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Director and Chief Curator of the Museum of Contemporary Craft steps down

Portland, OR – April 10, 2014 – Pacific Northwest College of Art President Tom Manley announced today that Namita Gupta Wiggers is stepping down as Director and Chief Curator of the Museum of Contemporary Craft, operated in partnership with PNCA. Wiggers served for 10 years at the Museum, including overseeing its move to the North Park Blocks and facilitating its partnership with PNCA.

Wiggers was hired in 2004 to help move the Museum from its longtime Corbett Avenue location to its present home in the North Park Blocks. During her tenure, she curated exhibitions that pushed the boundaries of what a contemporary craft museum can be. Supported by public programs, scholarly publications, and innovative methods of audience engagement, these exhibitions garnered national and international notice for the institution. Wiggers brought Ai Weiwei’s first West Coast exhibition to the Museum and curated important retrospectives of regional craft artists including Betty Feves, Laurie Herrick, and Ken Shores.

Other notable exhibitions during Wiggers’ tenure included Gestures of Resistance, guest curated by Judith Leemann and Shannon Stratton in 2010, which explored craft as an agent for social change, and Manufactured: The Conspicuous Transformation of Everyday Objects, guest curated by Steven Skov Holt and Mara Holt Skov in 2008, which called attention to the permeable boundaries between art, craft, and design. In her 10 years, Wiggers curated more than 65 exhibitions and 100 accompanying programs.

The Museum doubled the size of its collection under Wiggers’ directorship, including numerous significant gifts from local collectors as well as supporters from outside the region. She recently oversaw the redesign of the Gallery Store in collaboration with students from the MFA in Applied Craft and Design.

“I was first hired in 2004 to create a vision for a new kind of museum to address craft,” says Wiggers. “The partnership with PNCA has supported this work and ensures that one of the nation’s oldest institutions dedicated to craft has a renewed life as part of an urban college campus, while continuing to honor craft’s legacy. As the College transitions to the park blocks in 2015, the Museum is now fully poised to support student life, curriculum, and a newly integrated role in this next phase of a 78 year-long history.”

Wiggers will continue to work with the College and the Museum in new roles as she...
pursues independent curating, consulting, and teaching opportunities and develops Critical Craft Forum, an online forum for the craft community she co-founded in 2008.

“Namita has been key in driving the Museum of Contemporary Craft to engage in significant national conversations around craft while honoring the institution’s regional legacy,” says Tom Manley, president of PNCA. “Her impact on the institution and the field will be felt well into the future, and we look forward to this new phase of our relationship with her.”

ABOUT MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY CRAFT
Committed to the advancement of craft since 1937, the Museum of Contemporary Craft in partnership with Pacific Northwest College of Art is one of Oregon’s oldest cultural institutions. Centrally located in Portland’s Pearl District, the Museum is nationally acclaimed for its curatorial program and is a vibrant center for investigation and dialogue, expanding the definition of craft and the way audiences experience it.

ABOUT PACIFIC NORTHWEST COLLEGE OF ART
As Oregon’s flagship college of art and design since 1909, Pacific Northwest College of Art has influenced the state’s visual arts landscape for more than a century. In the last seven years, PNCA has doubled both the student body and full-time faculty, quadrupled its endowment, and added innovative undergraduate and graduate programs. PNCA is now embarking on its boldest venture yet by establishing the Arlene and Harold Schnitzer Center for Art and Design to anchor a new campus home on Portland’s North Park Blocks. The capital campaign Creativity Works Here was launched in June 2012 with a lead gift of $5 million from The Harold & Arlene Schnitzer CARE Foundation. PNCA’s new home will be a hub for creativity and entrepreneurship, reflecting the influential role of art and design in the 21st-century economy. For more information, visit pnca.edu.