



Photo of George Scheer. Photographed by David Katz.

The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts Announces George Scheer as New Executive Director; Founding Director Jane Stephenson steps down.

The Board of Directors of The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (EFA) is pleased to announce George Scheer as the organization's new Executive Director. Scheer brings over 20 years of creative leadership and arts management experience to the EFA. Co-Founder and Executive Director of [Elsewhere](#), an experimental museum and artist residency in North Carolina, Scheer most recently served as Executive Director of the [Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans](#). He succeeds EFA's Founding Director Jane Stephenson, who departs the organization following 32 years of service.

“We are delighted and excited to have George as our new Executive Director and feel confident he will guide EFA into a solid future,” said Board Chair, Alan Kleiman.

Now in its 32nd year, Scheer joins the organization at a critical moment as it strengthens the foundation of its programming and operations, grows board leadership, and expands patron support. “I am thrilled to join an organization like EFA, which makes supporting and sustaining artists within a holistic arts ecology core to its mission,” said Scheer. “EFA exemplifies the essential role of an artist-centered institution in fostering the next generation of artistic and critical thought.”

Scheer founded and directed Elsewhere in 2003, an experimental museum and artist residency set within a former surplus store once owned and operated from 1939 to 1997 by Scheer's grandmother. Located in downtown Greensboro, North Carolina, Elsewhere is a pioneer in relational practices in the residency field, and has developed an immersive and interactive art environment created through collaboration and co-creation by artists over time. It hosts more than 35 international artists annually, who work across media to create site-specific artwork out of the former store's vast collection of unused inventory and cultural materials. As Founder and Director, Scheer oversaw the creative and operational direction of the museum, and led the capital fundraising, historic building restoration, collection management, and programmatic and educational development, which continues its operations today.

At the Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans (CAC), Scheer oversaw organizational strategic planning, operational and financial restructuring. Amidst the pandemic, Scheer developed and implemented a five-year strategic plan, prioritizing social impact, earnings growth, long-term facility investment, institutional communications, and renewed mission and vision. Scheer also curated a three-year program of exhibitions and performances exploring issues of carceral justice, health equity, and climate change. Programming convened civic leaders, artists, and impacted communities, prioritized local knowledge, amplified existing strategies, and cultivated a more diverse, civically-engaged audience.

“We are thrilled to have George step in at the helm of EFA. His experience and commitment to building cultural and creative communities centered on sustainability will usher EFA into a new exciting chapter. We look forward to his fresh perspective and innovative ways to continue building our community and support creative practices.”

–HC Huỳnh, Deputy Director, EFA

Scheer holds a Doctorate from the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill in Communication and Performance Studies where he wrote *Deploying Place: Cultural Economy of Art and Urbanism in the Great Recession*. He received an MA in Critical Theory, Literature, and Visual Studies from Duke University, and a BA from the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, studying Political Science, Nonprofit and Government Management.



(Back, left to right) Board members: Michelle Loh, Alan Kleiman, George Gordon King, and Deanna Rockefeller
(Front, center) Founder, Jane Stephenson

Celebrating Jane Stephenson's Career Supporting the Arts

Jane Stephenson, a Founder and former Executive Director of The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, worked for 33 years to create and develop EFA into the vibrant artistic hub it is today. In its first year, it made over 130 artist grants. With the purchase of its 12-story building in midtown Manhattan in May of 1998, EFA dedicated itself to providing space, tools and a cooperative forum for the development of artists' work and careers, and becoming a catalyst for cultural growth, stimulating new interactions between artists, creative communities and the public. In 1998 EFA initiated its Studio program, in 2005 it incorporated the EFA Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop, and in 2008 began presenting exhibitions through EFA Project Space.

Stephenson was born in 1936 in the small town of Muscatine, Iowa. She was active in debate, leading her high school to victory in state and national competitions, where she placed 5th in the country in extemporaneous speaking. These skills served her well in a life in business and the arts. She received her Bachelor's Degree from Iowa Wesleyan, a Master's Degree from the Theater Department at Northwestern University and a Doctorate from the University of Denver focusing on the costuming of Victorian stage actor, Sir Henry Irving.

In 1959 she met and married Donald Guy "Deeg" Buckles, an actor and director who had been part of the 1955 Broadway production of *Inherit the Wind*. Together they created *Tent at the Lake*, in Springfield, Illinois, a summer outdoor theater production staged in a tent in the round and employing equity actors. Stephenson taught costume and set design at the University of New Mexico, designing for the school's plays and operas. She also managed costume design at the University of Denver while working on her doctorate.

In the late 1970's Stephenson began a global clothing design wholesaler, Mogul, Ltd. which fashioned modern

takes on traditional women's wear from India and Pakistan. The business ran successfully until 1990 when following her mother's death, Stephenson closed the operation to focus on the creation of The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts.

Stephenson is the mother of three creative children and the grandmother of two. She and her children lived in London for three years and in Pakistan for five years, deepening their appreciation of the importance of art in all its aspects in the US and around the world.

"It is with great pleasure that I celebrate George as EFA's new Executive Director. He brings outstanding professional experience and demonstrated ability to listen, absorb, communicate and initiate action to address the challenges facing EFA. He has established positive relations with the entire EFA staff, and has the personality and dedication that EFA needs."

–Jane Stephenson, Founding Executive Director of EFA



View from outside EFA Center.

About EFA

The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts is a 501(c)(3) public charity, dedicated to providing artists across all disciplines with space, tools and a cooperative forum for the development of individual practice. We are a catalyst for cultural growth, stimulating new interactions between artists, creative communities, and the public.

Today, the EFA [Studio Program](#) is a juried program offering over 90 working artists subsidized long- and short-

term studios, exhibitions, and professional opportunities. The EFA [Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop](#) continues the legacy of artist and printmaker Robert Blackburn by offering classes and affordable access to printmaking resources, publishing unique artist editions, and producing commissioned fine art printwork. The workshop also maintains the archive of Robert Blackburn and supports art historical research related to the artist and his contemporaries. Another key facet of the organization, EFA [Project Space](#) is an experimental exhibition space supporting independent curators and artists to develop curatorial projects that expand the scope of exhibition into modes of community engagement, public programming, performance, and activism.

“As the longest-running U.S. community print shop, EFA Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop continues to provide professional-quality printmaking facilities to the public, embodying Robert Blackburn's inclusive vision. We are dedicated to fostering technical and aesthetic exploration, collaboration, and scholarship as well as the creation and preservation of fine art print editions in both the studio and the archive.”

–Jazmine Catasús, Artistic Director / Master Printer, EFA Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop

"As a platform for experimentation and collaboration, EFA Project Space is dedicated to supporting diverse NY artists' communities through exhibition activation, projects, and expansive public programming, all free and open to the public. This year we are excited to highlight “folklore” as our main theme, as we celebrate personal narratives, traditions, and ceremonies, and include a wide variety of local emerging artists and participants..”

–Naomi Lev, Program Director & Chief Curator, EFA Project Space

“EFA Studios is poised to elevate artist exposure, ignite inspiration, and shape a future where creativity thrives in NYC. Since its inception, our mission has been to champion artists and foster creativity. Looking ahead, we expect to expand the impact and opportunities we provide to our artist community.”

–Alexandra Unthank, Program Director, EFA Studios