

**For Immediate Release  
May 27, 2009**

## **VAN ALLEN INSTITUTE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ADI SHAMIR STEPS DOWN**

**New York, NY** - The Van Alen Institute Board of Trustees announced today that Adi Shamir, Executive Director of the Institute, will step down from her position in June 2009. Ms. Shamir, who has headed Van Alen Institute for three years, plans to devote her energies to family and to the completion of several books including Envisioning Gateway, a compendium of the design competition for Gateway National Recreation Area organized by Van Alen Institute in partnership with National Parks Conservation Association and Columbia University, to be published by Princeton Architectural Press in 2010. Also underway is Bauhaus Style: The Architecture of Hebrew Labor in British Mandate Palestine, an analysis of the architectural production of the *Histadrut* in pre-state Israel.

Joan Ockman, a Van Alen Institute trustee and former director of the Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture at Columbia University, will assume the role of Interim Director while the board seeks a new executive director. In this role, Ms. Ockman will oversee the Institute's public programs, symposia, and exhibits.

The Van Alen Institute has a unique legacy as a promoter of research, dialogue, and education about design and the public realm. Over the past three years, Ms. Shamir launched two new programs that highlight the Institute's long-standing mission: the Design Archive and the New York Prize Fellowship. Initiated with support from the New York State

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Council on the Arts, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Design Archive will preserve, categorize, and create public access to a vast collection of Van Alen Institute design competitions dating from 1894 to the present. Comprised of over 2,000 architectural competitions, as well as numerous competitions in related fields such as sculpture and interior design, the archive will ultimately provide open-source, online access to historic competition briefs, submissions, and jury comments.

The New York Prize Fellowship expands the Institute's research capacities and lays the groundwork for a long-term strategic vision that establishes Van Alen Institute as an international cultural center and design destination. Prospective fellows are invited to submit project proposals in one of five research categories: land use and development, culture and politics, systems and ecology, information and communication, and forms and materials. A group of fellows, selected annually by the New York Prize Fellowship Council, work on their projects in residence at Van Alen Institute for several months, during which time they lead discussions in their respective fields, present their projects to the public, and engage each other in cross disciplinary dialogue about the complex issues of public space and the public sphere.

Commenting on Ms. Shamir's decision to step down, Board Chair Abby Hamlin said, "The trustees of the Institute are deeply appreciative of the leadership that Adi Shamir has provided these past three years. She has implemented new programs that expand the reach of the organization, established new partnerships with universities and other institutions, and has put in place the infrastructure that will result in public access to our important history and current range of inquiry. We are delighted that she will continue to work with us on the [Envisioning Gateway](#) publication and on other select initiatives as well."

Ms. Hamlin noted that the Institute is pleased to welcome Joan Ockman as its interim director. “Joan’s tremendous wealth of experience and breadth of scholarship will enable Van Alen Institute to pursue new projects and diverse programs in support of our mission while we conduct a national search.”

More information about the Executive Director position will be forthcoming shortly. Inquiries in the meantime should be sent, via mail or email, to the Search Committee:

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### **About Van Alen Institute: Projects in Public Architecture**

For over a century, Van Alen Institute has cultivated a community of architecture and design practitioners and scholars, awarded excellence in design, and fostered dialogue about architecture as a public practice. Today, Van Alen Institute continues its legacy as an architectural institute that is dedicated to critical inquiry surrounding contemporary forms of public space and new configurations of spatial practice. The Institute informs debate and advances design through competitions, fellowships, related forums, publications, and exhibitions. For more information about public programs and supporting the Institute, please visit [www.vanalen.org](http://www.vanalen.org).

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