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**Museum of
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OMAR KHOLEIF APPOINTED MANILOW SENIOR CURATOR AT MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART CHICAGO



Michael Darling, Chief Curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, announced today that internationally recognized curator and writer **Omar Kholeif** has been appointed the new Manilow Senior Curator at the MCA. Kholeif was most recently Curator at the Whitechapel Gallery in London, where he organized large-scale group exhibitions and monographic shows. He will assume his new responsibilities at the MCA on November 23, 2015.

“Omar is an exceedingly bright and personable curator whose infectious energy and wide range of interests will win new fans to the MCA for his projects,” says Darling. “He knows how to balance the scholarly with the populist and to identify ideas and patterns that are highly relevant to cultural and societal dialogues, which aligns perfectly with what we are hoping to achieve in our programs. He is a wildly prolific writer whose erudition on a variety of topics will certainly enrich the expertise of our staff, especially in the realm of artistic activity in the Middle East. He brings with him an international network of artists, writers, friends, and colleagues who will help us extend and expand our offerings for years to come. He is excited about the intellectual richness of Chicago and has already started building partnerships with colleagues at other institutions, such as the University of Chicago, that will surely bear fruit in the near future.”

Kholeif said, “I am thrilled to be joining the team at the MCA and to be making Chicago my new home. I have long admired the museum and the city’s rich cultural history, and I look forward to engaging with its artists and audiences in the years to come. Michael Darling and Madeleine Grynsztejn have built the MCA into a museum of international significance; I am excited to work with them towards a shared vision—bringing the most urgent artistic voices to new audiences both locally and globally.”

Omar Kholeif is an acclaimed curator, writer, and editor who has organized more than a hundred exhibitions and projects internationally. At the Whitechapel Gallery, he recently curated exhibitions including *Fiona Banner: Stamp out Photographie*; *James Richards: To Replace a Minute's Silence with a Minute's Applause* (in partnership with the V-A-C Foundation); *Emily Jacir: Europa*; *Imperfect Chronology: Debating Modernism and Mapping the Contemporary (Works from the Barjeel Art Foundation)*, and *Electronic Superhighway: From Experiments in Art and Technology to Art After the Internet*. Kholeif also oversaw the museum's Artists' Film International program, and was co-chair with the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art of the *Artists' Film in Britain: 1990 to Today* conference. He also curated the Cyprus Pavilion represented by artist Christodoulos Panayiotou at the Venice Biennale, the Abraaj Group Art Prize, and *Focus: Middle East, North Africa and Mediterranean* at the Armory Show, New York, all in 2015.

Kholeif also held the post of Senior Visiting Curator at HOME, an art center in Manchester, England, where he worked on its multidisciplinary program of visual art, theater, and film. He developed projects with artists including Judith Barry, Basim Magdy, Joana Hadjithomas, and Khalil Joreige, as well as group shows such as *The Heart is Deceitful Above All Things* and *Imitation of Life*.

Previously, Kholeif held the post of Senior Curator at Cornerhouse in Manchester and was Curator at FACT, the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology, where he commissioned and curated major projects by Akram Zaatari, Pedro Reyes, Anja Kirschner and David Panos, Semiconductor, and Ahmed Basyony, among others. He has also held the posts of Head of Art and Technology at Space, London, and Artistic Director at the Arab British Centre, London, where he founded and produced *Safar: The Festival of Popular Arab Cinema*, the award-winning film festival held at the ICA, London, which won the UNESCO-Sharjah prize. He was also the founding Director of the UK's Arab Film Festival, and a co-curator for Abandon Normal Devices and the Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art.

In addition to his curatorial work, Kholeif is an active writer and editor of critical, academic, and fiction writing. He has written for the *Guardian*, *Art Monthly*, *Wired*, *Frieze*, *Mousse*, and *Artforum International*, and is the author of several books including *You Are Here: Art After the Internet* (2014), *Jeddah Childhood circa 1994* (2014), and *Moving Image* (2015). Kholeif is Senior Editor of *Ibraaz*, the leading critical forum for visual culture in North Africa and the Middle East. He was also a co-founding editor of *Portal 9: Stories and Critical Writing about the City*, a bi-annual journal focusing on urbanism and architecture.

Omar is on the board of no.w.here in London, and the editorial board of *Documents of Contemporary Art* for MIT Press in Cambridge, MA, and Whitechapel Gallery, London. He has been a juror for the Film London Jarman Award, a committee member for the Sundance Lab, a juror for: The Line, East London's iconic public art walk; the Irish Pavilion at Venice; and the New Vision Film Award at CPH:DOX. He is a Churchill Fellow, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and a member of the International Association of

Art Critics (AICA). Kholeif was born in Egypt and holds degrees from the University of Glasgow, the Royal College of Art, London, and the University of Arts in Zurich, where he recently completed a PhD in curatorial and cross-disciplinary cultural studies.

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Image: Omar Kholeif. Photo by Eric T. White.

The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The museum is generously supported by its Board of Trustees; individual and corporate members; private and corporate foundations, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; and government agencies, including the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events. Museum capital improvements are supported by a Public Museum Capital Grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The MCA is a proud member of Museums in the Park and receives major support from the Chicago Park District. The MCA is located at 220 E. Chicago Avenue, one block east of Michigan Avenue. The museum and sculpture garden are open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm and Tuesday from 10 am to 8 pm. The museum is closed on Monday. Tuesdays are Community Free Days with free admission for Illinois residents. Suggested general admission is \$12 for adults and \$7 for students and seniors. Children 12 years of age and under, MCA members, and members of the military are admitted free. Information about MCA exhibitions, programs, and special events is available on the MCA website at mcachicago.org or by phone at 312.280.2660.