

Debra Simon Joins Times Square Alliance as New Director of Public Art

Release Date: Feb 15, 2017

New York, N.Y. February 15, 2017-- The Times Square Alliance announced today that Debra Simon will join as the new Director of Public Art. Simon will be responsible for programming Times Square with installations and performance art from artists around the world. Simon most recently served as Vice President and Artistic Director of Arts Brookfield, where she commissioned, produced and presented world-class works of art as part of program that supports creativity and innovation in the fields of music, dance, theater, film, and visual art. Times Square Arts, the public art program of the Times Square Alliance, collaborates with contemporary artists and cultural institutions to experiment and engage with one of the world's most iconic urban places. Through the Square's electronic billboards, public plazas, vacant areas and popular venues, and the Alliance's own online landscape, Times Square Arts invites leading contemporary creators to help the public see Times Square in new ways. Times Square has always been a place of risk, innovation and creativity, and the Arts Program ensures these qualities remain central to the district's unique identity.

Tim Tompkins, President of the Times Square Alliance said, "As the Alliance celebrates its 25th year and the completion of the Broadway pedestrian plazas, we pivot towards a vision of Times Square's public spaces that is not merely functional, but aspirational. Welcoming Debra Simon as our new Director of Public Art is extremely timely as we join the Global Cultural Districts Network and fully embrace the idea that a robust and independent art program is as important as the standard "clean and safe" mission of a business improvement district."

Debra Simon, new Director of Public Art for Times Square Arts said, "Having worked for a global platform that brought public art to locations around the world, I am excited and very much looking forward to focusing my work on a single location that happens to be a globally recognized and iconic public space."

"Debra Simon, who I had the honor of working with at the Downtown Alliance, was one of the leaders in bringing joy and vibrancy back to Lower Manhattan in the aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy. I am confident she will do the same – or more – on the Times Square stage," said Carl Weisbrod, Former Chairman of the New York City Planning Commission.

"Far and wide Debra has earned the deep respect of artists and arts institutions for her innovative public programming, and now she takes her vision to the world's most visible and most visited public square -- Times Square," said Anne Pasternak, Brooklyn Museum's Shelby White and Leon Levy Director.

"Debra Simon unflinchingly finds a way to unite two elusive elixirs: Public/Private spaces and artists' wild dreams and unruly escapades. She will be a Times Square Alchemist of the highest order," said Elizabeth Streb, founder of the Streb Extreme Action Company and SLAM, the Streb Lab for Action Mechanics.

As Vice President and Artistic Director of Arts Brookfield, Debra Simon oversaw the program that invigorates public spaces through the presentation of free cultural experiences in Brookfield Office Properties' premier buildings around the world. She oversaw public programming at over twenty-five sites in New York, Houston, Los Angeles and Denver and was involved in the presentation of more than 400 free cultural events each year with a combined attendance of over 1 million. Ms. Simon's performances have featured major attractions from across artistic genres, including the La Scala Orchestra, Laurie Anderson, William Kentridge, the Bang on a Can Marathon, Buddy Guy, David Byrne and Dianne Reeves, to name a few.

Earlier in her career Debra served as Vice President of Marketing for the Alliance for Downtown New York, where she led cultural planning, marketing and community relations for the Wall Street Business Improvement District. While at the Alliance, she conceived and implemented annual events and performance series including the "Music at Castle Clinton" summer music celebration; "DineAroundDowntown," a tasting festival with over 50 restaurants for 15,000 attendees; and "KidARoundDowntown," a children's festival with programming in several downtown cultural and financial institutions.

Debra was a founder of The River to River Festival and in 2004, she received the Arts and Business Council of New York's Encore Award as part of the River to River Festival team and the 2008 Visionary Award from Bang on A Can. In the fall of 2014, Debra accepted a position on the Art Committee of Madison Square Park Conservancy and in 2014, Americans for the Arts named Brookfield one of the ten Best Businesses Partnering with the Arts in America.

For more information on past and current projects, visit TimesSquareNYC.org/Arts

About Times Square Alliance

The Times Square Alliance works to improve and promote Times Square - cultivating the creativity, energy and edge that have made the area an icon of entertainment, culture and urban life for over a century. Founded in 1992, the Alliance keeps the neighborhood clean and safe, promotes local businesses, manages area improvements and produces major annual events including New Year's Eve, Solstice in Times Square and Taste of Times Square. As the custodians of Times Square, the Alliance works every day to improve the quality of life for the neighborhood residents and businesses while driving economic growth in New York City. www.TimesSquareNYC.org

###

CONTACT:

Marisa Wayne | (212) 843-9216 | mwayne@rubenstein.com

TJ Witham | (212) 452-5234 | tjwitham@timessquarenyc.org