

## The Menil Collection to Unveil a New Wall Drawing by Mel Bochner October 20, 2022

*Museum commissions artist for the fourth installment of its site-specific wall drawing series at the Menil Drawing Institute*



HOUSTON—October 11, 2022—The Menil Collection is proud to announce the fourth installment of the ephemeral wall drawing series at the Menil Drawing Institute. Conceptual American artist Mel Bochner (b. 1940) has been commissioned to create a blue powder pigment drawing, *Smudge*. The drawing will be unveiled with an Artist Talk, featuring Bochner in conversation with Edouard Kopp, Chief Curator at the Menil Drawing Institute, on Wednesday, October 19, at 6 p.m., followed by a public reception at 7 p.m. *Wall Drawing Series: Mel Bochner* will be **on view at the Menil Drawing Institute October 20, 2022–September 2023**.

Bochner was part of a generation of artists—which also included Eva Hesse, Donald Judd, and Robert Rauschenberg—who sought to break with Abstract Expressionism and rejected traditional compositional devices. Bochner became prominent during the second half of the 1960s, a moment of radical change in society at large as well as in art. In 1966, after becoming a teacher at the School of Visual Arts in New York, he mounted his first show, *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art*, which is often considered the first exhibition of Conceptual art. The artist's work soon made a place for itself through the challenge of its ideas, as he began exploring the usage of words in fine art, and the intersection of verbal and visual representation.

In the catalogue for *Mel Bochner: Blue Powder Pigment Wall Pieces*, shown at Grant Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles, in 2000, Bochner writes on how the first pieces he ever made directly on the wall utilized blue raw pigment—a dry carpenter's chalk. As he rubbed the dry pigment into the wall, an image began to emerge, a "smudge," roughly traced by the arc of his arm's reach.

“The film of color, inseparable from the wall itself, had no discernable thickness,” Bochner wrote. “It was emphatically visual, yet perceptually dislocated, seeming to float just slightly in front of the spatialized whiteness of the wall.”

Rebecca Rabinow, Director, The Menil Collection, said: “The Menil Collection is delighted to welcome Mel Bochner to the Menil Drawing Institute for the wall drawing series. The series is an integral part of the institute’s ambitious program to foster interest in contemporary drawing, with past iterations by artists Roni Horn, Marcia Kure, and Jorinde Voigt. We are pleased to present Bochner’s wall drawing *Smudge*, which the artist has described as a revelation in his career.”

Edouard Kopp, Chief Curator at the Menil Drawing Institute, said: “Mel Bochner pioneered the development of Conceptual art in the 1960s and since then he has kept challenging traditional definitions of drawing, notably by asking the question ‘what *isn’t* a drawing?’ Both delicate and thought-provoking, *Smudge* questions the tension between one’s sensory and non-sensory perception.”

*Wall Drawing Series: Mel Bochner* is curated by Edouard Kopp, Chief Curator, Menil Drawing Institute. The Menil’s Wall Drawing Series began in 2018 as part of the institute’s commitment to seeking new approaches to the form and language of drawing.

### **About the Menil Collection**

Philanthropists and art patrons John and Dominique de Menil established the Menil Foundation in 1954 to cultivate greater public understanding and appreciation of art, architecture, culture, religion, and philosophy. In 1987, the Menil Collection’s main museum building opened to the public. Today, the Menil Collection consists of a group of five art buildings and green spaces located within a residential neighborhood in central Houston. The Menil remains committed to its founders’ belief that art is essential to human experience and fosters direct personal encounters with works of art. The museum welcomes all visitors free of charge to its buildings and surrounding green spaces. [menil.org](http://menil.org)

### **Funding**

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### **Image Caption**

Portrait of Mel Bochner. Photo courtesy of James Powers

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