resources and financial policies for a growing staff of more than 50, oversaw the repairs and maintenance of the 27,000 sq. ft. facility, and also managed programs and events. Additionally, she served as interim residency manager and developed a formalized visitor services department to support the 200+ public programs produced annually by the organization.

Earlier in her career, Thomas worked as the Source Program Associate at New York Foundation for the Arts, where she created resources tailored to address the needs of artists at varying stages in their careers, and as Program Manager at African Film Festival, Inc., where she produced local, national, and international public programs with partners including Film Society of Lincoln Center, Brooklyn Academy of Music, and New Museum. Curatorially, Thomas has produced a spectrum of film, culture, and art-related projects, including the film series *Black, Brown + Indigo* in Portland, ME; *Artistic Voices of the Diaspora* at the Museum of Art and Design; and *Africans in the Diaspora: Expatriates and Homecoming* at The Jerome L. Greene Performance Space at WNYC. Within her own artistic practice, her multimedia works have been shown alongside those of Shani Peters, Terence Nance, Ina Archer, and Akosua Adoma Owusu, among others. She also worked as an interview facilitator for StoryCorps' Griot Initiative to record the narratives of Black Americans, which were later archived at The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress and the National Museum of African American History & Culture. Thomas holds a BA in Cultural Anthropology from Smith College, and an MA in Media Studies from The New School.

**About the Joan Mitchell Foundation**

The Joan Mitchell Foundation celebrates the life of abstract artist Joan Mitchell by expanding awareness of her pioneering work and fulfilling her wish to support and provide opportunities for visual artists. Through grants, residencies, and related initiatives, the Foundation advances the work of today’s artists and amplifies their essential contributions to communities around the world.

As the chief steward of Joan Mitchell’s legacy, the Foundation manages a collection of Mitchell’s artwork and archives containing her personal papers, photographs, and ephemera. The Foundation provides loans of Mitchell artworks from its collection to museums, academic institutions, and other non-profit arts spaces. Foundation staff are dedicated to assisting researchers and sharing information about the Foundation’s artwork and archival collections in order to further scholarship and broad appreciation for Mitchell’s life and work. The Foundation is also supporting the Joan Mitchell Catalogue Raisonné, established in 2015, which is currently researching Mitchell’s paintings in order to produce a scholarly, multi-volume book documenting all of the artist’s known painted work.

Fulfilling Mitchell’s mandate to “aid and assist” living artists, over the past 25 years the Foundation has evolved a range of initiatives that directly support visual artists at varying stages of their careers. The Foundation’s grant programs include the annual Painters & Sculptors Grants, which provide 25 artists with unrestricted funds of \$25,000, and Emergency Grants of up to \$6,000 for disaster recovery. The New Orleans-based Joan Mitchell Center hosts residencies for national and local artists, as well as artist talks, open studio events, and other public programs that encourage dialogue and exchange with the local community. The Creating a Living Legacy (CALL) initiative provides free and essential resources to help artists of all ages organize, document, and manage their artworks and careers. Together, these programs, along with additional professional support services, actively engage with working artists as they develop and expand their practices.

###

**For more information, please contact:**

Alina E. Sumajin  
PAVE Communications & Consulting  
[alina@paveconsult.com](mailto:alina@paveconsult.com) / 646-369-2050