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## **INNOVATIVE CULTURAL CENTER TO OPEN IN DENVER FALL 2006**

*The Lab at Belmar Creates a New Forum to Explore Contemporary Art and Ideas Through Cutting-Edge Exhibitions and Public Programs*

*Hagy Belzberg of Belzberg Architects to Design Multi-Purpose Facility*

**Lakewood, CO**, March 6, 2006 – The Laboratory of Art and Ideas at Belmar, a new institution dedicated to art and thought and combining elements of museum, think tank, and public forum, will open in Lakewood, Colorado, in fall 2006. Under the direction of founder and executive director Adam Lerner, The Lab at Belmar is conceived as a space for the general public to engage with artists and scholars, as well as to advance discussion of and experimentation with issues related to contemporary culture. Beginning with the U.S. premiere of a new film by artist Isaac Julien, The Lab will present exhibitions, lectures and symposia, live music, performances, and films that foster both public discourse and personal reflection.

The Lab will have a unique position as the cultural anchor in the Belmar district, a new mixed-use, residential and commercial urban neighborhood created by Continuum Partners and located five miles outside Denver. As a new and vital forum for contemporary art, The Lab will enrich the growing cultural landscape in Denver while providing a central, dynamic gathering place for its local community.

The Lab will launch its inaugural programming in fall 2006 in a 11,500 square-foot space building with a 2,600 square-foot deck adjacent to the open-air Plaza at Belmar. Award-winning architect Hagy Belzberg of Belzberg Architects of Santa Monica, California, has been selected to design the Lab's new home. In keeping with The Lab's dual role as gallery and community space, Belzberg will work with The Lab to adapt the raw space in a way that allows for a range of visitor experiences, including cultural, intellectual, artistic, social, and civic events that will encourage a variety of ways to engage with contemporary art.

As a prelude to its opening, in May 2004 The Lab began organizing several well-attended public lecture series held in a Belmar storefront. These lively discussions reinvent the idea of a lecture by fostering interactive experiences that explore everything from bird watching to contemporary

cultural theory to the music of Björk, and have drawn thousands of participants from around the Denver area.

“The Lab at Belmar presents an extraordinary opportunity to engage the public and reinvent the role of a contemporary arts center,” says Adam Lerner, Executive Director of the Laboratory for Art and Ideas at Belmar. “We envision The Lab as a platform for experimentation and discussion. Together with Continuum Partners, we are creating an institution that explores new ways to connect art and the world of ideas and at the same time, promotes interaction with its community and evolving urban environment.”

The Lab began as a collaboration between the Continuum Partners and the Denver Art Museum, where Lerner was formerly Master Teacher for Modern and Contemporary Art. Lerner and Lewis Sharp, Director of the Denver Art Museum, worked together to develop The Lab as a center for experimental programming that goes beyond the traditional art museum or gallery. Lerner is supported by an advisory committee of internationally renowned scholars, museum professionals, and artists.

### **Inaugural Exhibition Programs and Partnerships**

The opening of its new space is yet another step in the steady evolution of The Lab. Building upon the strong response of the community to its existing programs, this new dedicated space will allow The Lab to present significant international contemporary exhibitions, public forums, and thriving multiple lecture series as part of an overall expansion of its programming. Belzberg architects will work closely with Lerner to create a home that expresses the identity and fulfills the mission of The Lab while integrating it into the existing fabric of Belmar. The goal is to create a flexible space that allows for gallery exhibitions, events and lectures as well as an area for social events to foster dialogue and community interaction.

In fall 2006, The Lab will present as its inaugural exhibition the United States debut of Isaac Julien’s film installation, *Fantome Afrique*, co-commissioned with the Pompidou Center in Paris and the Ellipse Foundation in Portugal. Other aspects of The Lab’s inaugural programming will address the relationship between personal experience and public meaning, memory, and history. Artist Liam Gillick will collaborate with professional folklorists and ethnographers to produce and exhibit a range of material which may include home movies, oral histories, video testimonials

or other forms of amateur and professional documentation of individual stories. The Lab is developing a series of general audience and academic publications to supplement its exhibition and lecture program.

In addition to a strong exhibitions program, The Lab will build upon its successful lecture series, which combine a sophisticated discussion of ideas with elements of humor, irony and chance. “Mixed Taste: Tag Team Lectures on Unrelated Topics” randomly pairs topics from entirely different fields, for example meat sausage was paired with T.S. Eliot, cold sake with African art and Andy Warhol with artificial lighting. Other lectures include “Mishugas! Appreciating Contemporary Art and Things You Learn From Aunt Miriam,” a series led by Lerner emphasizing insight from his aunt, Miriam Edelman, and “School of Music Reform” which dissects the music of artists ranging from Philip Glass to Frank Zappa.

Furthering its role as a forum for engaging with current issues in contemporary culture, in May 2005, the Lab co-sponsored the Culture, Commerce and Community Conference, with the University of Colorado at Denver and the Health Sciences Center (UCDHSC), the City of Denver’s Office of Cultural Affairs, the Colorado Council of the Arts, and the Colorado Business Committee for the Arts. Featuring the first public debate between Richard Florida, social theorist and author of *The Rise of the Creative Class*, and Joel Kotkin, Senior Fellow at the Davenport Institute for Public Policy, Pepperdine University, the Conference engendered a community-wide discussion on the relation between art and civic and commercial life.

Following on the success of its initial partnership, Mark Heckler, UCDHSC Provost and Vice Chancellor, approached The Lab about developing a more permanent relationship between the institutions. Already, faculty in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the College of Arts and Media have served as organizers, speakers and performers of The Lab’s public programs. The Lab and UCDHSC are currently working to expand and formalize this relationship, in order to more closely tie The Lab’s educational offerings to the teaching and research mission of the university.

Funding for the project is being provided by the Plaza Metropolitan District and Continuum Partners. Belmar, which opened in May 2004, is a 104-acre, mixed-use development located at Wadsworth Boulevard and West Alameda Avenue in Lakewood. It serves as the downtown for the City of Lakewood. The \$750 million project has been developed through a public/private

partnership between the City of Lakewood and Continuum Partners LLC. As part of the long-term plan for Belmar, The Lab and Continuum hope to create a larger, stand-alone facility which will further enhance the Lab's ability to serve the residents of Belmar and the greater Denver community. For more information on The Laboratory for Art and Ideas at Belmar, visit [www.belmarlab.org](http://www.belmarlab.org).

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