

FOTOFOCUS

FotoFocus Announces Retirement of Executive Director Mary Ellen Goeke

Biennial Director Katherine Ryckman Siegwarth Named Successor



Katherine Ryckman Siegwarth and Mary Ellen Goeke. Photo by Jacob Drabik

(Cincinnati, OH — December 12, 2022) — FotoFocus, the nonprofit dedicated to championing photography and lens-based art, today announced that its **founding Executive Director Mary Ellen Goeke** will retire at the end of 2022. She will be succeeded by **FotoFocus Biennial Director Katherine Ryckman Siegwarth**, who will take the role of the second FotoFocus Executive Director since the institution's founding in 2010. The transition is marked by a moment of tremendous growth, as FotoFocus plans to build a new center for photography and lens-based art in Cincinnati that will ensure the region's continued education and celebration of the medium.

In her 12 years at the helm, Goeke matured FotoFocus from a grassroots collective of photography supporters to a distinguished organization esteemed for its year-round, public-facing programs and collaborations with internationally-acclaimed artists and curators. Her expansive approach and vision for signature programs like the FotoFocus Biennial and FotoFocus Symposium have allowed the organization to maintain the integrity and risk-taking of

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its founding mission while growing astronomically to collaborate on increasing numbers of projects with artists, curators, and participating venues. Highlights of her tenure include the development of FotoFocus as a grant-giving organization, which included distributing over 1,000 grants to support artistic venues presenting projects and educational programs that increase the public's understanding of photography and the world around us.



Mary Ellen Goeke with former Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley at the 2016 Biennial



Views of *Doug + Mike Starn: Gravity of Light* at Holy Cross Church at the Mount Adams Monastery from the inaugural FotoFocus Biennial in 2012, and work by world-renowned French artist JR on the Contemporary Arts Center in 2013

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“Mary Ellen instilled a sense of collaboration that has allowed FotoFocus to remain remarkably agile through its growth over the past twelve years,” said **FotoFocus Board President Maureen France**. “She has been an exceptional leader who has dedicated herself to this organization. Thanks to her curiosity and responsiveness to the expanding field of photography, FotoFocus has steadily increased its regional, national, and international presence. On behalf of the Board and Staff, I am thrilled to welcome Katherine in taking the reins after directing the 2022 FotoFocus Biennial, and excited for her to carry on Mary Ellen’s legacy.”

“The founding vision for FotoFocus was to elevate the reputation of Cincinnati as a global focal point for photography, in partnership with the many regional organizations exhibiting lens-based art,” said **former FotoFocus Board President Bruce Halpryn**. “Mary Ellen’s leadership allowed that vision to expand far beyond what we initially thought possible. Looking toward the future, it is a great pleasure to welcome the appointment of Katherine Siegwarth as Executive Director, on the heels of her direction of the largest Biennial FotoFocus has ever seen. She will undoubtedly strengthen and grow ties to regional arts organizations even further, and help to provide a greater platform for underrepresented voices in photography finally coming to the fore.”



Rendering of FotoFocus Center. Image: Jose Garcia Design + Construction

Siegwarth joined FotoFocus in late 2021 as Biennial Director, acting as primary liaison for over 100 participating venues and helping bring ambitious exhibitions to life. Previously, Siegwarth served as the Dayton Art Institute’s Kettering Curator of Photography and Special Projects where she curated exhibitions related to their encyclopedic collection, including exhibitions presented during previous FotoFocus Biennials, such as *Ravaged Sublime: Contemporary Landscape Photography in the 21st Century*; *Muse: Mickalene Thomas Photographs* and

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tête-a-tête; and *Archiving Eden: Dornith Doherty Photographs*. Prior to the DAI, Siegwarth was the Assistant Director of Zhulong Gallery, Luce Curatorial Fellow of Photography at the Amon Carter Museum of American Art, and held positions at the Center for Creative Photography. Siegwarth holds an MA from The University of Arizona and is an alumni of the Museum Leadership Institute's NexGen 2020 Executive Education for the Next Generation of Museum Leaders program.

"It has been a pleasure serving under Mary Ellen for the last year and I am honored by the opportunity to lead the next chapter of this remarkable organization," said **Siegwarth**. "I look forward to working collaboratively with my colleagues at FotoFocus and with our regional partners as we develop future Biennials and envision year-round programming with the creation of the FotoFocus Center." Siegwarth assumes leadership of the organization in January of 2023.

ABOUT FOTOFOCUS

FotoFocus is a Cincinnati-based nonprofit arts organization that champions photography and lens-based art through exhibitions and public programming. Since 2010, the organization has engaged art and educational institutions throughout the region to support and expand the cultural dialogue around the medium that has come to define our time. With an emphasis on intellectually and academically rigorous programs, the organization provides uniquely enriching access to lens-based art, film, and practices inspired by photography. FotoFocus has collaborated with organizations, curators, academics, and more than 1600 artists and participants, to present over 750 exhibitions and programs.

FotoFocus has awarded close to 600 grants to support partners presenting projects and educational programs that are accessible and engaging to the public. In April 2020, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, FotoFocus pledged part of its 2020 Biennial budget to financially support more than 100 Participating Venues and Partners in the region's art community through FotoFocus Emergency Art Grants.

Signature FotoFocus programming includes the **FotoFocus Biennial**, which took place October 2022 with the theme, *World Record*. Past editions have presented work across the Cincinnati region by historic and contemporary artists including Berenice Abbott, Eugène Atget, Roe Ethridge, Zanele Muholi, Karl Blossfeldt, Francis Bruguière, Thomas Ruff, and Akram Zaatari. Other landmark events include the **FotoFocus Symposium**, which has contributed significant dialogue and insight to culturally relevant topics including the controversial Mapplethorpe exhibition, and the **FotoFocus Lecture and Visiting Artist Series**, which has brought globally renowned artists like Zoe Leonard and William Wegman to Cincinnati.

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