



workman arts

# ARTISTS WITH EXTRAORDINARY MINDS

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: July 7, 2016

### **The Board of Directors of Workman Arts announces the retirement of Lisa Brown, Founder and Executive Director since our inception in 1987**

Toronto ON *July 6, 2016* – It's with heavy hearts and large congratulations that the Board share the news of Lisa Brown's retirement in June 2017 from the groundbreaking organization she founded. The creation and development of **Workman Arts** from its humble beginnings as a theatre company at the former Queen Street Mental Hospital (now CAMH) to the strong position today going into our 30th year in 2017 and most of all, her unwavering support of artists living with mental illness and/or addictions are a testament to Lisa's strong vision and expert guidance.

Under Lisa's leadership, Workman Arts launched the annual **Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival**, screening exceptional films on mental health issues followed by panel discussions that leave no viewer unchanged. In 2003 she launched the **Madness and Arts World Festival** in collaboration with the Harbourfront Centre. Programs for children and youth include **Rendezvous in the Classroom** and *Edward the "Crazy Man"*, as well as international touring of the production of *Vincent* and of *Third Eye Looming*. The *Mad Couture Catwalk*, a runway-style presentation of wearable fashion designed by Workman Arts members was presented at the **Art Gallery of Ontario** in 2012 and again at **Rideau Hall**. Workman's programs have been replicated in Holland, Germany, as well as five cities across Canada and over her final year as Executive Director Lisa will be working on scaling Workman Arts' model and programs to community based organizations in three Ontario communities. Lisa's pioneering work at the intersection of arts and mental health has sparked discourse, challenged stereotypes and broken down personal, professional and social barriers for artists and the society at large. Her contributions have earned her the **Governor General's Meritorious Service Medal**, the **Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal**, an **Ashoka Fellowship**, and in 2014, an appointment as a **Member of the Order of Canada**.

#### **Patrick Manley, Workman Arts Board Chair comments on Lisa:**

*"It seems hard to imagine Workman Arts without Lisa: Lisa created and led us to incredible heights which reflect her level of commitment, passion for art and mental health and her compassion for each and every one of the amazing artists whose talent has been nurtured and given exposure. However, I am very excited about the next chapter for Workman Arts because Lisa will be leaving behind an organization with a reputation as a world leader in the field of arts and mental illness blessed with an exciting group of talented artists who, along with new artists drawn to this incredible organization, will continue to be a source of incredible art and an effective influencers of the public perception of mental illness for many years to come".*

#### **Lori Spadorcia, VP of Communications and Partnerships at CAMH had this to add:**

*"The early announcement of Lisa's retirement provides adequate time for the Workman Arts Board to recruit a replacement and plan a smooth transition. When she retires, Lisa will leave large shoes to fill. I*



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*will personally miss her creativity and sound advice and most of all her deep compassion for our patients. We are enormously grateful for the contribution she has made to CAMH, our patients, and to the cause of mental health."*

## **Quick Facts about Workman Arts:**

- Workman arts provides a safe creative space for over 300 artists living with mental illness (members)
- In 2014/15 alone Workman Arts offered over 65 arts training programs providing over 840 spots for members
- Thousands of artists have been members of the Workman Arts community
- One of its long standing programs Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival celebrates its 25th Anniversary in 2017

Together with Lisa and CAMH, the board will begin the search process of Lisa's successor. The board is committed to finding the right leader to continue the Workman Arts journey for many years to come.

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