

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

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**CONTEMPORARY ARTIST JITISH KALLAT PRESENTS PROVOCATIVE**  
**PUBLIC NOTICE 3 ON THE ART INSTITUTE'S GRAND STAIRCASE**  
**Public Notice 3 on View September 11, 2010 through January 2, 2011**  
**First Major Presentation of Kallat's Work in U.S. Museum**

This fall, acclaimed contemporary artist **Jitish Kallat** turns the landmark Art Institute Grand Staircase into a meditation on religious tolerance, drawing on the museum's own history in concert with the most devastating terrorist attack on American soil. **Public Notice 3**, a site-specific installation, brings together two key historical moments: the first Parliament of the World's Religions, opening on September 11, 1893, in what is now the museum's Fullerton Hall, and the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon 108 years later, on that very date. **Public Notice 3**—the first major presentation of Kallat's work in an American museum—will be on view **September 11, 2010 through January 2, 2011**.



The Art Institute of Chicago has long held a unique historical connection with India. In 1893, during the World's Columbian Exposition, the museum's building served as the site of one of the most important gatherings in the history of modern religion, the first World's Parliament of Religions. One of the opening speakers was a young Hindu monk from India, Swami Vivekananda, who stunned and enthralled the audience of 7,000 with an address that opened one of the first dialogues

between Eastern and Western traditions and, importantly, argued passionately for universalism and religious tolerance. Exactly 108 years before the attacks in New York City and Washington, DC, Swami Vivekananda called for an end to all “bigotry and fanaticism” and pleaded for brotherhood across all faiths, a speech that was met with a standing ovation and was heralded by journalists as one of the pivotal moments of the Exposition. (Even today, the stretch of Michigan Avenue in front of the Art Institute is the honorary “Swami Vivekananda Way.”)

Kallat has chosen this historical event as the basis and site for his monumental installation. For *Public Notice 3*, Kallat will convert the complete text of Vivekananda’s inspiring speech into LED displays on each of the 118 risers of the museum’s Woman’s Board Grand Staircase, which is itself adjacent to what is now Fullerton Hall, where Vivekananda made his original presentation. Drawing attention to the great chasm between this plea for tolerance of 1893 and the very different events of September 11, 2001, the text of the speech will be displayed in the five colors of the United States’ Department of Homeland Security alert system—red, orange, yellow, blue, and green.

This historical coincidence—and the fact that the speech was delivered at the earliest attempt to create a global dialogue of faiths—heightens the potency of Vivekananda’s persuasive words. The resulting work, *Public Notice 3*, creates a trenchant commentary on the evolution, or devolution, of religious tolerance across the 20th and 21st centuries. The installation will serve not as a passive commemorative act but rather as an actively contemplative space.

*Public Notice 3* draws on Kallat’s earlier works, *Public Notice* and *Public Notice 2*, which also converted historic texts into large-scale installations. In *Public Notice* (2003), Kallat converted the text of Jawaharlal Nehru’s speech on the eve of Indian independence on August 15, 1947 into mutable rubber cement letters, which were then melted, burned, and installed against a reflective surface, lending the speech itself a violent, refractory cast. For *Public Notice 2* (2008), Kallat recreated Mahatma Gandhi’s 1930 speech before the historic march protesting the British salt tax—which essentially outlined a manifesto for Indian independence on the foundation of civil disobedience—into 4500 fiberglass letters that appear to be bones. *Public Notice 2* was recently one of the centerpieces of the Saatchi gift of contemporary art to the British nation.

Documenting the Art Institute’s undertaking of *Public Notice 3* will be a full-color, 80-page book that will be the first full-scale exploration of Jitish Kallat’s work published by a North American

institution. The contents will include an article by curator Madhuvanti Ghose that contextualizes *Public Notice 3* within the space of the museum; an essay by Shaheen Merali on Kallat's oeuvre that situates it within an international context, focusing on key themes and works; extensive images of *Public Notice 3*; a conversation with the artist and scholars, including Art Institute director James Cuno, Homi Bhabha (Harvard), Jeremy Strick, Geeta Kapur, James Rondeau (AIC), and Madhu Ghose (AIC); and a complete bibliography and exhibition history. This soft cover catalogue will be available September 2010 at the Museum Shop for \$18.95.

### **About the artist**

**Jitish Kallat** (b. 1974) is one of the most exciting and dynamic Asian artists to have received international recognition in recent years. Working across a variety of media including painting, sculpture, photography, and installation, his work reflects a deep involvement with the city of his birth (Mumbai) and derives much of its visual language from his immediate urban environment. Kallat has been included in such important museum exhibitions as *Thermocline of Art—New Asian Waves* at the ZKM Museum in Karlsruhe (2007) and *Century City* at Tate Modern in London (2001). Recent solo exhibitions have taken place in galleries in Beijing, London, and Mumbai. Kallat's work is held in a number of important public and private collections internationally including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Saatchi collection recently gifted to the British nation; the New Art Gallery Walsall; and Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery. *Public Notice 3* is the first major solo presentation of an Indian contemporary artist in a leading American museum.

*Public Notice 3* is curated by Madhuvanti Ghose, the Alsdorf Associate Curator of Indian, Southeast Asian, Himalayan, and Islamic Art at the Art Institute of Chicago. Lead individual sponsorship for the exhibition is generously provided by the Burger Collection, Hong Kong. Lead foundation sponsorship for the exhibition is generously provided by an anonymous fund at the Boston Foundation and the Efroymsen Family Fund, a CICF Fund. Individual co-sponsorship for the exhibition is provided by Charles and Kathleen Harper. Additional support for the exhibition is provided by Abby O'Neil and Carroll Joynes, Nancy K. and Stuart J. Murphy, and Betty and Richard Seid.

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