

# The Branch Unveils New Name, New Leader

## *The Branch Museum of Design*

### *Names Advertising & Design Innovator Kristen Cavallo as Executive Director*

January 8th, 2025 | RICHMOND, VA – The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design has a new name and a new leader to start the new year, its 10<sup>th</sup> year in operation.

Moving forward, the museum will be known as The Branch Museum of Design to reflect a full range of design that includes architecture. It is undergoing a rebranding that will be unveiled this spring.

In addition, Kristen Cavallo, who retired from the advertising industry in 2024 after 30 years, has been named The Branch Museum of Design’s new executive director.

At the time of her retirement, Cavallo was the global head of MullenLowe Group – which was named North America’s Design Company of the Year in 2024 by the prestigious London International Awards (LIA) – and oversaw a global network with 4,500 employees worldwide.

“Our new name is more reflective of the fact that design is all around us, from architecture and art to fashion and interiors,” said Walter M. Dotts, chair of the Board of Trustees of The Branch Museum of Design. “We are beyond thrilled to welcome Kristen to lead our organization as we further our vision of achieving a world where innovative, equitable and beautiful design is valued as essential to improving lives and ensuring a sustainable future. She has earned a reputation of bringing out the best in creative innovators and leading world-class firms in the design industry.”

Cavallo also spent six years as CEO of The Martin Agency. Under her watch, Martin was named “Agency of the Year” multiple times by *Adweek* and *Ad Age* and was included on *Fast Company*’s “Most Innovative Company” list twice. In December of 2023, Cavallo was named the “Virginia Businessperson of the Year” by *Virginia Business*.

“I’ve been a friend and admirer of Kristen for a long time,” said Kelly O’Keefe, a member of The Branch Museum of Design’s Board of Trustees. “Her work at The Martin Agency and MullenLowe Global was transformative and reflected her passion for the power of creativity and culture as tools that can bring communities together, lift people up and drive positive change. She is the perfect catalyst to guide The Branch Museum of Design as it seeks to act as a beacon for the work of the world’s best designers and a showcase for the power of design.”

Cavallo was named The Martin Agency’s first female CEO in 2017 and held that position until January of 2024, helping create reputational buzz for clients like Geico, OREO, CarMax and UPS. In 2022, she was simultaneously named Global CEO of international creative network MullenLowe, and under her guidance, six MullenLowe agencies were named “Agency of the Year” in their respective markets in 2023. The Cannes Festival of Creativity recognized MullenLowe’s own rebranding as one of the best of the year.

In addition to becoming known for leading with creativity, compassion and collaboration, Cavallo built a reputation in the industry for her commitment to DEI initiatives. When she retired from advertising last year, Cavallo expressed interest in working on causes related to societal change.

“The Branch Museum of Design captivates me,” Cavallo said. “I’ve seen firsthand how creativity can broaden minds and grow businesses. Design fosters curiosity, which is the root of growth – personally and professionally. In addition, Richmond has a reputation for design and is deserving of a museum to celebrate it. Lastly, housing this museum at the Branch House with its storied history provides an interesting tension between the old and the new that I love.”

The Branch Museum of Design is housed in the restored home of prominent Richmond financier John Kerr Branch that was designed by renowned architect John Russell Pope, whose other masterpieces include the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, the National Archives, the West Wing of the National Gallery of Art and Richmond’s Broad Street Station (now the Science Museum of Virginia). The home – a 27,000-square-foot Tudor-Revival design that featured 11 levels – is the only residence of its kind designed by Pope in which the interiors have survived intact and is one of the earliest examples of its architecture in Virginia.

Cavallo replaces Executive Director Heather Ernst, who is relocating out of Virginia to be closer to family.

#### ABOUT THE BRANCH MUSEUM OF DESIGN (OR THE BRANCH):

The Branch Museum of Design – housed in a 1919 John Russell Pope building on the National Register of Historic Places – explores the impact of design in everyday life, working with individuals and communities to create a more equitable, beautiful, and productive future. Through thought-provoking exhibitions, we aim to spark creativity, joy, and appreciation for design excellence. Through forward-thinking programs, we empower people to recognize and advance successful design solutions to better lives.

GENERAL INFORMATION: The Branch Museum of Design is at 2501 Monument Avenue, Richmond, VA 23220. The museum is open to the public Tuesday through Saturday 10am–5pm, and Sundays 1pm–5pm. Admission is pay-what-you-can. For general information please call 804-655-6055 or visit [www.branchmuseum.org](http://www.branchmuseum.org)