

ICA at VCU and VPM Announce Initiative to Launch a New Community Media Center at the ICA

*Community Podcast Workshops and Training Sessions Launch this Fall,
Dedicated Space at ICA Opening in Summer 2021*

Chioke I’Anson Named Inaugural Director of the VPM + ICA Community Media Center

Richmond, VA – Updated December 17, 2020 – The Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University (ICA at VCU) and VPM, Virginia’s home for public media, today announced a joint initiative creating a new media center inside the ICA for the production of audio content by VCU students, local community members, and VPM professionals. Through this innovative partnership, the ICA and VPM will also launch a multi-year educational and media-making program comprised of VCU academic seminars, youth media programs, and public seminars, workshops, and symposia.

Leveraging the ICA’s connections to VCU students and faculty as well as local creatives; VPM’s resources, expertise, and dedicated listener base; and the vibrancy of the Richmond community, the VPM + ICA Community Media Center will create new opportunities for storytelling, train and educate the next generation of audio producers, and amplify voices often missing from traditional media. Under the leadership of newly named Director of the VPM + ICA Community Media Center Dr. Chioke I’Anson, the Media Center will launch this fall with community and student podcasting workshops, training sessions, and a special performance—all of which are expected to begin virtually due to COVID-19. Construction on the VPM + ICA Community Media Center in the Murry DePillars Learning Lab is slated to begin in fall 2020 and is targeted for opening in late summer 2021.

“Over the past several years, we’ve witnessed the rise of podcasting as a new genre of narrative and documentary art. With that in mind, the ICA—as an institution responsive to new currents in public culture—sought to partner with VPM and launch an initiative that supports audio story-telling by, for, and about our communities, especially those that have suffered historical inequity,” said ICA Executive Director Dominic Willsdon. “We plan to grow this over time to include audio, video, and community media-making more broadly. Beginning in 2021, our new Community Media Center will provide the space, tools, and support for this.”

“The VPM + ICA Community Media Center is a unique opportunity for public media to play a role in engaging a new generation of diverse content makers,” said Jayme Swain, CEO of the Virginia Foundation for Public Media and President, VPM. “We are honored to partner with the ICA and Dr. I’Anson to provide a creative space for students and the community to learn how to harness the power of media to tell their stories.”

As home to this initiative, the ICA’s second-floor Murry DePillars Learning Lab will be transformed to house the VPM + ICA Community Media Center, complete with two recording booths and workspace for conceptualizing, editing, and producing podcasts and other audio programs. The space is being designed by architect and VCUarts Associate Professor of Interior Design Camden Whitehead, interior designer and VCUarts adjunct professor Jillian Chapin, ICA Director of Facilities and Experience Design Michael Lease, and graduate students from VCUarts’ Department of Interior Design who participated in a studio

course and design charette in partnership with the ICA during the 2019-20 academic year. This project reflects the ICA's continued engagement with VCU students and faculty to develop new ways of thinking about and utilizing its space, a precedent that's been in place since the ICA's conception and has actively shaped its building design and programming.

Once completed, the VPM + ICA Community Media Center will host VCU academic seminars, youth media-making programs, and community podcasting workshops—all designed to provide unique educational and mentoring opportunities for students and community podcasters, as well as the technical and editorial support needed to elevate their programs' production quality and reach. It will also serve as a remote hub for VPM staff to produce and edit their own broadcast stories.

The VPM + ICA Community Media Center will be helmed by Dr. Chioke I'Anson, Assistant Professor of African American Studies at VCU and underwriting announcer at NPR. As Director of the VPM + ICA Community Media Center, I'Anson will teach a podcasting seminar each semester for students in the Department of African American Studies and will work with a managing team comprised of VCU students to plan and create a series of community events and youth programs including podcasting and media classes, workshops on podcast development and critique, symposia with invited speakers and mentors, and live podcasting programs.

"Everyone in Richmond has a story that only they can tell, or a perspective only they can share," said I'Anson. "The VPM + ICA Community Media Center is the lab where anyone with something to say or a desire to create can get the technical skills to share their vision. The Media Center will be an arts and storytelling focal point, serving the city of Richmond and helping deliver its stories to the rest of the world."

While construction on the physical space is underway—and with current COVID-imposed limits on in-person gatherings—the initiative will launch this fall with a slate of remote programming. These programs include a series of monthly training sessions with I'Anson for students and community podcasters, and a larger Producer's Institute, wherein individuals with existing podcast projects will be able to share their work and receive critique and guidance from I'Anson, media professionals at VPM, and other special guests. The program launch will also include a live or streamed performance of a popular podcast. More details will be announced later this summer on icavcu.org.

About Dr. Chioke I'Anson

Chioke I'Anson is a philosopher, podcaster, and professor of African American Studies at VCU. He has been engaged in audio for as long as he has been working in academia, an engagement that only deepened when he moved to Richmond. He has worked as a producer for BackStory with the American History Guys and the AIR Media Finding America Project UnMonumental. His podcast pilot, Do Over, made it to the top ten of Radiotopia's Podquest and also secured entry into NPR's first Annual Story Lab. Through this, I'Anson was hired as NPR's national underwriting voice for digital downloads and newscasts, placing his voice among the most heard voices of NPR. Chioke is a committed teacher, eager to explore audio as a pedagogical tool for his students and members of the Richmond Community.

About the Institute for Contemporary Art

The Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University is a non-collecting institution that showcases a fresh slate of changing exhibitions and programs. The ICA is a place to explore new

ideas, providing an open forum for dialogue and collaboration across the region and the world. Mirroring the increasing emphasis on cross-disciplinary studies across VCU, the ICA has created a new environment for artists and scholars from around the world to test ideas. As a university-wide resource, the ICA links campus, community, and contemporary artists by supporting local creative communities, engaging an international network of contemporary artists and organizations, and encouraging collaborations with VCU departments, faculty, students, and the Richmond community. The ICA is a responsive institution that offers a broad range of artistic perspectives from across the world, with the goal of questioning assumptions and encouraging critical discourse. For more information on the ICA, please visit icavcu.org.

About VCU and VCU School of the Arts

VCU is a major, urban public research university with national and international rankings in sponsored research. Located in downtown Richmond, VCU enrolls more than 31,000 students in 217 degree and certification programs in the arts, sciences, and humanities. One of the nation's leading schools of arts and design, VCU School of the Arts offers 15 undergraduate and 10 graduate degree programs in fine arts, design, performing arts, historical research, and pedagogical practice. Distinguished faculty members are internationally recognized in their respective fields, contribute significantly to the stature of VCU, and are committed to mentoring the next generation of artists, entrepreneurs, scientists, scholars, and engaged citizens of diverse communities around the world. Its campus in Qatar provides students and faculty with a direct tie to the Middle East and underscores the school and university's commitment to global education and experience.

About VPM

As Virginia's home for public media, VPM connects nearly 2 million people across Central Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley to insightful programming in arts and culture, history, science, news and education. VPM operates public television stations VPM PBS, VPM Plus, VPM PBS KIDS, lifestyle channel VPM Create and international program channel VPM WORLD, as well as Richmond NPR station VPM News (88.9 FM) and VPM Music (107.3 FM, 93.1 FM and 88.9-HD2). In the Northern Neck (89.1 FM) and Southside Virginia (90.1 FM), listeners receive a combination of news and music. Audiences can access VPM online at VPM.org and on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

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