

**THE MENIL COLLECTION SELECTS SHORT LIST OF  
FOUR ARCHITECTURE FIRMS TO DESIGN THE NEW  
MENIL DRAWING INSTITUTE**

**Inaugurated in Museum's 25<sup>th</sup>-Anniversary Year, Project Is Central to  
Long-Range Plan to Enhance the Menil Campus; Will Create the  
First Freestanding Building in America Dedicated to Modern and Contemporary Drawing**

**Houston, TX, April 13, 2012** — Josef Helfenstein, director of the Menil Collection, today announced that the Board of Trustees has narrowed the international search for an architect to design the Menil Drawing Institute (MDI), the first major building project under the museum's ambitious long-range plan. Four firms will compete for the design of the MDI, with a final selection expected by early June 2012.

The multi-year plan envisions improving and reconfiguring the Menil's serene urban campus with more green space, concentrations of art and amenities for the public, allowing the museum to advance its activities on every front. This future will begin with the construction of the MDI, the first freestanding facility in America dedicated to modern and contemporary drawing. The new building and its programs will enable the Menil to enhance its hallmark experience of a direct encounter between each visitor and the work of the artist's hand.

The short list, comprising firms that are both well-established and emerging, are **Tatiana Bilbao** (Mexico City); **David Chipperfield Architects** (London); **Johnston Marklee** (Los Angeles); and **SANAA** (Tokyo).

Josef Helfenstein stated, "In this year, when we observe the 25th anniversary of our great museum building by Renzo Piano, we are pleased to begin realizing our vision for the future by selecting the next architect to design a major building for the Menil campus. By taking on the challenge of designing MDI—the only facility of its kind—the architect will create a home for our largest, fastest-growing but most delicate collection of artworks, while also providing an important new focal point for the entire campus."

Leslie Elkins Sasser, Chair of the Menil's architecture selection committee, stated, "The Menil's campus is one of the world's most cherished cultural landscapes. We intend to move forward with respect to what exists, preserving and nurturing its spirit as we move forward in the Menil's tradition of commissioning exceptional architecture. Each of the four firms we have selected for the short list, after months of research, travel and discussion, have the

potential to achieve a remarkable addition- for our campus, for our city of Houston and for the many visitors from around the world.”

Established in 2008 as a program of the Menil Collection, the Menil Drawing Institute currently conducts research into modern and contemporary drawing; organizes exhibitions (such as surveys of the drawings of Claes Oldenburg and Tony Smith, and the current *Richard Serra Drawing: A Retrospective*); and is undertaking the research and publication of the multi-volume catalogue raisonné of the drawings of Jasper Johns. The Board of Trustees has resolved that a freestanding facility for MDI will be the first major building project undertaken through the long-range plan, as a key expression of the Menil’s values and vision for the future. A modest project under the plan—a 1,500-square-foot café, being designed by Rice University’s Rice Building Workshop—was announced in 2011.

The Menil’s building program began with a strategic planning process undertaken in 2006, calling for a series of expansions to realize the full founding vision of Dominique and John de Menil. Among its features, the strategic plan proposes completing the campus with construction of the MDI, a café, additional space for the Menil Archives and buildings devoted to the work of individual artists (such as the Menil’s Cy Twombly Gallery and Dan Flavin Installation at Richmond Hall). It was on the basis of this strategic plan that the Menil in 2009 commissioned David Chipperfield Architects to create a master site plan for the campus, a 30-acre “neighborhood of art” (as it was described by the late architecture critic Reyner Banham) in Houston’s Museum District. The Board of Trustees has enthusiastically embraced the Chipperfield master site plan for its sensitivity and intelligence in showing how to increase the Menil’s visibility and accessibility without sacrificing the campus’s tranquil, oasis-like quality. The plan suggests no alterations to existing Menil art buildings and will preserve the scale, green ambience, and tranquility of the Menil’s neighborhood.

### **Short-Listed Firms**

Tatiana Bilbao created the studio **Tatiana Bilbao/mx.a** in 2004 and has completed projects in Mexico, China and Spain. The studio includes a department specially devoted to cultural projects such as exhibitions, lectures and publications. Projects in Mexico include the Botanical Garden Culiacan; Funeral House, San Luis Potosi; Universe House (designed with Gabriel Orozco), Puerto Escondido; Parque Biotecnologico, Culiacan; Centro de Artes Escenicas, Guadalajara; and Ventura House, Monterey. The firm also designed the Jinhua Architecture Park in Jinhua, China. Bilbao was advisor for Urban Projects at the Urban Housing and Development Department of Mexico City in 1998-99.

David Chipperfield established **David Chipperfield Architects** in 1985. The firm currently has offices in London, Berlin, Milan and Shanghai and works internationally on cultural, residential and commercial projects. Notable cultural projects include The Hepworth Wakefield, West Yorkshire; Turner Contemporary, Margate; Neues Museum, Berlin; James Simon Gallery, Berlin; Museum Folkwang, Essen; Museum of Modern Literature, Marbach am Neckar; and

Figge Art Museum, Davenport. The firm was recently commissioned to renovate Mies van der Rohe's Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin.

Founded in 1998 by Sharon Johnston and Mark Lee, **Johnston Marklee** has undertaken residential, commercial, and institutional projects and exhibition environments with a particular focus on the arts. Notable projects include View House, Rosario, Argentina; Hill House, Pacific Palisades; and Helios House, Los Angeles. Current projects include a new studio campus for the UCLA Graduate Art Program, Culver City; DEPART Foundation's Grand Traiano Art Complex, Grottaferrata, Italy; Poggio Golo winery, Montepulciano, Italy; Vault House, Oxnard; and Chile House/META, a community arts center in Penco, Chile.

Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa have been working collaboratively under the name **SANAA** since 1995. Sejima studied architecture at the Japan Women's University and launched her own practice in 1987. Nishizawa studied architecture at Yokohama National University and, in addition to his work with Sejima, has maintained an independent practice since 1997. Notable projects include the Rolex Learning Center, Lausanne; the Toledo Museum of Art's Glass Pavilion; the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; the Serpentine Pavilion, London; the Christian Dior Building in Omotesando, Tokyo; and the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa.

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