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## Photo Center NW celebrates new leadership and Longshot exhibition

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by **Rodney Lotter**

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Photo courtesy of Brian Allen.

Located in the heart of the rejuvenated 12th Avenue Arts district on Capitol Hill, Photo Center NW is changing leadership this summer in hopes of gaining more exposure in the Seattle arts scene.

Earlier this month, the non-profit organization announced that Michelle Dunn Marsh would be the new Executive Director.

Rafael Soldi, Marketing Director at Photo Center NW, said that Marsh was chosen through a two-month process because of her ability to lead.

"We had many applicants that were all very well qualified," Soldi said. "But, in the end, [Dunn] was the person that married together all of the qualities we were looking for: she is a great leader, is opinionated, has big ideas, and has roots in the community, as well as connections all across the globe."

Dunn was born in Puyallup, and has nearly two decades of experience working for galleries, publishers, non-profit organizations, museums, and a host of other photography-related groups around the country, including the Aperture Foundation in New York City, Chronicle Books in San Francisco and a graphic design teaching stint at Seattle Central Community College.

"She really has an amazing resume," Soldi said. "What really mattered to us, and why we chose her over the other candidates, was because she has roots here in the Pacific Northwest, but also has all of these connections to communities outside of the region. Our goal is to bring attention to artists here and to really make a name for photography in Seattle."

Photo Center NW was founded in the early 1980s, primarily as a school for burgeoning photographers in the Seattle area. Eventually, the school became an all-encompassing arts center for everything related to photography and visual art. Today, the center is still a photography school, but is also a community area, and has a gallery that showcases work from photographers all around the world.



Photo courtesy of Brian Allen.

About five years ago, the center nearly closed its doors for good due to a mix of poor leadership, economic woes, and a reputation that was not very respected amongst the arts community. Soldi said that, although he was not working at Photo Center NW during that time, it was his understanding that the organization was nearly bankrupt, and the future looked pretty bleak.

But the center has since recovered, and the addition of Marsh is what the Photo Center NW believes will be the final push over the hump.

"We have been stable and no longer have to worry about closing," Soldi said. "So now we can focus on the future, and the possibilities seem endless with [Marsh] on board. Now we can strengthen our message, and really show the rest of the country the talent that we have here in Seattle, as well as inspire local photographers and show that this is a moment of renaissance for both the center and the region."

As well as adding a new Executive Director this summer, Photo Center NW will also be celebrating their 20th anniversary as an accredited school during two events. The first event, "Longshot," lasts from June 21 to June 22. The event features hundreds of photographers that take pictures of anything in Seattle, anytime during those two days, with the idea being that all of the photos will capture Seattle life during the longest day of the year.

The second anniversary celebration event will be on July 27, which is when the center's gallery will showcase the photographs taken during Longshot. There will also be live music, food and a variety of other entertainment going on. Soldi said that more than \$35,000 was raised from last year's Longshot exhibition. The events are open to anyone, and there is no criteria that must be met other than the photos must be taken in Seattle.

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