

The Menil Collection Names Toby Kamps as New Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art

HOUSTON, July 14, 2010 – Following an extensive search that included numerous national and international candidates, Josef Helfenstein, director of The Menil Collection, has named Toby Kamps as the museum's new curator of modern and contemporary art. Currently senior curator at Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Mr. Kamps brings a wide range of museum, publishing and academic experience with him to his new post, which he will assume in September.

Said Mr. Helfenstein: "I am most pleased that we found our ideal candidate right here in Houston. He brings impressive credentials, national and international experience and a real enthusiasm to the Menil as we move forward, building upon the legacy of its founders, John and Dominique de Menil."

Many Houstonians know Mr. Kamps from his three-and-a-half years at CAMH, where he organized many exhibitions, including 2008's *The Old, Weird America*, a study of folk themes in contemporary art, which won a "Best Thematic Show Nationally" award from the U.S. chapter of the International Association of Art Critics. In his CAMH exhibition programs, many of which were accompanied by critically praised catalogues and traveled to other museums, he worked closely with artists, colleagues and scholars to engage communities and develop a broad range of educational outreach initiatives.

Said Mr. Kamps: "The Menil has been model and inspiration to me since I first visited the museum in 1991. I am tremendously excited about organizing exhibitions in the Menil's beautiful spaces and working with – and building – its extraordinary collection. The institution's emphasis on spirituality, diversity, and social justice resonates with my own interests, and its amazing holdings provide a unique and thrilling context for aesthetic and life-engaged thinking."

Prior to his arrival in Houston, Mr. Kamps held posts at several notable arts and educational organizations and institutions. He served as senior curator of the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati and as director of the Institute of Contemporary Art and assistant professor at Maine College of Art. As curator and department head at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, he led the collections committee and was active in identifying and presenting works of art for acquisition.

Over the years, in his writings, teaching, lecturing and exhibition programs, Mr. Kamps has spotlighted artists working in multiple media – painting, sculpture, photography, installation, and sound.

Earlier in his career Mr. Kamps served as curator of exhibitions with Madison Art Center in Madison (where he frequently lectured at the University of Wisconsin). As curatorial assistant at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis he co-edited the catalogue raisonné of Bruce Nauman. After receiving his bachelor's degree in German from Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, Mr. Kamps pursued postgraduate studies in art history at Kunsthistorisches Institut at the Free University in Berlin and assisted the English-language editors at Prestel-Verlag, the Munich-based art publishers. He then returned to the U.S. and took a master's degree in art history from Williams College.

In the course of his curatorial career, Mr. Kamps has developed a remarkably broad range of modern-and-contemporary projects, including major surveys of internationally known artists, provocative thematic shows, and intimate project-style endeavors – engaging general and academic audiences alike. "We look forward to Toby's arrival," said Mr. Helfenstein. "At the Menil he will continue to expand his range as a curator with eye-opening exhibitions, scholarly publications and exciting programs."