

MEDIA RELEASE

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Green light for the Institute for Advanced Study

The Swiss Institute for Art Research (SIK-ISEA), well known as a documentation centre for art in Switzerland, is on the way to becoming an Institute for Advanced Study with an international reach. Two professors of international repute, Dr. Beat Wyss and Dr. Oskar Bätschmann, will work with the SIK-ISEA team as Professorial Fellows on major research projects scheduled for the period 2008–2011.

Since its foundation in 1951, the Swiss Institute for Art Research, now SIK-ISEA, has been dedicated to documenting and researching the fine arts and to art-related technologies, first in Zurich and then from 1988 also at its Antenne romande in Lausanne. Its serious scholarship has won it an excellent reputation at home and abroad as a centre of competence on art in Switzerland. Nevertheless, the rapid emergence of a globalised knowledge-based society has radically altered the framework for education and research in recent years, with higher education becoming an extremely competitive sector. The Institute has a role to play here, having been recognised under the Swiss University Development Act in 1981, which meant that from 1992 it fell within the scope of the Research Act.

Managing Director Dr. Hans-Jörg Heusser was quick to realise that the Institute would need to venture down new paths to strengthen its competitive credentials. This forward-looking strategy, fully endorsed by the Board of Trustees presided over by Anne Keller Dubach, sets great store by expanding research and repositioning SIK-ISEA in the education landscape as an Institute for Advanced Study. At the end of October 2008, the Institute will be launching its Research Promotion Programme, which will take the form of parallel Focus Projects, backed by fundraising, within the various fields of operation pursued by SIK-ISEA. Professors of international renown will be appointed to the Institute as Professorial Fellows, and will spend three years there investigating interdisciplinary questions of major sociocultural relevance. As part of their duties, they will supervise Doctoral Fellows, selected in a stringent procedure to receive a stipend while working on their doctoral dissertations. This arrangement will add dynamic momentum to both personal careers and specialised fields of study.

A key feature of this approach will be the close cooperation between the appointed scholars and SIK-ISEA, who will work together on the research themes and objectives. Throughout the duration of the projects, there will be constant, multi-faceted exchange between the researchers and staff at the Institute. The additional research will be geared to reflect areas of interest to SIK-ISEA and integrated into its operations. In this way, the know-how of guest academics will develop sustainable benefits for the Institute. This will be another distinctive feature of SIK-ISEA compared with other higher education institutions: it will coordinate services related to art scholarship – such as documentation, expertise, restoration and lexicography – and ambitious academic research, stimulating the cross-fertilisation of theory and practice. SIK-ISEA will therefore be making an innovative contribution to Switzerland's role as a research base.

At the same time, SIK-ISEA will be expanding its institutionalised research spectrum to include the mechanisms of the art sector under the headline "Kunstbetrieb", creating the basis for a new department. This field will be led and developed by Dr. Melanie Franke, and to this end she will move to Zurich from the Museum für Gegenwart at the Hamburger Bahnhof, one of Berlin's State Museums. Her department will host the first Focus Project, having won over one of the most original art historians in current academic discourse: Prof. Dr. Beat Wyss. He will be taking a sabbatical from his Chair in Art Studies and Media Theory at the Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung in Karlsruhe in order to carry out a research project for the Institute in 2008–2011 as a Professorial Fellow. The second Focus Project, this time based with the Art History Department, will begin in February 2009. This has obtained a commitment from one of Switzerland's most highly esteemed art historians, Prof. Dr. Oskar Bätschmann, Professor emeritus of Modern Art History at the University of Bern.



SIK ISEA

This leap forward has prompted the Institute to review its logo and corporate design. The SIK-ISEA website has reaped the fruits of this exercise, too. You will find the fully revamped website at www.sik-isea.ch.

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