

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

November 15, 2023

**Media Contacts:**

Lauryn Cantrell, 202.387.2151 x235  
[lcantrell@phillipscollection.org](mailto:lcantrell@phillipscollection.org)

Third Eye  
Tyler Mahowald, 212.335.9009 x311  
[tyler@hellothirdeye.com](mailto:tyler@hellothirdeye.com)

**Online Press Room:**

[www.phillipscollection.org/press](http://www.phillipscollection.org/press)

## **The Phillips Collection’s Director of Contemporary Art Initiatives and Academic Affairs Dr. Vesela Sretenović Departs After Nearly 15 Years**

*Sretenović’s tenure bolstered the museum’s longstanding engagement with contemporary art and educational programming*



WASHINGTON, DC—The Phillips Collection announces the departure of Director of Contemporary Art Initiatives and Academic Affairs Dr. Vesela Sretenović after nearly 15 years of distinguished service and curatorial accomplishments. Sretenović began her tenure at the Phillips in January 2009 as Senior Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, the first curatorial position of its kind at the museum. In 2020, she was promoted to the Cross-departmental Director of Contemporary Art Initiatives and soon after to the Director of Contemporary Art Initiatives and Academic Affairs. She leaves now to pursue independent curatorial projects and teaching.

“Vesela has made a lasting mark on The Phillips Collection. She helped align the institution more closely with its legacy as a museum of contemporary art while expanding the museum’s scope through innovative exhibitions, programs, and acquisitions,” says **Vradenburg Director & CEO Jonathan P.**

**Binstock.** “Her bold ideas and passion for art will be sincerely missed, but we wish her the very best in her next chapter of creative and pioneering work.”

Sretenović oversaw vibrant programs that engaged in the global conservation of contemporary art. Her efforts led to the growth of the museum’s contemporary art collection and more than 40 exhibitions which include monographic presentations of internationally renowned artists such as Robert Ryman, Ellsworth Kelly, and Antony Gormley. In 2018, she curated the groundbreaking retrospective of then relatively unknown Cuban artist Zilia Sánchez, who has gone on to earn international recognition.

Upon her arrival in 2009, Sretenović inaugurated *Intersections*, a series of contemporary art projects in which the artists—national, international, emerging, and established—were invited to engage with the museum’s permanent collection and historic architecture and create new work(s). The *Intersections* roster underscores the diversity of artists’ ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds and their conceptual and aesthetic approaches. Featured artists include Alwar Balasubramaniam, Sanford Biggers, Sandra Cinto, Linling Lu, Linn Meyers, Marta Pérez García, Bernardí Roig, Ranjani Shettar, Richard Tuttle, and Xavier Veilhan among many others. Sretenović also secured acquisitions of artworks by acclaimed national and international artists, including William Anastasi, Angela Bulloch, Moira Dryer, Sam Gilliam, Antony Gormley, Elizabeth Murray, Ernesto Neto, Jorge Pardo, Tim Rollins+KOS, Valeska Soares, Bosco Sodi, Frank Thiel, Massimo Vitali, and many more.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, when the Phillips pivoted toward digital programs, Sretenović initiated *Digital Intersections* and commissioned artists Luca Buvoli and Daniel Canogar to create projects that could be experienced virtually. As part of the museum’s Centennial celebration, she co-organized three major site-specific installations for the Phillips’s 21st Street location and Phillips@THEARC by artists Victor Ekpuk, Nekisha Durrett, and Wesley Clark.

“I am grateful to all my colleagues for their continued support in reviving the presence of contemporary art at the museum and thereby the mission of founder Duncan Phillips—to apprise the art of our own time. We embraced many challenges and made remarkable strides and we did it with joy and enthusiasm. I will always cherish my time at the Phillips and look forward to seeing the museum continue to evolve,” says **Vesela Sretenović**.

In addition to curatorial work, Sretenović played an integral role in the Center for Art and Knowledge (formerly the Center for the Study of Modern Art) and its programming. She supported the development of academic partnerships with the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, George Washington University, the University of Maryland, and the current partnership with the University of Virginia. She led many academically affiliated programs, which included Duncan Phillips Lectures, Conversations with Artists, Creative Voices DC, Artists of Conscience, and other initiatives including the Phillips Book Prize and Postdoctoral Fellowships. As a member of the Senior Leadership team, Sretenović participated in the recent strategic plan development and built philanthropic relationships with prospective donors, foundations, and the Board of Trustees. In 2019, she helped spearhead the museum’s Contemporaries program for young professionals, which provided additional funds for art acquisitions, including major works by DC-based artists Ellington Robinson, Nara Park, Zoë Charlton, and Hedieh Javanshir Ilchi.

Prior to joining the Phillips, Sretenović worked at the David Winton Bell Gallery of Brown University, where she organized numerous special exhibitions of contemporary art, including solo shows of the works of Charles Long, Joseph Beuys, and Sean Scully. She previously worked for the University of Buffalo Art Gallery and the Brooklyn Museum, as well as several galleries in New York.

**IMAGE:** Dr. Vesela Sretenović, Photo by Margot Schulman Photography

**IMAGE GALLERY**

High-resolution press images are available upon request. Please contact [lcantrell@phillipscollection.org](mailto:lcantrell@phillipscollection.org).

**ABOUT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION**

The Phillips Collection, America’s first museum of modern art, was founded in 1921. The museum houses one of the world’s most celebrated Impressionist and American modern art collections and continues to grow its collection with important contemporary voices. Its distinctive building combines extensive new galleries with the former home of its founder, Duncan Phillips. The Phillips’s impact spreads nationally and internationally through its diverse and experimental special exhibitions and events, including its award-winning education programs for educators, students, and adults; renowned Phillips Music series; and dynamic art and wellness and Phillips after 5 events. The museum contributes to global dialogues with events like Conversations with Artists and Artists of Conscience. The Phillips Collection values its community partnership with THEARC—the museum’s satellite campus in Southeast DC. The Phillips Collection is a private, non-government museum, supported primarily by donations.

###