

The Menil Collection Opens *Fragments of Memory* at the Menil Drawing Institute

Exhibition presents drawings from the Menil's permanent collection exploring the ways in which the past imbues the present



HOUSTON—August 26, 2024—The Menil Collection opens *Fragments of Memory* at the Menil Drawing Institute on September 20, 2024. On view through January 26, 2025, the exhibition addresses how 20th- and 21st-century artists have placed pieces of personal experiences and historic events at the heart of their work.

Memories in their material form—snapshots, collages, notes, and the like—are often fragmentary and ephemeral and are deeply imbued with emotional weight. In the hands of these artists, the past is alive and replete with possibility. Events are revisited in different ways, creating alternate perspectives and proposing new understandings.

Kelly Montana, Assistant Curator, Menil Drawing Institute, said, “The artists in this exhibition demonstrate a desire to say more than what personal ephemera, historical accounts, and selective memory leave behind. We hope that these works, many of which are new additions to

the museum's collection, will encourage visitors to reimagine how fraught memories and contested histories are accessed and how these recollections impact our present.”

Wardell Milan's (b.1977) *Pulse*, recently acquired by the Menil, recalls the 2016 deadly mass shooting at an Orlando nightclub that targeted the city's queer and Latin American communities. The artist's decision to remember the victims in a vibrant dance celebration is a staunch message of resistance against calculated violence. Milan will participate in an Artist Talk discussing his work on **Thursday, November 14, 7–8 p.m.** at the Menil.

Houston artist Gael Stack (b. 1941) layers texts and images to form the visual ground of her compositions, such as *Untitled (for Tim)*, 1985. Culling from notes, jotted grocery lists, and doodles, often from her family and friends, Stack's work presents a swirl of consciousness as chaotic as it is contemplative. Similarly, Sari Dienes's (1898–1992) *Letterbox*, 1940s–1980s, fuses artwork and scrapbook by juxtaposing decades of personal correspondence from her circle of friends inside a found antique box. The meandering narrative she lays out for the viewer functions as both a composed portrait of her community and an art historical archive.

Also included is *My Door*, a 2013 series featuring six works of a fractured landscape by Luc Tuymans (b. 1958). The scene of a figure photographing a waning sun atop a distant horizon is portrayed through multiple perspectives—all similar but distinctly different. Memory, and how it fragments as time passes, is a foremost theme in the artist's work. For Tuymans and others in the exhibition, the idea of the fragment surfaces in their exploration of vision, identity, and elegy.

The robust list of artists represented in the show also includes James Lee Byars, Jacob El Hanani, Joe Goode, Jasper Johns, Mark Lombardi, Jim Love, Walter Tandy Murch, Denyse Thomasos, Cy Twombly, and Danh Vo.

Fragments of Memory is curated by Kelly Montana, Assistant Curator, Menil Drawing Institute.

About the Menil Collection

Philanthropists and art patrons John and Dominique de Menil established the Menil Foundation in 1954 to foster greater public understanding and appreciation of art, architecture, culture, religion, and philosophy. In 1987, the Menil Collection's main building opened to the public. Today, the Menil Collection consists of a group of 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 welcomes all visitors free of charge to its buildings and surrounding green spaces. menil.org

About the Menil Drawing Institute

The Menil Drawing Institute was established in 2008 in recognition of drawing's centrality in the lives of artists and its crucial role in modern and contemporary artistic culture. The Drawing Institute has since developed an international profile for exhibitions, scholarship, and collaboration. In 2018, a dedicated building for the Menil Drawing Institute, designed by Johnston Marklee, was inaugurated. It is now the site of regular drawings exhibitions, an annual monumental wall drawing commission, public programs, and study. menil.org/drawing-institute

Funding

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Image Caption

Wardell Milan, *Pulse*, 2019. Charcoal, graphite, pastel, oil pastel, acrylic paint, and paper collage on hand-dyed paper, 66 7/8 × 83 1/2 in. (169.9 × 212.1 cm). The Menil Collection, Houston, Purchased with funds provided by the William F. Stern Acquisition Fund and Bridget and Patrick Wade. © Wardell Milan. Photo: Adam Neese

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