

**REEM FADDA RECEIVES THE MENIL COLLECTION'S
2017 WALTER HOPPS AWARD FOR CURATORIAL ACHIEVEMENT**



HOUSTON, TEXAS, May 23, 2017 — Dr. Rebecca Rabinow, Director of the Menil Collection, announced today that Reem Fadda, a Palestinian curator based in Ramallah, Palestine and Amman, Jordan, has been chosen as the eighth recipient of the biennial Walter Hopps Award for Curatorial Achievement. Established in 2001 in honor of Menil Founding Director Walter Hopps (1932-2005), the award recognizes early to mid-career curators who have made significant contributions to the field of contemporary art. In conjunction with the award, which confers a stipend of \$20,000, Ms. Fadda will deliver a public lecture at the Menil Collection in the fall.

Since the beginning of her career in 2000, Reem Fadda has won international renown for her innovative exhibitions of new art from the Middle

East and Africa, her achievements as an institution-builder, and her scholarly contributions as a writer and speaker on contemporary art. A distinguished selection panel assembled by Dr. Rabinow and Toby Kamps, the Menil's Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, chose her from an international field of nine candidates to receive the Walter Hopps Award.

The members of the 2017 selection panel were Phong Bui (Co-Founder and Creative Director of the New York City culture and politics journal *The Brooklyn Rail*), Hou Hanru (Artistic Director of MAXXI National Museum of 21st-Century Arts, Rome), and Jessica Morgan (Director of Dia Art Foundation, New York). Previous recipients of the Walter Hopps Award are Roger M. Buergel (2003), Hamza Walker (2005), Eungie Joo (2007), Maria Lind (2009), Adam Szymczyk (2011), Cuauhtémoc Medina (2013), and Thomas J. Lax (2015).

Speaking of Reem Fadda's curatorial contributions toward establishing a new contemporary art museum in the United Arab Emirates with a strong collection of Middle Eastern art, Jessica Morgan said, "As Associate Curator of Middle Eastern Art for the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, a position she held from 2010 to 2016, Reem defined a vision for a new institution doing pioneering work in a part of the world not yet adequately served by cultural institutions. She

equipped the nascent Guggenheim Abu Dhabi with an extraordinary collection, recognizing the many creative voices from the region.”

Hou Hanru stated, “In the Middle East, there is less structural and financial support for contemporary art than in other parts of the world. Reem has done yeoman service for her native Palestine by serving as Director of the Palestinian Association for Contemporary Art (PACA) and as Academic Director of the International Academy of Art Palestine, a progressive educational institution which she helped found in 2006. Also commendable is the work she has done as an independent curator in organizing major international surveys with distinctive points of view, including, most recently, the 2016 Marrakech Biennial 6, which considered the aesthetic and structural challenges of the everyday, and the 2006-07 project *Liminal Spaces*, an eight-month international art project in Israel, Palestine, and Germany that considered the role of art in times and places shaped by occupation and resistance.”

Acknowledging Reem Fadda’s alertness to the roles of politics and critical discourse in recent art and architecture and her commitment to defining a new and vital “Afro-Asian axis” in culture, Phong Bui said, “Reem makes a political framework a throughline in her vision, and it’s been instrumental in both her temporary exhibitions and in the permanent institutions she’s helped launch. Her observation that the Third World has not yet been thoroughly anesthetized by the forces of globalization and colonization is prescient, and points to how much we all can learn from its artists.”

Toby Kamps said, “This year’s roster of international candidates for the Walter Hopps Award was extremely strong, but our panelists agreed that Reem Fadda should be the recipient because of her original approach to exhibition and collection development and her commitment to developing cultural infrastructures in parts of the world where they are much needed.”

Rebecca Rabinow summarized the selection committee’s decision by saying, “Reem Fadda has an impressive record of organizing groundbreaking programs both inside and outside of conventional museums. Her fundamental belief that contemporary art and architecture represent an ongoing engagement with the most challenging questions of our time informs every aspect of her work.”

Reem Fadda served from 2010 to 2016 as Associate Curator, Middle Eastern Art, Abu Dhabi Project of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. From 2005 to 2007, she was Director of the Palestinian Association for Contemporary Art (PACA) and worked as Academic Director for the International Academy of Art Palestine, which she helped found in 2006. She has been involved in many international exhibitions, including the National Pavilion of the United Arab Emirates at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013; *Tarjama/Translation*, 2010, organized by ArteEast, which featured 30 artists from the Middle East and Central Asia at the Queens Museum of Art, New York, and the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University; *Ramallah Syndrome*, part of the Venice Biennale in 2009; and *Liminal Spaces*, a four-year artistic and political project beginning in 2006 consisting of conferences, tours, art residencies, and exhibitions in Palestine,

Israel, and Germany. In 2009, she curated the Riwaq Biennale, Ramallah, with Charles Esche. She was granted a Fulbright scholarship to pursue her Ph.D. in the Department of History of Art and Visual Studies at Cornell University. Fadda was the curator of the 6th edition of the Marrakech Biennale, held on Feb- May 2016. She will curate the inaugural exhibition of the Palestinian Museum, in Ramallah opening on September 1, 2017.

Walter Hopps began his career in Los Angeles, where in 1957 he co-founded the Ferus Gallery and was instrumental in bringing the first postwar generation of the city's artists to international prominence. Among the seminal exhibitions he organized as curator and director of the Pasadena Art Museum were the first retrospectives of Marcel Duchamp in 1963 and Joseph Cornell; he also mounted the first exhibition devoted to Pop Art, 1962's *New Painting of Common Objects*. Over the years, as director of the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., the Menil Collection in Houston, and as commissioner and curator of the São Paulo Biennial and Venice Biennale, Hopps presented work by artists including Barnett Newman, Frank Stella, Robert Irwin, and Diane Arbus. In 1997, Hopps organized a Robert Rauschenberg retrospective for the Menil Collection, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York (where he held the title of adjunct senior curator of twentieth-century art). One landmark event following another, 2003's *James Rosenquist: A Retrospective*, curated by Hopps and Sarah Bancroft, opened at the Menil Collection and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Hopps was founding director of the Menil Collection and later served as its longtime curator of 20th-century art.

About the Menil Collection

A legacy of the philanthropists John and Dominique de Menil, the Menil Collection opened in 1987. The museum presents regular rotations of artworks from its growing permanent collection, organizes special exhibitions and programs throughout the year, publishes scholarly books, and conducts research into the conservation of modern and contemporary art. The Menil Collection's main museum building, the first building in the United States designed by Renzo Piano, anchors a parklike 30-acre campus, which also includes the Cy Twombly Gallery, a site-specific Dan Flavin installation, the Byzantine Fresco Chapel—now a venue for long-term installations by contemporary artists—and outdoor sculpture. A new building for the Menil Drawing Institute by Johnston Marklee, opening October 7, 2017, will be the first freestanding facility in the United States designed expressly for the exhibition and study of modern and contemporary drawings. On December 2, 2017, the Menil will mark its 30th anniversary with a celebratory fundraising gala, only the fourth to be held in the museum's history. The Menil is open Wednesday through Sunday, 11am to 7pm, and charges no admission fee.

On view at the Menil

The Beginning of Everything: Drawings from the Janie C. Lee, Louisa Stude Sarofim, and David Whitney Collections – On view through June 18, 2017

ReCollecting Dogon – On view through July 9, 2017

The Condition of Being Here: Drawings by Jasper Johns – Inaugural exhibition of the Menil Drawing Institute opening October 7, 2017

Mona Hatoum: Terra Infirma – Opening October 13, 2017

Think of Them as Spaces: Brice Marden's Drawings – Opening January 12, 2018 in the Menil Drawing Institute

Roni Horn: When I Breathe, I Draw – Opening April 27, 2018 in the Menil Drawing Institute

Francis Alijs: The Fabiola Project – On view through May 13, 2018 in the Byzantine Fresco Chapel

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Press Contact

Menil Press Office

Tommy Napier

713 535 3170

tnapier@menil.org