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**High resolution images available upon request**

**NEW APPOINTMENTS, PROMOTIONS, AND BOARD MEMBERS AT HIGH CONCEPT LABS**

*Promotions and board expansion help increase organization's stability and expertise*

CHICAGO, IL — Arts incubator High Concept Labs (HCL) announces today promotions to its board and staff, as well as the addition of one new member to the board, effective immediately. Paul Boulis has been appointed Board Chair; Billie Howard has been promoted to Manager, Artistic Planning and Administration; and long-term marketing professional Cindy Blikre has joined the eleven-member board.

“2017 has already kicked off with great developments for the organization, which builds upon the foundation and successes of 2016” says HCL Executive Director Steven Wang. “Paul’s rich history with Blue Cross Blue Shield, with the Arts & Business Council, and with the Harris Theater will help take the organization to the next stage of growth. Billie has done an amazing job curating our artistic programs in 2016, so we are happy to recognize her for her achievements. Cindy’s entry into our board is extremely timely as we look to grow the HCL brand in 2017.”

Mr. Boulis is the retired President of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois and is currently a Trustee at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance. He has also served as Chairman of the Board of the Arts & Business Council for four of the nine years he served that organization. Mr. Boulis earned a B.A. from the University of Pittsburgh; a Master's in Hospital Administration from the University of Michigan; and a one year Fellowship at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University.

Ms. Howard has been instrumental in creating a supportive cohort of artists for each of the past two seasons of the Sponsored Artist Program. She has also curated two Open Houses and supported current and past artists with special events, private critiques, community workshops and more since coming to HCL this past March. In her new role, Ms. Howard will support new strategic partnerships for the organization and develop new programming to engage the Chicago communities.

Ms. Blikre has over 20 years of experience in marketing blue-chip brands with a career in global advertising agencies Ogilvy, JWT, and Leo Burnett. She spent 16 years of her career at Leo Burnett in account management, including four years as an Executive Vice President/Group Account Director. Passionate about the power of people, creativity and ideas to drive change, Cindy is currently back at Northwestern getting a Master's in Learning and Organizational Change and is continuing to consult in the marketing space. She also has a Master's in Integrated Marketing Communications from Northwestern and an undergraduate degree from the University of North Dakota where she sits on the Alumni Association Board of Directors.

High Concept Labs is an arts-service organization that has supported more than 140 artists and collectives with no-cost, customized support through its four-month Sponsored Artist Program and its yearlong Institutional Incubation Program. Additional programs include Cultural Conversations, artist showcases, and special community events.

For more information about the new appointments, please visit [highconceptlabs.org/who-we-are](http://highconceptlabs.org/who-we-are)

**High Concept Labs** (HCL) supports artists and facilitates dialogue between artists, audiences, and staff. This increases access and transparency to the artistic process and fosters transformational experiences in an environment of experimentation and discovery. [highconceptlabs.org](http://highconceptlabs.org)

HCL is supported in part by the generosity of The National Endowment for the Arts, The Chicago Community Trust, The MacArthur Funds for Arts and Culture at The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, The Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, The Arts Work Fund for Organizational Development, The Illinois Humanities, The Chicago Dancemakers Forum, The Martha Struthers Farley and Donald C. Farley, Jr. Family Foundation, N.A., The Norwottock Charitable Trust, The Samuel J. Baskin Charitable Trust, Minor's Unique Printing, Inc., Mana Contemporary Chicago, and individual donors.

website: [highconceptlabs.org](http://highconceptlabs.org)

calendar of events: [highconceptlabs.org/calendar/](http://highconceptlabs.org/calendar/)

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HCL is based at Mana Contemporary Chicago in the Pilsen neighborhood, at 2233 S. Throop St. Chicago, Illinois 60608.

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