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Co-Founder of Gage Academy of Art Heads Back to School

Pamela Belyea Steps Down After Twenty-Three Years as Executive Director

SEATTLE, WA – March 7, 2013 – After twenty-three years as the visionary leader of one of the nation’s most respected classical art centers, Pamela Belyea, co-founder of Gage Academy of Art will step down from her position as Executive Director, effective July 1, 2013. During the transition period and going forward, Gage co-founder Gary Faigin will continue to serve as Artistic Director.

Gage Academy of Art sprang from the vision of two extraordinary people. Pamela Belyea, with her husband, celebrated artist and art critic Gary Faigin, conceived of Gage as an extension of the art training they received at the Art Students League in New York and the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Faigin had already taught at the League and other NY art academies for a decade, and Belyea was an innovative designer with a knack for project management. Together, they were convinced that they could create a new kind of art school.

After settling in Seattle in the early 90s, Belyea and Faigin set out to build an art school in the mold of the major art academies of the East Coast. By 1998, the school’s founders had won the Mayor’s Art Award for their business acumen and community service; in 2000, they recruited a founding board and transformed the school into a non-profit to broaden its community programs and outreach; in 2007, the school received the WA State Governor’s Arts Award for its work state-wide in arts education.

“I’ve always had three goals for Gage: that it provide professional-level fine-art training to anyone, regardless of their age or skill level; that it give the youth of our community a pathway to their own creative potential; and that it become a beloved community resource,” Belyea says. “Now I want to be part of the budding charter school movement in Seattle, and apply the lessons I’ve learned toward creating a new kind of public school.”

When Belyea and Faigin started out in the summer of 1990, the school was named the Academy of Realist Art, and consisted of one instructor (Faigin) teaching in the art studio of Santa Fe’s St. John’s College. After a move to Seattle in 1991, they rented two classrooms in the historic University Heights Center. With generous seed money from former Microsoft executive Ida Cole, and a visionary founding board, the school became a nonprofit in 2000 and changed its name to the Seattle Academy of Fine Art.

By 2004, the school had relocated to the St. Nicholas Building on North Capitol Hill, quadrupling its square footage with adequate space for six classrooms, 44 on-site studios for atelier students and instructors, a student lounge, library, three gallery spaces and a staff of 12. In 2006, the school was re-named Gage Academy of Art, after the 14th century Middle English word which means, “a pledge of performance.”

Belyea, who as executive director oversees the day-to-day operations of the school, was instrumental in the development of several innovative Gage programs, most notably, “Teen Art Studios,” a free weekly studio program on Capitol Hill and in Rainier Valley that has been continuously running for over a decade. “With over 1,600 teen visits last year, I’m proud of how this program has helped young artists to build their confidence and their portfolios for college and to begin careers in the visual arts – the impact has been astounding!” notes Belyea.

“Pamela has proven that she is a force of nature – innovative, energetic, and passionate, and a true leader of the arts in our region,” says Julie Tall, Gage Board President. “As Director Emerita, we are excited about Pamela’s new professional path and look forward to working with her on strategic Gage initiatives in the future.”

Gage has enrolled students from every state in the union and across Canada, and now offers studio and museum programs in New York in partnership with the Art Students League. In addition, Gage is launching a new studio and art history program with The Florence Academy of Art in Italy, and has already enrolled students from South Africa and England. Since 1996, Belyea and Faigin have also been leading specialty tours to the art capitols of Europe focused on art history and major museum collections. Belyea plans to continue her participation in international tours, including her role as the architectural guide in the upcoming “Provence to Paris” tour in October 2013.

A celebration event to honor Belyea’s legacy is planned for fall 2013.

ABOUT GAGE ACADEMY OF ART

Celebrating more than 20 years as a national center for classical training in the foundation principles of drawing, painting, and sculpture, Gage Academy of Art, a 501-C3 non-profit, features fine-art programs year-round that engage and inspire emerging and established artists of all ages and abilities through rigorous study and practice in the Realist tradition. For more information, connect with Gage on Facebook and Twitter, or visit GageAcademy.org.

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