

For Immediate Release
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UrbanArt Commission Announces New Executive Director

Memphis, TN – The UrbanArt Commission is pleased to announce John Weeden as its new Executive Director effective May 5th.

Weeden takes over for Carissa Hussong, who successfully led the organization through its first 10 years. During her tenure Hussong helped establish a Public Art Program for the City of Memphis as well as 'percent-for-art' legislation affecting new construction and renovation projects of the city and Memphis City Schools. Hussong is now the Executive Director of the National Ornamental Metal Museum.

Weeden comes to UrbanArt from the Rhodes College Center for Outreach in the Development of the Arts (CODA) where he supervised visiting artist programs and community arts outreach projects. As Assistant Director of the CODA Fellows program Weeden also led a highly-specialized arts leadership curriculum for selected scholarship students focused on areas of arts advocacy and project planning. A Memphian of many years, Weeden graduated from White Station High School and Rhodes College before obtaining a MA degree in Contemporary Art History from the Sotheby's Institute in London, UK. He has worked for visual art institutions in London, Scotland, Paris and Memphis including Delta Axis and the Brooks Museum, all in curatorial roles producing contemporary art exhibitions of various media. In 2004 he founded Lantana Projects, a local residency program that brought international artists to Memphis for short-term exhibitions. He is set to receive a second MA degree from the Bard College Center for Curatorial Studies at the end of May.

"It is both an honor and a privilege to be offered the opportunity to serve my neighbors in the position of Executive Director," says Weeden. "I believe the potential for the culture of our city to make an impact on the wider world is matched only by the possibility of the arts to make the lives of our fellow citizens more meaningful on a daily basis. Throughout my career I have always borne in mind the influences that growing up in Memphis have provided in shaping my outlook toward the role that art can play in cultivating a strong and vibrant community. At the same time, I believe there are many lessons I've learned in my travels and professional experiences that will positively influence the work of UrbanArt as well."

In addition to maintaining its already strong collaborative relationships with their current supporters, Weeden and UrbanArt intend to address new areas of engagement moving forward. Among these are: enhancing awareness of the organization's work within the community, increasing the transparency of its operations, developing new partnerships with private developers and community groups city-wide, and producing temporary projects of a curatorial nature on a more regular basis.

The mission of the UrbanArt Commission is to create a dynamic, vibrant, nurturing community through art and design. The UAC is funded in part by the City of Memphis, ArtsMemphis, Tennessee Arts Commission and the Hyde Foundation.

Call the UrbanArt Commission for more details, 901.525.0880.