DeCordova hires Julie Bernson as Deputy Director for Learning and Engagement and announces strategic changes to its education program

Lincoln, MA, March 5, 2012—DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum announces changes to its education program as described in the newly adopted 2011-2016 Strategic Plan: the addition of a Deputy Director for Learning and Engagement, an enhanced and restructured art making program, and the expansion of the deCordova/Lincoln Nursery School (LNS) partnership.

“Our newly hired educational leadership, the creation of the first resident preschool at a contemporary art museum in the U.S., and our new free admission policy for children twelve and under, continue to build on the momentum we’ve gained from the new strategic plan,” commented Director Dennis Kois. “That plan, and the goal it describes—to become a clear leader among this country’s sculpture parks—is impacting every aspect of what we provide for our visitors. Strengthening our education program is integral to advancing our mission, and hence it’s exciting to see so much progress in that area already underway.”

Deputy Director for Learning and Engagement

After a nationwide search, deCordova has announced the appointment of Julie Bernson to the newly-created senior post of Deputy Director for Learning and Engagement. Bernson, currently Curator of Education at the Addison Gallery of American Art at Phillips Academy in Andover, is nationally-recognized as a leading museum educator and a visionary thinker.

“I am looking forward to all of the new opportunities that deCordova’s strategic plan offers for engaging visitors of all ages and backgrounds in the Park and Museum and with art and artists,” Bernson said. “The Museum is uniquely situated to share its rich resources of art, artists, and the environment with the immediate communities of Lincoln Nursery School and the town of Lincoln, and the broader museum-going community, as well as initiate new visitors and families into the value and enjoyment of interacting with art.”

Bernson first joined the Addison Gallery in 1995; in 1999 she became Director of Education and
then was named Curator of Education in 2010. While at the Addison Gallery, Bernson spearheaded the development of the Addison’s new award-winning Museum Learning Center. She holds a Master’s in Education from Lesley University with a particular focus on the intersection of museum pedagogy and the Reggio Emilia approach, an important connection as deCordova deepens its partnership with the Lincoln Nursery School. Bernson also holds a Certificate in Museum Studies from Tufts University and an undergraduate degree in Art History and Religion from Trinity College. Prior to her work at the Addison, Bernson has held positions at Gateway Arts, the New Art Center in Newton, the Clark Gallery in Lincoln, and was the Founding Administrative Director of the Revolving Museum in Boston. She will begin her new role on March 19, 2012.

**Art Making Program**

The Strategic Plan describes the goal of becoming a leader among this country’s sculpture parks by 2016 by, in part, offering a robust slate of curatorial programming and innovative educational offerings with an emphasis on experiential learning for all ages—particularly youth and family audiences. DeCordova is modifying the format of its current educational program to being inspired directly by the exhibition themes, exhibiting artists’ ideas and techniques, and the Museum’s unique setting. The current semester-based studio art making program is being transformed into a mission-focused set of offerings to include workshops, seminars, short class series, and readily available art making opportunities for visitors of all ages in a variety of media. Changes are already underway, and it is anticipated that these new programs will be fully implemented by fall 2012.

**Lincoln Nursery School Partnership**

DeCordova also announces that starting fall 2012 the deCordova campus will be the home of Lincoln Nursery School (LNS). In September 2010, the two organizations launched a pilot project that fully integrated one of four LNS classes onto deCordova’s campus—the first program of its kind at an American contemporary art museum and recently named one of the “most innovative projects in the country” by the Center for the Future of Museums at the American Association of Museums. The move of the entire LNS program to grow the partnership involves the transforming studio space on deCordova’s campus into unique classrooms for three to five year-olds and integrating deCordova’s art, staff, visitors, artists, and projects into the school’s Reggio Emilia-inspired educational program.

After receiving the full support of their respective Boards, deCordova and LNS are currently
negotiating a five-year lease agreement for studio space on deCordova’s campus and will continue to discuss their long-term partnership as part of deCordova’s upcoming facilities and landscape master plan for the entire campus.

Lincoln Nursery School is inspired by the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, which encourage children to plan and determine activities based on their individual and collective experiences. The context of a school offers the possibility for a variety of connections to children’s thinking, stories, and explorations. The Pilot Class program is developed in response to children’s interests and the provocations that the Museum, Sculpture Park, and nature offer. “It is a profound experience for children and adults to immerse themselves in this context. The opportunity to observe installations over time, explore materials, develop relationships, and play in the inspiring surroundings supports children as they make meaning of their world. I am thrilled that all children enrolled at LNS, their families and teachers will form a community at deCordova in the fall,” expressed Nancy Fincke, Director of Lincoln Nursery School.

LNS leadership found that space restrictions in their current facility made further growth difficult, and in 2007 LNS’s Steering and Long Range Planning Committees began searching for solutions, resulting in the pilot class on deCordova’s campus.

Through this partnership Lincoln Nursery School seeks to provide innovative excellence to early childhood experiences and relationships by fostering a meaningful and stimulating experience for students through play, nature, and the arts at deCordova. For its part, deCordova believes the LNS partnership and the Reggio Emilia approach will inform deCordova’s development of children and family programs where young people and parents can discover and learn side-by-side, as well as its general approach to experiential group learning by visitors of all ages to the Park and Museum.

For more information about the Reggio Emilia approach to education visit: http://www.reggiokids.com/about/about_approach.php
For more information about the Lincoln Nursery School and its curriculum visit: http://www.lincolnnurserieschool.org/
For more information about deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum’s Strategic Plan visit: http://www.decordova.org/strategic-plan-faq-0

**General Information**

DeCordova is open Tuesday through Sunday, from 10 am to 5 pm and on select Monday holidays. To coincide with the new Strategic Plan, the cost of admission has changed to the
Changes to deCordova’s education program

following: $14 for adults, $12 for seniors, $10 for students (ages 13 and up), and Free for children 12 and under. The Sculpture Park is open year-round during daylight hours. Guided public tours of the Museum’s main galleries take place every Thursday at 1 pm and Sunday at 2 pm. Tours of the Sculpture Park are given on Saturday and Sunday at 1 pm from April to November. All guided tours are free with Campus admission. Visit decordova.org or call 781.259.8355 or further information.

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