



For Immediate Release

Seattle, WA, July 17, 2012—Today we proudly announce the launch of The New Foundation Seattle, a private foundation founded by creative philanthropist and art collector Shari D. Behnke. The Foundation was created to strengthen the position of contemporary visual art and production through concentrated support of individual artistic development, and the presentation of public programs that foster the exchange of ideas about art and its role today.

The New Foundation Seattle Will Have Three Primary Activities

1. The Acquisitions Program will enhance American museum collections and will make the work of Seattle artists accessible to significantly larger and more diverse audiences.
2. The Education Program will strengthen individual artistic development by ensuring both professional and student artists in Seattle have access to excellent education opportunities that will advance their talents and network here and abroad.
3. The Public Program will allow the Foundation to invite national and international visual art professionals to Seattle to engage in an active exchange of knowledge. Productions will be diverse and will take the shape of public presentations—exhibitions, lectures, workshops, etc—to audiences based in the Northwest.

Ideas for the Foundation came from a series of active conversations between Shari Behnke and Yoko Ott, a cultural producer supportive of contemporary visual art practice, production, and presentation in Seattle. Shari initiated the collaboration out of a desire to find someone with a mutual interest in contemporary art, investing in artists and their ideas, and an impulse to do something meaningful for this region. As an individual with a long history of searching for solutions to create a network of support for the community she lives in, starting The New Foundation Seattle was a natural next step. “Getting to know artists and supporting them by buying their artwork is something I love. But when I turned 60 recently, I started to reflect on how I could really make a difference at this point in my life,” says Shari. “Starting the foundation is a way to continue to connect with artists and work with a younger generation of talent. The challenge and excitement for me will be to continue to identify new and different ways of helping artists working in this region.”

Initial seed money for the The New Foundation Seattle comes from the sale of a work of art by Louise Bourgeois titled, *Spider Home*, gifted by Shari. The work of Bourgeois has significant meaning as the artist herself shared a desire to help younger artists and demonstrated outstanding tenacity throughout her career. As an avid collector of contemporary art, Shari views this gift and its proceeds as an opportunity to make a difference through her collection.

The Foundation Inaugurates Its Programs

The Foundation inaugurates The Education Program with a grant given to the University of Washington’s School of Art, Division of Art. “The grant will be a crucial component to help propel a new initiative at the University of Washington School of Art that will significantly enhance our engagement in contemporary artistic research,” writes Professor Jamie Walker, the School of Art’s

Associate Director. "Coupled with support from the College of Arts and Sciences, this initiative will enable us to enlist a new generation of artists, critics, curators and scholars to develop innovative programming, teach classes and conduct research in residence. This partnership will also encourage greater engagement with the regional arts community by offering public lectures and exhibitions. In these challenging economic times, the support from The New Foundation Seattle is particularly important and we are honored by their belief in our mission and future."

We are also pleased to announce The Acquisition Program's inception with gifts of two Seattle-based artists' artworks for museum collections. On the occasion of the Henry Art Gallery's forthcoming exhibition *Like a Valentine: The Art of Jeffry Mitchell*, the Foundation will purchase a work of art from the exhibition for the museum. "I'm just thrilled to be chosen. Of course I'm deeply honored, and even more, this kind of support creates a stone-in-a-puddle rippling goodness effect. The artists enjoy the direct benefit of a significant sum in pocket and the placement of a significant work in a major institution where it accrues prominence and visibility," states Mitchell.

Additionally, the work of Whiting Tennis will be purchased for The Francis Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College in recognition of his recent solo exhibition, *Opener 22*, curated by Ian Berry. "The Tang Museum is honored to be part of The New Foundation Seattle's first round of activities," writes Berry. "Shari Behnke has a long history of creatively engaging artists and institutions and this new initiative is an exciting way to do even more. One of our most important roles at the museum is to support artists. In many ways this service is at the core of what we do at the Tang and we are pleased to be working with the New Foundation to bring art from Seattle into the collection."

The New Foundation Seattle Team

The New Foundation Seattle is supported by a board of directors who bring with them years of experience in non-profit management, a refined understanding of contemporary art, and a collaborative, good-natured spirit embodied by the Foundation:

Shari D. Behnke (Founder/President), is a creative philanthropist and art collector based in Seattle, WA. She has a varied history of contributing to the growth and vitality of the community in which she lives by participating on non-profit boards and creating programs that serve the public. In the past twenty-five years Shari has created: The Behnke Foundation, which under her leadership founded The Neddy, an unrestricted cash award for individual Seattle-based visual artists; The Child Care Fund at Cascadia Revolving Fund, a micro-lending program for Day Care providers that was recognized by President Clinton in 1997 for its innovation; Two Cupcakes Production a manufacturing company of fingerless gloves whose profits funded the "It's a Wrap" award and a scholarship for apparel design students at Seattle Central Community College; The Brink a collaborative award with the Henry Art Gallery for an emerging visual artist from the Northwest region; and most recently, she co-chaired the Innovation Campaign for Building Changes.

Yoko Ott (Foundation Director/Secretary), is an acclaimed independent curator and organizer. She was Executive Director of Open Satellite, a residency-based contemporary art gallery in Bellevue, WA, Curator at Seattle University's Hedreen Gallery, and Manager of Youth and Community Outreach Programs at the Frye Art Museum. In 2011, she was designated a leading Culture Maker in Seattle by City Arts magazine.

Alex Allred (Treasurer), has a background in creative writing and brings years of financial management to the Foundation. She's the Associate Director of 826 Seattle, a non-profit writing center in Greenwood which provides free tutoring, workshops and publishing opportunities to kids ages six to eighteen. Prior to 826 Seattle, she managed the accounting department of Archie McPhee.

Aaron Flint Jamison (Board Director), is an artist based in Portland, OR. In addition to exhibiting internationally, he: co-founded the artist-run center Department of Safety (2002-2010) in Anacortes, WA, is the founder and editor of Veneer Magazine, and is founder of the art center Yale Union (YU) in Portland, OR.

Jessica Powers (Board Director), is a talented non-profit administrator, curator and writer. She has worked in education, outreach and program management at the Museum of Glass, Western Bridge and Path with Art. Jessica is a founding member of the curatorial group TART and has independently organized art exhibitions throughout the US and Canada. She is presently Curator at Seattle University's Hedreen Gallery and is also the Communications Director at Listen and Talk.

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