



FRONT International
Cleveland Exhibition for
Contemporary Art

For Immediate Release

FRONT INTERNATIONAL: CLEVELAND EXHIBITION FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, A NEW CITYWIDE CONTEMPORARY ART PROGRAM, TO LAUNCH ITS FIRST EDITION “AN AMERICAN CITY” IN 2018

CLEVELAND, Ohio (August 4, 2016) – FRONT Exhibition Company announces the launch of **FRONT International: Cleveland Exhibition for Contemporary Art**, a new large-scale, multi-venue, citywide contemporary art program that will take place in Cleveland every three years. This exhibition has been conceived of by the Co-Artistic Directors, **Michelle Grabner** and **Jens Hoffmann**, following an invitation by FRONT International CEO & Executive Director **Fred Bidwell**. The first edition, entitled *An American City*, will take place July 7 to September 30, 2018, and aims to rethink the conventional Biennial or Triennial exhibition model.

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Featuring more than fifty international artists, *An American City* will include site-specific artistic interventions throughout the city, public programs, artistic and curatorial residencies, a temporary academy, a web-based art journal for the Midwest, and a number of solo and group exhibitions with a wide range of collaborators. Research will focus not only on Cleveland’s most celebrated and stereotyped characteristics, but also on its overlooked elements: little-known locations, historical curiosities, marginalized subcultures. Objects from Cleveland’s collecting institutions will be exhibited in thematic presentations, along with remarkable documents and photographs drawn from the city’s archives. The exhibition becomes a dynamic system of dialoguing components, rather than a static and invariable display of art objects.

FRONT International: Cleveland Exhibition for Contemporary Art will be presented in collaboration with a collection of Presenting Partners, including: **Akron Art Museum; Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College; Cleveland Institute of Art; Cleveland Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland; LAND Studios; Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage; The Sculpture Center; SPACES, Cleveland; Transformer Station, Cleveland; and Zygot Press.**

Bidwell comments, “This unique European-style citywide exhibition model, paired with the ambition of FRONT, could only be made possible in the city of Cleveland. The unprecedented and unmatched collaboration of Cleveland’s superb visual arts and cultural institutions, spread across the complex landscape of an industrial city in transition, will offer North America a provocative contemporary art experience driven by ideas. We are thrilled to have both Grabner and Hoffmann as our Co-Artistic Directors leading this vast global endeavor, who together have both Midwestern roots and an international foothold in the contemporary art world. FRONT will inspire its visitors to experience the wealth of cultural and artistic opportunities inherent to Cleveland.”

Grabner and Hoffmann's curatorial premise and complementary styles take stock of Cleveland, a city marked by change and hybridization. Grabner and Hoffmann state, "Cultural identities are multilayered, conflicted, and vary in hyper-local ways. *An American City* investigates the complex processes by which Cleveland is being constantly undone and rebuilt. Treating the city as both paradigm and physical site, this citywide initiative will tease out the ways in which contemporary experiences of an urban location are shaped by historical and current events, and uncover how the city's collective memory and sociopolitical imperatives can define artistic and curatorial production."

An American City will fan out to notable Cleveland sites such as the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, FirstEnergy Stadium (home to the Cleveland Browns), the Great Lakes Science Center, and City Hall. Several of the exhibition's **twenty** new commissions will reinterpret or remake an existing site on an architectural scale. Participating artists will engage with the city's neighborhoods, dispersing the exhibition while bringing Cleveland's heterogeneity and topography into focus. Artist residencies lasting several months will nurture the production of new work, and channel Cleveland's rich history and its dynamism.

Throughout the exhibition, **Transformer Station, Cleveland**, a onetime railway substation turned contemporary art space, will operate as a hub and temporary academy housing conversations and workshops. The academy will involve, among many other constituencies, students in the immediate area as well as from Columbus, Chicago, and Detroit.

An American City is made possible through the **Cleveland Foundation**, whose lead gift supports the appointment of co-artistic directors, Michelle Grabner and Jens Hoffmann. Grabner and Hoffmann will assemble a team of local and regional curators, as well as a national and international group of Global Delegates, who will advise and help shape the curatorial program. Additionally, the curatorial team will nominate six international artists for the fall 2017 cohort of the Cleveland Foundation's three-month artist residency program, Creative Fusion. The Creative Fusion artists will work with FRONT to create new work for *An American City*.

Ronn Richard, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Cleveland Foundation comments, "The Cleveland Foundation has long believed in the power of art in bridging cultures, uniting people and celebrating new ideas." He adds, "We are proud our support will enhance the international focus of FRONT, aligning it with our international artist in residency program, while putting more global eyes on Cleveland and helping Cleveland connect with the world."

FRONT International: Cleveland Exhibition for Contemporary Art is also receiving major support from the **George Gund Foundation** for the two-year Associate Curator Fellowship for this inaugural edition. The Cleveland-based associate curator will work with the artists and assist in the planning and production of the festival. "Cleveland's rich and diverse arts community provides an ideal location for the region's first contemporary arts festival" stated **David Abbott**, Executive Director of The George Gund Foundation. "We are pleased to fund the assistant curator fellowship position that will help forge a strong bond between the curatorial team, the artists and our city."

The support of Cleveland Foundation, the George Gund Foundation, and Founding Patrons Richard and Michelle Jeschelnic, Scott Mueller, Sandy and Sally Cutler, Jan Lewis, and Fred and Laura Ruth Bidwell, in addition to FRONT's Board, have laid the foundation for *An American City's* nearly \$5 million budget.

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ABOUT

FRONT is a city-wide celebration of contemporary art and the expression of a two-year engagement by an international team of artists, curators and scholars with the creative resources of Cleveland. In museum exhibitions and unconventional sites spread across the city, FRONT will be an expansive stage for local, national and international artists to create and share new work that is inspired by and engaged with the most important social, political, cultural and environmental issues of today.

This exhibition will be an important showcase for Northeast Ohio's cultural resources by convening artists, curators, scholars, collectors and art lovers around a city-wide and region-wide celebration of contemporary art. Powered by all of Cleveland and Northeast Ohio's renowned visual arts institutions, this exhibition will be unique in the world for the scope of its collaboration.

The first edition of this planned triennial has been titled "An American City". The themes and ideas explored by artists will be authentically rooted the spirit of Cleveland and the region while connecting our history and future to issues and ideas that are universal and global.

WHEN

July 7 - September 30, 2018

WHERE

Cleveland, Ohio

PRESENTING PARTNERS

Akron Art Museum
Allen Memorial Art Museum
Cleveland Institute of Art
Cleveland Museum of Art
Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland
LAND Studios
Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage
Oberlin College
The Sculpture Center
SPACES, Cleveland
Transformer Station, Cleveland
Zygote Press

LEADERSHIP

Fred Bidwell, Executive Director

Fred Bidwell is a philanthropist, collector and community leader. After a 35-year career as an advertising and marketing entrepreneur, Fred established, along with his wife, the Fred and Laura Ruth Bidwell Foundation in 2011. In 2013, the Bidwell Foundation opened Transformer Station, a new contemporary art exhibition space on Cleveland's West Side. Transformer Station alternates as a venue for exhibitions curated by the Bidwell's from their renowned collection of photo-based contemporary art and exhibitions organized by the Cleveland Museum of Art. Fred Bidwell serves on the boards of Akron Art Museum, Cleveland Museum of Art, the Visiting Committee of the Allen Memorial Art Museum and the Akron Community Foundation. He is the current Co-Chair of the Gordon Square Arts District board of trustees and is a Co-Chair of the Action Committee for Arts and Culture which recently successfully supported the renewal of the tobacco tax which funds Cuyahoga Arts and Culture.

Michelle Grabner, Co-Artistic Director

Michelle Grabner is a celebrated American painter and conceptual artist. Her work is in the collection of the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Milwaukee Art Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; DaimlerChrysler Collection, Berlin; Musee d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg, Mudam Museum, Luxembourg; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC; and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. In November 2012 Grabner was selected as one of three curators who organized the 2014 Whitney Biennial in New York. She recently curated the Portland2016 Biennial, a state-wide exhibition in Oregon. Michelle is The Crown Family Professor of Painting and Drawing at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. With her husband Brad Killam, Michelle co-directs the project spaces, The Suburban in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and The Poor Farm in Little Wolf, Wisconsin. Michelle Grabner serves on the board of the Milwaukee Art Museum.

Jens Hoffmann, Co-Artistic Director

Jens Hoffmann is an exhibition maker, writer, educator and editor based in New York. From 2012 to 2016 Hoffmann was Deputy Director, Exhibitions and Public Programs of the Jewish Museum in New York, where he continues to work on exhibitions and public programs. He has been Senior Curator-at-large at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit since 2012 and a curator and senior adviser for the Kadist Art Foundation in San Francisco and Paris since 2008.

Hoffmann was Director of the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts in San Francisco (2007–12) and Director of Exhibitions at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London (2003–7). He has curated and co-curated over five dozen exhibitions around the world including the 9th Shanghai Biennale (2012), the 12th Istanbul Biennial, with Adriano Pedrosa, (2011), the 2nd San Juan Triennial (2009) and the 1st Prague Biennial (2003) among many others.

Hoffmann is the founding editor of *The Exhibitionist: Journal on Exhibition Making* and editor-at-large of *Mousse Magazine*. He is a frequent contributor to art magazines such as *Frieze*, *Artforum* and *Texte zur Kunst*. He has written over 250 essays for exhibition catalogues and museum publications.

SUPPORT

FRONT is made possible through the generous support of:

The Cleveland Foundation

The George Gund Foundation

About The Cleveland Foundation

The Cleveland Foundation has helped citizens give back to their community since 1914. Still, many societal ills remain, and some are worsening. We must develop new ways of educating, creating jobs and wealth, and solving problems we have only begun to comprehend. Our staff and board of directors have identified six areas to which we now proactively direct a growing percentage of our grant dollars. Today two-thirds of our flexible grant dollars support projects in these priority areas, with the goal of creating significant, widespread impact. The balance of our grantmaking dollars is awarded in response to direct requests from the community.

About The George Gund Foundation

The George Gund Foundation was established in 1952 as a private, nonprofit institution with the sole purpose of contributing to human well-being and the progress of society. The Foundation funds programs that enhance our understanding of the physical and social environment in which we live and increase our ability to cope with its changing requirements. Grants are made in the areas of education, human services, economic and community development, environment and arts.

FOUNDING PATRONS

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BUDGET

\$4 to \$5 Million

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