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Rice appoints Alison Weaver to direct Moody Center for the Arts

Alison Weaver, an art historian and former director of affiliates for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, has been named executive director of Rice University's Moody Center for the Arts.

Weaver will oversee the \$30 million, 50,000-square-foot facility, currently under construction, that will be an interdisciplinary center with space for arts education, performances, gallery exhibitions, material fabrication and digital media art production, as well as a site for collaborations with local and international arts institutions.



"Alison brings a wonderful combination of deep passion for the arts and practical experience as a senior administrator in one of the world's best museums," Rice President David Leebron said. "Her wide-ranging background and perspective make her the ideal person to serve as the first director of the exciting new Moody Center for the Arts at Rice."

The Moody Center will benefit from Weaver's museum management experience, knowledge of art history, solid business background and ties to the Houston community. In her six years at the Guggenheim, Weaver led its programs and operations in Berlin, Venice, Las Vegas and Bilbao, Spain, while managing its departments of Exhibition Management, Registration, Art Services and Library/Archives in New York. Together with her curatorial colleagues, she implemented a wide range of international traveling exhibitions, from historical loan shows such as "Art in America: 300 Years of Innovation" to new commissions such as William Kentridge's "Black Box/Chambre Noire." She also coordinated the museum's strategic-planning process and managed the Guggenheim's reaccreditation by the American Association of Museums.

Weaver has a Master of Arts degree from Williams College and will complete a Ph.D. in art history this fall at City University of New York, where her research focuses on the dialogue between Europe and the United States from 1945 to the present. She has written about a variety of international artists, including Nam June Paik and Sigmar Polke, and has taught Introduction to the Visual Arts of the World at City College of New York. Her current research focuses on the U.S. reception of the German artist Joseph Beuys. She also has an MBA from the Yale School of Management and a B.A. cum laude in the history of religion from Princeton University. Before joining the Guggenheim staff, she was an engagement manager for the consulting firm McKinsey & Co.

“Alison’s combination of a strong business background, an incredibly strong academic background and very significant museum experience is remarkable,” said Sarah Whiting, dean of Rice’s School of Architecture, who chaired the search committee for the Moody Center director. “She can engage artists, faculty, students and the general public with the same ease because she has such a breadth of experience and interests. She’s going to bring a new way of thinking to Rice, and we’re very excited to have her.”

Weaver said that working internationally with the Guggenheim’s affiliates, each of which faced local as well as global challenges, helped her appreciate the importance of working together to realize common goals. That experience, she said, will be relevant to Rice.

“A crucial part of my role will be to listen and respond to the various creative ideas of the departments across campus,” she said. “My goal is to involve everyone – whether you’re an artist or an engineer or a member of the visiting public. There will be exciting programs and classes held at the Moody Center designed to attract and engage diverse audiences.”

Weaver also expressed her excitement about partnering with the Menil Collection, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Contemporary Arts Museum and other local arts organizations on exhibits at the Moody Center. “It will be a homecoming of sorts,” she said. Weaver grew up in Houston and developed her own passion for the arts by visiting local museums, theaters and community art spaces.

“My interest in art began while growing up in Houston wandering through the Menil and marveling at its extraordinary collection, and was further developed as an undergraduate at Princeton,” Weaver said. “While taking a class on early Chinese art, I had the opportunity to physically handle a Shang bronze ritual vessel in the collection of the university museum. It was a transformative experience that led to a lifelong interest in the power of art, and ultimately to a career as an art historian and arts administrator.”

“I believe that every student at Rice and every visitor to the Moody Center should be given the opportunity to have a transformative experience with a work of art, and I look forward to partnering with my Rice colleagues to bring stimulating objects, compelling classes and memorable programs to the Moody.”

Weaver, who will report to Provost Marie Lynn Miranda, starts her new position Sept. 1. She will move to Houston in August with her husband and two children. Her parents – both of whom are Rice alumni – still live in Houston, so that added to the appeal of moving back to her hometown.

About Rice University

Located on a 300-acre forested campus in Houston, Rice University is consistently ranked among the nation’s top 20 universities by U.S. News & World Report. Rice has highly respected schools of Architecture, Business, Continuing Studies, Engineering, Humanities, Music, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences and is home to the Baker Institute for Public Policy. With 3,888 undergraduates and 2,610 graduate students, Rice’s undergraduate student-to-faculty ratio is 6-to-1. Its residential college system builds close-knit communities and lifelong friendships, just

one reason why Rice is ranked among some of the top schools for best quality of life by the Princeton Review and for best value among private universities by Kiplinger's Personal Finance.