FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 26, 2012
MEDIA CONTACTS: Erin Hogan Chai Lee
(312) 443-3664 (312) 443-3625
ehogan@artic.edu clee4@artic.edu

ART INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENT OF SYLVAIN BELLENGER AS SEARLE CHAIR AND CURATOR OF DEPARTMENT OF MEDIEVAL THROUGH MODERN EUROPEAN PAINTING AND SCULPTURE
Bellenger to Head Department Previously Chaired by Art Institute Director Douglas Druick

The Art Institute of Chicago is pleased to announce the appointment of Sylvain Bellenger as the Searle Chair and Curator of the museum’s Department of Medieval through Modern European Painting and Sculpture. Bellenger, a French citizen, will assume his new responsibilities on October 1, 2012. This position was previously held by Douglas Druick, who became the Art Institute’s President and Eloise W. Martin Director in August 2011. The Department of Medieval through Modern European Painting and Sculpture is the largest of the Art Institute’s 11 curatorial groups, with a collection that includes the museum’s renowned holdings of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works; modern European masters such as Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Vasily Kandinsky; and earlier paintings by such artists as El Greco, Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes, and Giovanni Battista Tiepolo. Bellenger is currently Chief Curator of National Heritage at the Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art in Paris.

“Sylvain brings to the Art Institute an international reputation and a wide and varied range of experience and expertise—as a scholar, a curator, and an innovative administrator,” said Douglas Druick, President and Eloise W. Martin Director of the museum. “Intellectually, his strengths complement those of the
curators in place in the department, and I have every confidence that the department, already a leader among museums throughout the world in scholarly excellence, will become even stronger under his direction. I am very grateful to the senior curators in the department, Stephanie D’Alessandro, Gloria Groom, and Martha Wolff, for their stewardship during this transitional period, and I look forward to seeing the department flourish in the years to come."

“I first saw Chicago in the 1970s, when I visited the United States for the first time,” said Bellenger. “It struck me then as the most modern city in the country, full of dynamism and a sense of adventure. That feeling has only increased with every visit since, as I have watched the city, particularly downtown Chicago, become one of the most dignified urban spaces in the United States. In the same way that I have seen Chicago develop, I have closely followed the evolution of the Art Institute, with its vibrant exhibition program and always-growing permanent collection. It is the opportunity of a lifetime for me to participate in and contribute to the growth of one of the finest museums in the world.”

Prior to Bellenger’s appointment at the Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art in 2005, he served for six years as the Paul Vignos and Edith Ingalls Curator of European Sculpture and Paintings at the Cleveland Museum of Art, where he was also the head of the Department of European and American Art 1500–1950. There he was responsible for many significant acquisitions, particularly in French, Italian, and American paintings and sculpture from the early 17th century to the early 20th century. From 1992 to 1999, he was the director and chief curator of the Château and Museums of Blois, France, and from 1987 to 1991 the director of the Museums of Montargis.

Bellenger is widely respected as a scholar with a broad range of interests, including decorative arts, Beaux-Arts architecture, and Baroque, Neoclassical, and Romantic painting and sculpture. The curator of more than a dozen exhibitions, he is perhaps best known for his work on the early Romantic French painter Anne-Louis Girodet. He is currently curating the first exhibition ever devoted to the French sculptor Félicie de Fauveau (1801–1886), opening at the Musée d’Orsay in 2013, which promises to be a milestone in the history of French art. He is additionally the author of numerous exhibition catalogues, books, and articles, including Girodet 1767–1824 (2005); Paris 1837: Views of Some Monuments in Paris Completed During the Reign of Louis-Philippe (1999); and Charles-Niçaise Perrin: Un Peintre sous la Révolution (1989). His Félix Duban: Les Couleurs de l’Architecte (1996) was awarded the Architectural Book Prize from the Académie d’Architecture and the Prix Jean-Jacques Berger Prize from the Académie Française and is considered instrumental in the ongoing restoration of the Louvre and the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris.
Educated at the University of Paris X–Nanterre, the University of Paris IV–Sorbonne, and the École du Louvre, Bellenger is a pioneer among French museum directors for his innovations in community development, conservation initiatives, and interpretation and education. He has additionally been focused on achieving greater scholarly and public access to collection research among French museums, including, in his current position, the digitization of French artists’ correspondence and a new model of access to the resources of the Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art.

Bellenger has received numerous professional honors and awards and is the only French curator ever to be awarded a Samuel H. Kress Fellowship at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts from the National Gallery of Art. In 2002 he became a Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres de la République Française and, in 2006, a Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur in recognition of his work on Girodet and his contributions to the history of French art.

# # # #

Web: www.artinstituteofchicago.org
Twitter: @artinstitutechi
Like us on Facebook

MUSEUM HOURS
10:30 am–5:00 pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday
10:30 am–8:00 pm Thursday
10:30 am–5:00 pm Saturday, Sunday
Museum free to Illinois residents weekdays from January 2 through February 10 and on first and second Wednesdays of every month thereafter.
Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day.

ADMISSION
Adults $18.00 Includes all special exhibitions
Children 14 and over, students, and seniors $12.00 Includes all special exhibitions
Chicago residents receive a $2.00 discount with proof of residency
Children under 14 always free
Members always free

City of Chicago residents with Chicago Public Library cards can borrow a "Museum Passport" card from any library branch for free general admission to the nine members of Museums in the Park, including the Art Institute of Chicago.