NEW YORK, NY (September 4, 2019) – The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) today announced the appointment of Elissa Auther to the position of Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs and William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator, effective immediately. In this role, Auther will collaborate with Nanette L. Laitman Director Chris Scoates to create diverse exhibition programs and collections, foster relationships with artists and designers, and develop forward-looking strategies for engaging a broad audience.

“A highly valued colleague, Elissa is a gifted curator and scholar who is passionate about the vital and evolving importance of craft in contemporary art,” said Scoates. “In her new leadership position at MAD, she will help define and reshape the important questions driving the dialogue and direction of art and design in the twenty-first century.”
In December 2014, Auther joined MAD as its inaugural Windgate Research and Collections Curator, a position funded by the Windgate Charitable Foundation. In this role, Auther led an educational and curatorial partnership between the Museum of Arts and Design and Bard Graduate Center that has increased the visibility of craft and design in art history and the contemporary art world.

Auther has mounted four major exhibitions at MAD, including *Vera Paints a Scarf* (2019–2020), the first comprehensive exhibition devoted to the work of textile designer and entrepreneur *Vera Neumann* (1907–1993) and her contributions to American design; and the critically acclaimed *Surface/Depth: The Decorative After Miriam Schapiro* (2018), which examined the influence of the feminist re-appropriation of craft and the decorative in the work of a diverse range of artists, including Sanford Biggers, Ruth Root, Jasmin Sian, Edie Fake, Jeffrey Gibson, and Sara Rahbar, among others.

“I am thrilled to be named Chief Curator at this pivotal moment for the Museum,” Auther said. “At a time when makers of all kinds are being swiftly assimilated into the larger art historical narrative, MAD is uniquely positioned to guide that conversation forward. I am very excited to collaborate with my colleagues to break down the divisions between art, craft, and design, while advancing scholarship of the rich history from which this museum was formed.”

Auther joined MAD from the University of Colorado, where she served as an Associate Professor of Contemporary Art and Director of the Art History and Museum Studies Program from 2003–2014. Concurrently, Auther held an Adjunct Curator position at the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver and co-directed *Feminism & Co.: Art, Sex, Politics*, a series of public programs that created access to critical debates surrounding feminist issues through the lens of creative practice, from performance to hands-on making.


Auther holds a Ph.D. in the History of Art from the University of Maryland, and a BA in the History of Art from San Francisco State University.
ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN
The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields and presents the work of artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity and skill. Since the Museum’s founding in 1956 by philanthropist and visionary Aileen Osborn Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum’s curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are influencing the direction of cultural production and driving twenty-first-century innovation, and fosters a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design. For more information, visit madmuseum.org.

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