

Distinguished Service Honoree



Christopher G. Kennedy

Merchandise Mart Properties, Inc.

CHRISTOPHER G. KENNEDY holds a vision of Chicago as an international center for the arts. And he's helping to make that vision an ongoing reality through Artropolis, a city-wide celebration of art, antiques, and culture.

Kennedy created Artropolis through his rescue of Art Chicago, an internationally acclaimed art fair, from certain death and considerable embarrassment in 2006. That's no exaggeration. Arriving at Navy Pier to set up for the 2006 fair, exhibiting gallery owners found little more than an empty tent. Just days before opening night, Art Chicago's cash-strapped owner called Kennedy and asked him to help.

Kennedy agreed to host the fair that weekend—at the Merchandise Mart. He put his strategic thinking and enthusiastic attitude to work to motivate dealers and put plans in motion.

Crews worked around the clock to move the event to the Mart from Navy Pier. Within 24 hours, the event was ready, including an emergency run of fliers and invitations announcing the new location. The fair went on without much of a hitch, to the great relief of gallery owners and the city leaders.

After the successful 2006 installment drew 21,600 people, Kennedy bought the whole fair and rebranded it as Artropolis, a city-wide experience. In 2007, he increased the fair's reach and appeal, adding satellite fairs Bridge, The Artist Project, and Intuit, in addition to an aggressive campaign to lure more of the best galleries and most elite art collectors from around the world. Artropolis featured 132 of the world's top modern and contemporary art galleries, showcases of emerging artists, a fashion show, and more. Crowd estimates for 2007 nearly doubled the previous year, to more than 42,000.

Kennedy has even bigger plans for the future. He has announced his company's intention to buy the Armory Show in New York, a

leading competitor for Art Chicago, and the European fair VOLTA. With these acquisitions, Kennedy plans to maintain the unique identities of each fair but combine the wealth of knowledge into a stronger community of artists, galleries, and collectors.

Since 2000, Christopher G. Kennedy has served as president of Merchandise Mart Properties, Inc. (MMPI), which manages numerous wholesale trade properties across the United States. He also serves on numerous boards of directors and participates in numerous philanthropic and nonprofit organizations in Chicago.

As a director, Kennedy sits on the board of directors of Ariel Mutual Funds and on the board of directors of the Interface Floor Covering Company, as well as the boards of various privately held companies. His involvement in civic organizations in Chicago includes the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, the City Club of Chicago, the Executives' Club of Chicago, the Economic Club of

Chicago, and The Commercial Club of Chicago.

Kennedy's work for nonprofit groups includes serving as treasurer of the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation and on the board of directors of the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago and the Catholic Theological Union. He is the past chairman of the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau and is a former chairman of the Greater Chicago Food Depository. Additionally, he served on the boards of Citizens Energy Corporation, El Valor Agency, the Heartland Alliance, Children's Memorial Hospital, the Irish Fellowship Club, the Center for Disability and Elder Law, and the Illinois Council on Economic Education.

Christopher G. Kennedy is the son of Robert and Ethel Kennedy and is the eighth of their eleven children. He currently resides in suburban Chicago with his wife, Sheila Berner Kennedy, and children Katherine, Christopher Jr., Sarah, and Clare.

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