1111 Eighth Street
San Francisco, CA 94107
415.703.9500

5212 Broadway
Oakland, CA 94618
510.594.3600

cca.edu

CCA CALIFORNIA COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

**For Immediate Release**

# CCA WATTIS INSTITUTE PRESENTS A SOLO EXHIBITION OF NEW WORK BY LAURA OWENS
# April 28 through July 23, 2016

San Francisco, Calif., March 17, 2016 — A new body of work by Los Angeles–based artist Laura Owens will debut at CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts from April 28 through July 23, 2016. The exhibition is free and open to the public.

Curated by Wattis Institute director and chief curator Anthony Huberman, the exhibition presents mixed-media works on canvas, artist books, and hand-printed wallpaper installations that were created for the presentation and will fill the entire 4,000-square-foot exhibition space, marking the artist's first solo institutional show in the United States since 2004.

Owens, who is currently shortlisted for the prestigious Hugo Boss Prize and the recipient of the 2015 Robert De Niro Sr. Prize, is known for large-scale, vivid paintings that are simultaneously abstract and figurative and embrace both everyday subject matter and art-historical concerns with restless invention.

She explores painting in the wake of conceptual art, continually questioning the possibilities of the medium and furthering many concerns explored throughout Western art history—flatness versus depth, materiality versus illusion, the epic versus the everyday, the grid versus the gesture. Owens has described her work as visually onomatopoeic, in a sense that she creates "paintings that look like paintings." The artist has further noted that "every painting is about how you make a painting."

"With their complex balance of intuition, humor, and formal precision, there is always something wonderfully *wrong* in Laura Owens's paintings," Huberman says. "Her images are childlike but too monumental for children, abstract but too full of language to be speechless, pretty but too impolite to please everyone, and hung on the wall but too sculptural to remain there."

The artist's wide-ranging iconography samples genres ranging from 11th-century Chinese landscape painting to Cubism, and draws on sources both high tech and mundane: spam emails, emoji, internet memes, newspaper classified ads, her own photographs, coloring book illustrations, fantasy environments, vintage embroidery patterns, and a host of whimsical plant and animal motifs. Owens has also appropriated doodles her children make, which, depicted at monumental scale, evoke Abstract Expressionist–like gestures.

All untitled, the works blend traditional oil-painting techniques and drawn lines with collage and screen-printed images that Owens digitally manipulates. Her use of Illustrator and Photoshop is visible in the enlarged gestural sweeps and signature drop-shadow effects of finished works, and

while many tag the work as "painting in a digital age," her paintings are decidedly physical. They can involve 50 layers of gesso or incorporate objects attached to the surface of the canvas, such as bicycle wheels, laser-cut wood, or battery-operated clock parts.

Many works comprise multiple paintings and are often arranged in site-specific installations that include the spaces surrounding them. "In that sense, Owens forces painting to perform tasks other than painting," says Huberman.

For her Wattis Institute exhibition, Owens takes the gallery spaces as her point of departure and has extended the height of some of the walls to create a continuous surface for hand-printed wallpaper installations. In addition, she presents a new series of mixed-media paintings and artist books.

**About Laura Owens**
Born in 1970 in Euclid, Ohio, Owens is a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design and the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). Since Dave Hickey selected her work for the 1994 *LACE Annuale* (Los Angeles Contemporary Art Exhibitions), one of her first major exhibitions, Owens has exhibited extensively, and her work is in major museum collections worldwide. In 2003, just nine years out of college, she became the youngest artist ever awarded a survey show at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles.

Other solo exhibition venues include Secession, Vienna (2015); Kunstmuseum Bonn (2011); Kunsthalle Zürich (2006); Camden Arts Centre, London (2006); Milwaukee Art Museum (2003); and Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (2001), among others. Major group exhibitions include *Painting 2.0* at the Museum Brandhorst in Munich (2015); *The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World*, the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2014); *Whitney Biennial,* Whitney Museum of American Art (2004 and 2014); *The Spectacular of Vernacular,* Walker Art Center (2011); *Undiscovered Country,* the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2004); and *Carnegie International,* Carnegie Museum (1999).

Owens is represented by Gavin Brown's enterprise, Sadie Coles HQ, and Galerie Gisela Capitain, and is co-founder of 356 S. Mission Rd., a contemporary art exhibition space in Los Angeles.

**About the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts**
CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts is a nonprofit exhibition venue and research institute dedicated to contemporary art and ideas. It was founded in 1998 at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco. As an exhibition space, the Wattis Institute commissions and shows new work by artists from around the world. Recent solo exhibitions include *Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys: Tram 3* (which traveled to MoMA PS1), *Josephine Pryde: Lapses in Thinking by the Person I Am* (which traveled to ICA Philadelphia), *Sam Lewitt: More Heat Than Light* (which traveled to Kunsthalle Basel), and *Ellen Cantor: Cinderella Syndrome* (which traveled to Künstlerhaus Stuttgart).

As a research institute, it dedicates an entire year to reflecting on the work of a single artist, which informs a regular series of public events, texts, and research by other relevant artists and thinkers. Recent featured artists in the series include Joan Jonas and Andrea Fraser. For more information, visit wattis.org.

**About California College of the Arts**
Founded in 1907, California College of the Arts (CCA) offers 22 undergraduate and 13 graduate programs in the areas of fine arts, architecture, design, and writing. The college offers BFA, BA, MFA, MA, MBA, BArch, MArch, and MAAD degrees. It has campuses in San Francisco and Oakland and currently enrolls 1,950 full-time students. CCA students are encouraged to work in

an interdisciplinary manner, undertaking projects and collaborations with students in other majors and engaging with outside communities. For more information about CCA, visit cca.edu.

**CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:**

**CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts** presents
***Laura Owens***, a solo exhibition of new work
**April 28 through July 23, 2016**

**Opening reception: Thursday,** April 28, 6:30–8:30 p.m.
**Location:** 360 Kansas Street (between 16th and 17th Streets), San Francisco
**Gallery hours:** Tues.–Fri., noon–7 p.m.; Sat., noon–5 p.m.; closed Sun. and Mon.
**Admission:** Free
**Information:** 415.355.9673 or visit cca.edu, wattis.org

**PRESS CONTACTS**
CCA: Laura Braun, 415.703.9541, lbraun@cca.edu
Streetwise Communications: Robyn Wise, 415.269.7043, wiserobyn@gmail.com