

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****HIGH NAMES MICHAEL ROOKS NEW WIELAND  
FAMILY CURATOR OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART**

**ATLANTA, November 18, 2009** – Michael E. Shapiro, Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr. Director of the High Museum of Art, announced today that the High has appointed Michael Rooks as the new Wieland Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art. Rooks will officially join the High in January 2010. Rooks has held curator positions at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, The Contemporary Museum Honolulu, and at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. Most recently, Rooks served as Chief Curator and Director of Exhibitions and Artist Relations at Haunch of Venison, a contemporary art gallery in New York.

“Michael has worked in the contemporary art field for more than a decade, and brings to the High extensive knowledge from his experiences as both a scholar and curator,” said Michael E. Shapiro. “He joins the High as we embark on a new multi-year collaboration with MoMA, bringing some of the world’s most recognized modern and contemporary art to Atlanta. These exhibitions, combined with the High’s new acquisitions in the department, will allow Michael to oversee a number of new initiatives that will offer a fresh perspective on modern and contemporary art to our community and the Southeast.”

As curator at The Contemporary Museum, Rooks initiated Hawaii’s first international artist project series with major outdoor works by Taiwanese artist Michael Lin and British artist Paul Morrison, and he served on the advisory board of the University of Hawaii’s international artists’ residency program. While at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (MCA), Rooks was responsible for a dozen exhibitions, including the retrospective “H. C. Westermann.” As co-author of the Westermann catalogue raisonné and other publications on Westermann, Rooks is the leading authority on this highly influential but still under-recognized American artist. Also at MCA, Rooks organized “Roy Lichtenstein: Interiors,” a posthumous survey focusing on Lichtenstein’s late work; “War: What is it Good For,” the first museum response to the Iraq war; and “AA Bronson: Negative Thoughts,” Bronson’s first solo show in a museum.

As Wieland Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rooks will be responsible for the High’s growing collection of modern and contemporary art, now totaling more than 2,300 works. Significant holdings include works by Michaël Borremans, Chuck Close, Ellsworth Kelly, Agnes Martin, Gerhard Richter, Sean Scully and Fred Wilson. The collection was recently enhanced by a gift from Herbert and Dorothy Vogel, New York-based collectors who are donating artworks to museums across the United States as part of a philanthropic program called “50 Works for 50 States.” The Vogels’ gift to the High included works by Richard Tuttle, William Anastasi and Stephen Antonakos, among others.

“I am eager to join my new colleagues at the High Museum and to become a member of the arts community in Atlanta,” said Rooks. “Upon a solid foundation established by my predecessors, I look forward to helping build a focused collection and presenting exhibitions that not only make important contributions to the field but also create opportunities for learning and discovery.”

Rooks received both a Master of Arts degree in modern art history, theory and criticism (1995) and Bachelor of Fine Arts degree (1988) from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has lectured on postwar and contemporary art at museums and university campuses in the United States, most recently at the University of Chicago's Smart Museum. In addition, Rooks has conducted public interviews with contemporary artists including Gilbert & George, Yoshitomo Nara and Art Spiegelman for audiences in Chicago and Honolulu. Besides authoring and contributing to four monographs on H. C. Westermann, Rooks has written about the work of Roy Lichtenstein, most recently in a major monograph published by Kunsthaus Bergentz, and is co-author of the exhibition catalogue "Situation Comedy: Humor in Recent Art," a group show that Rooks co-curated for Independent Curators International (iCI).

### **High Museum of Art**

The High Museum of Art, founded in 1905 as the Atlanta Art Association, is the leading art museum in the southeastern United States. With more than 12,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century American art, significant holdings of European paintings and decorative art, a growing collection of African American art, and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists and is distinguished as the only major museum in North America to have a curatorial department specifically devoted to the field of folk and self-taught art. The High's media arts department produces acclaimed annual film series and festivals of foreign, independent and classic cinema. In November 2005, the High opened three new buildings by architect Renzo Piano that more than doubled the Museum's size, creating a vibrant "village for the arts" at the Woodruff Arts Center in midtown Atlanta. *For more information about the High, please visit [www.High.org](http://www.High.org).*

### **The Woodruff Arts Center**

The Woodruff Arts Center is the largest arts center in the Southeast as well as one of the four largest in the nation. The Woodruff is unique in that it combines five visual and performing arts divisions on one campus as one not-for-profit organization. Opened in 1968, the Woodruff Arts Center is home to the Alliance Theatre, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the High Museum of Art, Young Audiences and the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Playhouse.

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