

Datebook



Lawrence Rinder, director and chief curator of BAMPFA, will step down in March.

Carlos Avila Gonzalez / The Chronicle 2016

BAMPFA chief leaving

Lawrence Rinder plans to depart in March to learn from nature

By Charles Desmarais

Lawrence Rinder, for nearly a dozen years the director and chief curator of the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, announced Monday, Sept. 23, that he is stepping down, effective March 2020.

In 2016, Rinder led the move of the museum from its original home, an architecturally significant but seismically challenged structure, to an acclaimed new building. The \$112 million project, designed by New York architects Diller Scofidio + Renfro, relocated BAMPFA from the southeast periphery of the Berkeley campus to a lively corner of Center Street. In the process, art and film became a much-needed linchpin between the university and the downtown of its host city. As chief curator, a role at the museum he as-

sumed in addition to director, Rinder organized some of the largest and most ballyhooed exhibitions in recent years there, to varying reception. “Architecture of Life,” the opening show, was a resounding success, adventuresome and expansive in the best ways. “Way Bay,” however, which had the apparent hallmarks of a Rinder curatorial manifesto, was a largely incoherent sampling of Bay Area art history, even though it included many individually strong works.

It is not unusual for museum directors to move on after completing a major building campaign. In an exclusive interview with The Chronicle, Rinder said he will have spent four years working in the new building by the time

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BAMPFA leader to leave next year

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he leaves but had been thinking about the timing of such a move since the opening.

"We get one life, and I feel like the museum is in a good position. We got a large gift, and that creates a runway for a new director," he said.

A.J. Fox, the museum's media relations manager, confirmed receipt earlier this year of "a very significant gift from an anonymous donor that will match new and upgraded memberships as well as new and increased gifts 2 to 1." He did not share details other than that the donation is "in the millions."

At 58, Rinder said he is not ready to retire.

"There's a novel I'm hoping to write," he said, "and I'm interested in ways I can make a more positive impact on the world." He is not certain whether that will entail volunteer work or consulting, but he knows where he will focus first. "What's the most important thing that's going on between March 2020 and November 2020?" he asked, referencing the upcoming presidential election.

Rinder plans to sell his Berkeley home and move to a remote proper-



Frederic Larson / The Chronicle 2009

Lawrence Rinder, shown in the old Berkeley Art Museum in 2009, oversaw BAMPFA's move to a new building in 2016.

ty he owns in Mendocino County near Ukiah. There, on 40 acres "at the edge of the wilderness," he plans to spend time "enjoying nature and learning from nature."

With his partner of 10

years, artist Colter Jacobsen, Rinder has turned the place into an informal retreat of sorts, where the two have worked side by side with craftspeople to construct outbuildings using Japanese joinery techniques. "We designed

it so it can be welcoming to other people," he said, but it is not "planfully" an official residency program.

"I've always been very drawn to nature, even growing up in the East Village on Twelfth Street.

As a kid my companions were a bunch of plastic farm animals," said Rinder. He will add the real thing at his Mendocino County property, he said, "maybe rescue animals."

But "first, a trip to Spain. Then the donkeys

arrive."

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