



Koffler Centre of the Arts Appoints New Executive Director Karen Tisch

Cathy Jonasson entrusts a thriving, stable organization to her successor

Toronto, February 6, 2019 ... **Tiana Koffler Boyman** and **Carl Goldenberg**, Co-Chairs of the Board of Directors of the Koffler Centre of the Arts, are delighted to announce the appointment of **Karen Tisch** to the position of Executive Director. She succeeds **Cathy Jonasson**, who is stepping down after an exceptional six-year tenure at the Koffler. Ms. Tisch is a veteran arts manager, programmer, and consultant with more than 25 years of experience in the Canadian arts sector, including executive positions at the Ashkenaz Foundation, Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, Images Festival, and Toronto Arts Council. Ms. Tisch begins her new role at the Koffler on March 4, 2019.

“On behalf of the Koffler Centre of the Arts Board of Directors, I’d like to extend a warm welcome to Karen Tisch. We are confident that her professional expertise in arts and culture, along with her specialized focus on diversity and inclusion make Karen the perfect choice to guide the Koffler Centre into the next stage of its vibrant future,” said Tiana Koffler Boyman. “We are very grateful to current Executive Director Cathy Jonasson, who leaves the Koffler Centre with a legacy of strong financial stewardship and a history of critically acclaimed programs, exhibitions, and important public engagement initiatives.”

Karen Tisch brings considerable experience in contemporary cultural thought to her new role, along with an innovative and entrepreneurial spirit and a broad network within the Canadian and international arts and cultural scene. She has also worked extensively in cultural policy and funding, having served as a Grants Officer at both the Toronto Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts. A recognized leader in the field of equity in the arts, she has developed and implemented diversity and inclusion policies and programs for the Canada Council for the Arts, Toronto Arts Council, FACTOR, and the City of Toronto. Read more about Karen Tisch below and in the [Koffler’s interview with her](#).

“I am thrilled to be joining the Koffler Centre at this exciting time of growth. Celebrating five years at its new West Queen West location in Artscape Youngplace, the Koffler has become a major force in the city’s multicultural and multi-disciplinary arts landscape. I am very excited to be part of an organization that is committed to intercultural dialogue, diverse perspectives, social justice, and presenting contemporary art that addresses the most pressing issues of our times,” said Karen Tisch.

The Koffler Centre of the Arts has experienced significant growth since Cathy Jonasson’s appointment in January 2014. In collaboration with the board and staff, Ms. Jonasson oversaw the relocation from North York to Queen Street West, as the organization moved into a new space at Artscape Youngplace. During her tenure, the Koffler was registered as an independent charity and implemented two strategic plans. A new mandate was incorporated as the foundation for the organization’s programming, which has established the Koffler as a leading cultural organization focused on intercultural dialogue.

“It has been a great privilege and pleasure to work closely with the Board and staff through a time of exciting change when much was accomplished because of the commitment and passion of this close-knit organization,” said Cathy Jonasson. “And now, with strong programming and a stable infrastructure in place, it is a good moment to welcome a new Executive Director who can guide the organization through its next series of accomplishments.”

Over the past six years, the Koffler has introduced strong multi-disciplinary programming including superb exhibitions, lectures, live theatre productions, original digital productions, and other public events. These include public presentations by Tony Kushner, Art Spiegelman, Fran Lebowitz and David Grossman; exhibitions of the work of Mary Anne Barkhouse, Sigalit Landau, Howard Podeswa, and 2Fik, among others; and theatrical productions including *Bad Jews*, *Like Mother Like Daughter*, *Marathon*, and *Ballad of the Burning Star*. During this time, the Koffler also developed Koffler.Digital and launched an annual designer vintage sale, “Koffler Couture,” which has become a very successful fundraiser now entering its sixth year.

“The Koffler Centre of the Arts remains true to the spirit of its original founders – Murray and Marvelle Koffler – with contemporary cultural programming that positions Jewish identity in spirited and important conversations through the arts,” said Tiana Koffler Boyman. “I know that Karen will continue this work, as she understands the importance of meaningful engagement with the critical issues being explored by artists today. The Board and I are looking forward to working with Karen to fulfill the Koffler mandate and to take the organization to new and unique places.”

ABOUT KAREN TISCH

Karen Tisch is a veteran arts manager, programmer and consultant with over 25 years of experience in the Canadian arts sector. She was the founding Managing Director of the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, where she was instrumental in growing the festival’s audience tenfold. Earlier in her career, she worked as Programming Director for the Images Festival, an annual event dedicated to experimental film and video art. She also served as Executive Director of the Ashkenaz Foundation, presenter of North America’s largest Jewish arts festival, where she played a key role in expanding the organization’s intercultural focus.

Karen has worked extensively in cultural policy and funding. She served as a Grants Officer at both the Toronto Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts, managing funding programs in dance, media, visual and literary arts. She has also acted as an Equity Advisor for both agencies, writing foundational policies to improve access for culturally diverse artists and co-authoring Canada’s first national disability arts funding program.

Karen is the immediate past-President of the Toronto Arts Council, a multi-million dollar arts funding agency. She previously served as President of A Space Gallery, Chair of the Toronto Book Awards and Chair of the Racial Equity Fund, a provincially funded program designed to increase the participation of Indigenous and filmmakers of colour in the film industry. Karen is a current Board member of Red Sky Performance, a leading Indigenous theatre and dance company, Vice-President of the Ashkenaz Foundation, and a member of the Toronto Significant Event Investment Program advisory committee.

For the past decade, Karen has run an independent consultancy practice, serving clients throughout the Canadian arts and cultural sector, with a particular focus on strategic planning, cultural policy and diversity and inclusion strategy. She is an alumna of the Ontario College of Art and Design and Canada’s National Ballet School.

ABOUT THE KOFFLER CENTRE OF THE ARTS

The Koffler Centre of the Arts is a cultural platform that explores critical ideas and concerns of our time through exhibitions, publications, performances, conversations and digital initiatives. We examine complex issues in respectful, constructive discussions that position our Jewish identity in conversation with diverse perspectives and global voices. The Koffler Gallery and its administrative offices are located at Artscape Youngplace, in Toronto’s vibrant downtown West Queen West art and design district.

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