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Media Contacts:

Malia Bates

(804) 655-6108

assistant@branchmuseum.org

Heather Ernst

(804) 655-6104

hernst@branchmuseum.org

**Sharon Aponte named Executive Director of**

**The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design**

**RICHMOND, VA (August 29, 2021) —** The Branch Museumof Architecture and Design today announced the appointment of Sharon Aponte as Executive Director. Aponte previously served as Deputy Director for Collections and Curatorial Affairs and Interim Co-Director at The Wolfsonian-Florida International University in Miami, Florida, before consulting for clients including The National Academy of Design and The Asia Society in New York City.

“I was impressed at my first review of her resume”, says John Crouse, AIA, of The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design’s Board of Trustees, who chaired the nationwide search. “Her international experience, and the breadth of exhibitions and programs that she was instrumental in guiding was impressive. However, it was her interview where she shared her enthusiasm for our mission, and her commitment to mentoring her staff, that really spoke to me. She is the person we are looking for to lead us forward to a higher level.”

During her time at The Wolfsonian, Aponte guided critically acclaimed programming, including exhibitions drawn from The Wolfsonian’s own collections and partnerships with contemporary artists, designers, and architects, many of whom created new works or engaged in projects inspired by the collection. She co-led the development of a $16 million capital improvement project to expand the museum’s footprint on Miami Beach and rehabilitate its two historic structures.

“As a museum leader committed to creative capacity building, I am excited to play a role in imagining and realizing a vibrant future for an organization committed to design and its impact on the world,” Aponte says.

Aponte joined The Branch on August 2, succeeding Penelope Fletcher, who is retiring after five years at the helm. “It has been a privilege to serve as Executive Director of The Branch,” says Fletcher. “As I retire, I look forward to seeing the exciting new directions The Branch will take under the leadership of our new director, Sharon Aponte. I am certain that with her leadership, our incredible staff, and our dedicated Board, the future of this unique Richmond cultural institution will be bright.”

Prior to The Wolfsonian, Aponte served as Deputy Director for Curatorial & Collections Management at the National Museum of Qatar, working closely with Qatari leaders and the architect Jean Nouvel to build the new museum celebrating the history and culture of the Qatari people. She was also part of the leadership team that built the Musical Instrument Museum in Phoenix, Arizona, serving as Head of Collections. As Collections Manager for the Linde Collection, also in Phoenix, she established policy and procedure for the care of the collection and new facility by Jones Studio.

For more information about The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design exhibitions, programs, and events, please visit branchmuseum.org or call (804) 655-6055.

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**About The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design**

The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design is dedicated to exploring design for the public good – design that creates connections, improves lives, strengthens communities, and transforms the world we share for the better. The Branch House – the museum’s home on Monument Avenue – was designed by John Russel Pope in 1916 and remains the largest residence in Richmond, Virginia. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1967 and upgraded to National Landmark status in 1997.