



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COCA ANNOUNCES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S EXIT

ST. LOUIS — Kelly Pollock, Executive Director of COCA - Center of Creative Arts, has announced that she will be exiting the organization as of July 2022. Pollock has served as an integral leader at the nationally recognized community arts center since 1997, taking the helm as Executive Director in 2010.

“My 25 years at COCA have been the most fulfilling, challenging, and inspiring years anyone could ever hope to have in their career. There are no words to adequately express my gratitude for the opportunity I’ve had to lead this uniquely St. Louis made institution. COCA is in a position of tremendous strength, poised to thrive under the next generation of leadership,” said Pollock.

Over Pollock’s tenure, the organization realized significant growth and greater financial stability, highlighted by the successful completion of a \$49 million campaign effort to expand COCA’s historic facility and build its endowment and reserves, making it possible to serve thousands more students in the years to come. Additionally, Pollock’s time was marked by bold partnerships and innovative programming to broaden its reach, including a collaborative MFA in Dance with Washington University, the creation of COCAbiz—an arts-based training program for business and community leaders which has engaged over 5,000 professionals from more than 350 companies, and the expansion of school-based programs and support services designed to remove barriers, making arts education more accessible for young people.

Under her leadership, COCA received numerous awards and recognition, including: one of 18 organizations to be nationally accredited through the Accrediting Commission for Community and Pre-Collegiate Arts Schools (ACCPAS); the Anti-Defamation League’s *David M. Grebler Award* for promoting acceptance, inclusion, and respect for diversity; and Paraquad’s *Shine the Light Award* for efforts to advance opportunities for people with disabilities. Most recently, Pollock led a 6-month engagement process with The Bridgespan Group to shape COCA’s strategic priorities with a focus on equity and to redesign its organizational structure to align with COCA’s growth and aspirations for the future.

“In my 20 years of involvement at COCA, I have known Kelly Pollock to be an unwavering and strategic visionary for the COCA community and a prominent advocate for the power of The Arts in raising human potential. She also has been a good friend and trusted partner, and she has inspired me and so many others to make visual and performing arts education a priority in the St. Louis community,” stated COCA’s Board President Bill Carson. “Kelly has led COCA to such a strong institutional position, with incredibly diverse programmatic offerings, an amazing building, and—most importantly—an energized, top-notch, faculty and staff. The COCA Board and I are well-prepared to find COCA’s next organizational leader, and we congratulate and support Kelly on this professional transition!”

COCA’s Board of Directors will be launching a national search for its next Executive Director. The details of the search and process will be communicated in the coming weeks.

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ABOUT COCA

COCA's mission is to *enrich lives and build community through the arts*. With a commitment to equity and access, COCA serves as a regional hub for learning in and through the arts for all ages from all backgrounds. One of the most diverse cultural institutions in St. Louis, COCA serves more than 50,000 students, audience members, artists and families from more than 200 zip codes across the St. Louis region every year. The fourth largest multi-disciplinary arts organization in the country, COCA is committed to supporting the vitality and creativity of over 200 artists at the heart of its work in schools, community centers, local business, cultural organizations, and on-site at its campus in University City.