

The Menil Collection Presents *Fragments of Memory* at the Menil Drawing Institute This Fall

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



HOUSTON—April 30, 2024— This fall, the Menil Collection will present *Fragments of Memory*, on view at the Menil Drawing Institute September 20, 2024–January 26, 2025. The show addresses the many ways that 20th- and 21st-century artists have placed fragments of personal experiences and historic events at the heart of their work.

Memories have a deeply personal nature, and their material form is often fragmentary and ephemeral—snapshots, collages, notes, and the like—and deeply imbued with emotional weight.

In the hands of the artists whose work is included in this exhibition, the past remains alive and replete with possibility. Past events are revisited in different ways, creating alternate perspectives, and understanding. Wardell Milan's (b.1977) *Pulse*, recently acquired by the

Menil, recalls a 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.

Houston artist Gael Stack (b. 1941) layers texts and images to form the visual ground of her compositions, such as *Untitled (for Tim)*, 1985, acquired by the museum in 2013. Culling from notes, scribbles, 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' (1898–1992) *Letterbox*, 1940s–1980s, fuses artwork and scrapbook by juxtaposing decades of personal correspondence in 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 *At 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. For this artist and others in the exhibition, the idea of the fragment surfaces in their exploration of vision, identity, and elegy.

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 our collection, will encourage visitors to reimagine how fraught memories and contested histories are accessed and how these recollections impact our present."

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, Thomas Schütte, 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

This exhibition is generously supported by Sheila Noeth and Ted Dohman and the City of Houston through Houston Arts Alliance.

Image Caption

Wardell Milan, *Pulse*, 2019. Charcoal, graphite, pastel, oil pastel, acrylic paint, cut-and-pasted paper on hand-dyed paper. 66 7/8 × 83 1/2 inches (169.9 × 212.1 cm). Purchased with funds

provided by the William F. Stern Acquisition Fund and Bridget and Patrick Wade. © Wardell Milan, courtesy of David Nolan Gallery. Photo: Adam Neese

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