



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRIGITTE MARTIN TO STEP DOWN

Martin guided the respected craft organization through COVID-19 and led its reinvention as a virtual entity supporting New England craft artists.

Deputy Director Karina Burston becomes Acting Executive Director, working with the Board of Trustees to finalize, implement a new strategic plan.

BOSTON – February 16, 2023 – The Board of Trustees for the Society of Arts + Crafts (**Gary Roberts, Chair**) announced today that **Brigitte Martin** will step down from her position as Executive Director at the end of this month, after four years as the organization’s leader. Roberts says Deputy Director **Karina Burston** will become Acting Executive Director and will continue developing a strategic plan that she, Martin, and the board have worked on during the past two years.

Martin (r.) held her position since spring 2019. Among her accomplishments she led the organization through the challenging years of the COVID-19 pandemic and transitioned its popular semi-annual CraftBoston event into a year-round online educational marketplace centering craft artists in New England and around the country.



“I speak for all of us on the board and staff when I say how grateful we are to Brigitte for her steady guidance over the past four years and her leadership in creating a new vision for the organization’s future,” Roberts says. “She joined the Society at a crucial moment, when the future of brick-and-mortar craft retail was becoming increasingly unsettled, and the pandemic was threatening to change how artists and customers interacted. Her enthusiasm for craft energized our organization and will be missed.”

NEW PRIORITIES FOR A CHANGING FIELD

Soon after arriving Martin made strategic moves for the organization including a planned departure from its underperforming retail and exhibition location in the Seaport, which proved prescient as the world grew aware of an urgent rising health emergency in early 2020. When in-person craft shows across the country closed down due to the pandemic, Martin led her team to reimagine CraftBoston as an online destination supporting a wide variety of craft artists and continuing the educational components of the Society’s mission.

A formal strategy planning process begun in January 2022 with Boston-based Technical Development Corporation is nearing its completion. That research and design effort has begun to inform the Society’s future direction to serve craft artists outside a marketplace environment. Pilot initiatives like the Craft Innovation Jumpstarter initiative that offers seed grants to advance the field and individual practices

through innovation, and the Mentor Program that connects working artists with inspirational art, design and craft leaders grew from the early research.

During the past four years the Society prioritized and created opportunities for more craft artists of color to be involved in organizational leadership, events and programs: an “equity in craft” peer learning group was created and knowledge-sharing convenings with artists and U.S. craft leaders fosters greater equity, diversity and inclusion in the field. Through efforts over the past four years, BIPOC artist participation in the Society’s signature programs rose from 2% to 29%.

“It has been an honor and pleasure to lead the Society of Arts + Crafts for the past four years,” Martin says. “What drew me to the role was the organization’s long history of advocating for artists, from training and financial support to mentorship, retail opportunities, residencies and in-person convenings. Support for craft makers and building a bigger network of like-minded individuals and institutions have been key priorities of my work at the Society. The vision of a relevant, compelling organization that builds and sustains a vibrant craft community remains our orientation. I know this work will continue under Karina’s and Gary’s watchful leadership.” Martin says she made the decision to move on from the position after much reflection about personal and family priorities.

BACKGROUND ON ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KARINA BURSTON

Karina Burston (r.) came to the Society of Arts + Crafts in 2019 with 25 years of experience in marketing, strategy, and operational roles for corporations and non-profit organizations. At the Society she has been responsible for managing staff, marketing, website development and redesign, volunteer management and other functions. During COVID-19 shutdowns, Burston led the operational transition to online versions of the Society’s work including implementation of retail functions to support craft artists. She is editor of the organization’s online newsletter and holds an M.B.A. degree from Columbia University, and a B.A. from Mount Holyoke College.



“Having spent the past four years working closely with Brigitte and the team, connecting with our artists, funders, members and a variety of stakeholders about the future of craft, I look forward to taking the Society into its next phase, working on its transition into a regional resource for the field and making important decisions to keep the organization vital and thriving,” Burston says.

Roberts says the board will support Burston in prioritizing business and programmatic continuity, and engaging in new partnerships and collaborations around New England, aligned with other transitions planned for the organization.

The mission of the Society of Arts + Crafts is to support and celebrate craft makers and their creativity. Its vision is to build and sustain a vibrant diverse community, and to shape the future of craft. Since its inception, the Society of Arts + Crafts has been at the forefront of the American craft movement. During its 125th anniversary year, the organization moved to reinvent itself with a strategic plan that acknowledges a new era for craft and moves to promote the relevance of craft in the 21st-century.

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MEDIA CONTACTS

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