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MEDIA ALERT
For Immediate Release

Blue Star Contemporary Announces New Name, Graphic Identity, and Website

*Regarded as a cultural icon in San Antonio's contemporary art community,
the institution will now be known as the Contemporary at Blue Star*

San Antonio, Texas on September 30, 2022 — Blue Star Contemporary, San Antonio's first and longest running contemporary art nonprofit, is proud to announce a new name, graphic identity, and website. The cultural institution will be known as the **Contemporary at Blue Star** and invites the public to celebrate with a **First Friday Block Party on Friday, October 7 at 6:00 pm**.

In 2021, a series of community focus groups were conducted to create the Contemporary's new name and graphic identity, and included artists, educators, donors, program participants, community leaders, and the organization's founders. The participants were asked about the Contemporary's role in the community, past and current, and how the organization could continue to grow and serve successfully into the future.

James Lifshutz, owner of the Blue Star Arts Complex and a member of the Contemporary's Advisory Council shared, "Over the past three decades, I have seen this wonderful contemporary art nonprofit flourish into a great institution. It has been a pleasure to support the Contemporary's role in our center city's revitalization and to see it thrive along with businesses and organizations that sparked this remarkable growth years ago — growth that continues today. As owner of the Blue Star Arts Complex, I know firsthand the power of art to transform lives and build community, and I am energized by the Contemporary's mission-driven, forward-thinking at this pivotal time."

The sessions were led by brand strategist Leigh M. Baldwin, and the updated graphic identity was conceived of and executed by local graphic designer Jamie Stolarski. "We worked closely with the staff, board, and arts community to gather input on how best to convey the institution's professionalism, inclusivity, and support for artists, while providing distinction between it and the Complex and its commercial spaces. The modular system of logos and assets works with a wide variety of programming, artists, subjects, and tones. The iconic, deeply saturated cobalt blue used by artists such as Yves Klein, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, Anni Albers, and others, as well as shifting the brand name to the Contemporary, emphasize the art space's true focus," comments Mr. Stolarski.

The Contemporary marks this new and exciting change with the launch of a new website. Designed and developed by Spellerberg Associates, a digital design firm specializing in museums and cultural institutions, the new website is informed by many community feedback sessions, and will allow for a more updated, user-friendly, accessible, and engaging experience.

"We are delighted to take this bold new step for our institution," says Mary Heathcott, the Contemporary's Executive Director. "After the last couple of years, we are entering a new era of reinvention and positive change. Led by our mission to inspire, nurture, and innovate through contemporary art, this new identity for San Antonio's first nonprofit home for contemporary art prioritizes our commitment to the art and artists of today.

During the community feedback process, we asked, ‘What is the promise we make to the community?’ and the answer consistently returned to: Contemporary Art for San Antonio, which is actually our incorporated name. To honor this history as an artist-centric home for contemporary art in San Antonio, celebrate the community we’ve built over the last 36 years, and prioritize our mission, the Contemporary at Blue Star felt like the right choice to lead us into the future.”

Originally founded as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit by Richard Mogas, Jeffrey Moore, Kent Rush, Adair Sutherland, Lewis Tarver, and Richard Thompson, Contemporary Art for San Antonio has operated under several DBAs over the last 30 years. Since its first show in Summer 1986, The Blue Star Exhibition, the Contemporary has been an anchoring cultural institution of the Blue Star Arts Complex and the King William Cultural Arts District. Lifshutz remains the organization’s leading supporter with his and his family’s generous in-kind donation of gallery space in the beloved Southtown landmark, continuing the legacy of giving first established by Hap Veltman and Bernard Lifshutz.

The project was made possible with funds from the Texas Commission on the Arts, the Contemporary’s Board of Directors and Advisory Council members, and private donors. Patty Ortiz, the Contemporary’s Board Chair, shares, “I am grateful for the investment of the Texas Commission on the Arts in the Contemporary’s future through their Cultural Districts support. And I’m most proud that our Board of Directors and Advisory Council led this important work with their financial support and deep involvement in the year-long process. Since its inception, the Contemporary has been community-focused and that remains true today.”

To celebrate this new era and look into the future, the Contemporary invites the public to two special events this fall:

The **Contemporary at Blue Star First Friday Block Party** on First Friday, October 7 from 6 to 8 pm, is a celebration of the Contemporary’s new name and identity. The public is invited to enjoy a block party style celebration with a DJ and an interactive screen-printing station. T-shirts and bandanas are available with a donation to the Contemporary. The galleries, featuring the Contemporary’s five current exhibitions, will be open to the public.

The 32nd Annual Red Dot Art Sale and Show launches on November 9 from 7 to 10 pm with the annual art sale fundraiser. The Red Dot Show will be on view, free and open to the public, from November 11, 2022 through January 8, 2023. This event presents and celebrates the work of over 100 San Antonio artists, offering the public an opportunity to start or expand their own art collections with works on sale for a wide variety of tastes and budgets. Proceeds from art sales equally benefit artists and the Contemporary at Blue Star. This year, Red Dot honors Artist Andy Benavides, Arts Patron and Chef Johnny Hernandez, and Arts Education Champion S.M.A.R.T., a nonprofit nurturing creative minds and building community through experiential art education. Individual tickets to the Red Dot Art Sale fundraiser are \$50.

THE STORY OF THE CONTEMPORARY AT BLUE STAR

The Contemporary at Blue Star presents exhibitions with artists from San Antonio and around the world sharing their global perspectives that encourage understanding, empathy, change, and action, fulfilling our mission to inspire, nurture, and innovate. Like most non-collecting contemporary art spaces, the Contemporary contributes fresh insight and perspective on larger issues affecting society and culture by highlighting trends, movements, and conversations happening in art. Admission to the Contemporary is always free.

The Contemporary was founded for artists by artists in 1986 in a grassroots movement sparked by the cancellation of the first major museum exhibition of contemporary art in San Antonio. Six arts supporters and artists founded Contemporary Art for San Antonio to provide an exhibition venue for artists and the public. With the support of donors and property developers Bernard Lifshutz and Hap Veltman, the founders, artists, and volunteers converted a warehouse into a gallery for the first annual Blue Star Exhibition. Over the years, the Contemporary has grown to encompass a professional staff, a robust calendar of onsite and offsite exhibitions, community collaborations, creative youth development programs, international exchange opportunities for artists, and public art projects. Formerly known as Blue Star Contemporary, the institution announced its mission-driven new name, graphic identity, and website in 2022.

The Contemporary is an anchoring cultural institution in San Antonio, and a destination for residents and tourists alike. Located along the banks of the San Antonio River Walk, it is a central highlight between the bustle of downtown and the UNESCO World Heritage San Antonio Missions. The organization has remained true to its artist-centric foundation alongside this fiscal and programmatic growth. The Contemporary is San Antonio's first WAGE-certified organization, committed to transparent and equitable payments to artists for their creative contributions to its exhibitions and education outreach programs. Through its commitment to artists with a social practice, tuition-free youth arts education programs, and community-centric fundraising, the Contemporary is dedicated to equity and social justice in all its endeavors.

In addition to welcoming visitors to its gallery in Southtown, the Contemporary presents traveling exhibitions at Texas State University and partners with area organizations like University Health, Ruby City, and the San Antonio Public Library system. Public artworks produced by the Contemporary's MOSAIC Student Artist Program delight audiences along the River Walk, at Hemisfair Park, and along Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive. The Contemporary's Berlin Residency Program also recently expanded to include a mini-residency in Darmstadt, Germany for the participating San Antonio-based artists.

To extend the reach of its exhibitions, a variety of complementary programs are offered: *Open Studios*, a film series which goes behind the scenes at artists' studios; the Art Education Lab, which offers hands-on programming and education content; and outreach events including workshops, artist talks, panel discussions, Family Saturdays, and film screenings.