

# The Menil Collection

NEWS RELEASE

## The Menil Collection Announces Gladys Nilsson as Menil Drawing Institute's Next *Wall Drawing Series* Artist



HOUSTON—*June 25, 2025*—The Menil Collection is pleased to announce that Chicago-based artist Gladys Nilsson (b. 1940) has been commissioned for the seventh installment of the Menil Drawing Institute's ephemeral *Wall Drawing Series*, **opening September 5, 2025**.

Nilsson studied painting at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago before rising to prominence in the mid-1960s, when she and five other recent Art Institute graduates (Jim Falconer, Art Green, Jim Nutt, Suellen Rocca, and Karl Wirsum) presented the first of a series of provocative group exhibitions under the name Hairy Who. The collective challenged the then prevailing artistic trends, such as pop art and minimalism.

Nilsson is known for her densely layered and meticulously constructed watercolors and collage, populated by casts of bizarre, distorted figures with exaggerated poses that engage in complex webs of interaction. Her crowded compositions are typically marked by deft and fluid lines, candy-colored palettes, humor and playfulness, and a sense of the absurd. Her art draws

inspiration from a wide array of sources, from Egyptian art and classical mythology to German Expressionism, Outlier art, and comics.

*Wall Drawing Series: Gladys Nilsson* is curated by Edouard Kopp, John R. Eckel, Jr. Chief Curator, Menil Drawing Institute. The *Wall Drawing Series* began in 2018 as part of the Drawing Institute's commitment to seeking new approaches to the form and language of drawing. Past participants include Marc Bauer, Mel Bochner, Roni Horn, Marcia Kure, Ronny Quevedo, and Jorinde Voigt.

Gladys Nilsson will present an Artist Talk on Thursday, September 4, 2025, at the Menil Drawing Institute.

### **About the Artist**

Born in Chicago in 1940, Gladys Nilsson studied painting at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Since 1966, Nilsson's work has been the subject of over 50 solo exhibitions, including sixteen at Phyllis Kind Gallery (1970–1979, 1981–1983, 1987, 1991, and 1994, Chicago and New York), and two at The Candy Store (1971 and 1987, Folsom, California). Her work also has been featured in many important museum exhibitions, such as: *Human Concern/Personal Torment* (1969, Whitney Museum of American Art); *Who Chicago?* (1981, Camden Art Center, London); *Parallel Visions: Modern Artists and Outsider Art* (1992, Los Angeles County Museum of Art); *Chicago Imagists* (2011, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Wisconsin); and *What Nerve! Alternative Figures in American Art, 1960 to the Present* (2014, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence). Nilsson is represented in the collections of major museums around the world, including: the Art Institute of Chicago; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Wisconsin; the Milwaukee Art Museum; the Morgan Library, New York; the Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Museum of Modern Art; the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; the Whitney Museum of American Art; and the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut. Nilsson is a recipient of the 2024 Anonymous Was A Woman Award.

### **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](https://www.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](https://menil.org/drawing-institute)

### **Funding**

This wall drawing is generously supported by Sheila Noeth and Ted Dohmen.

### **Image Caption**

Gladys Nilsson. Photo: Alexa Viscius

### **Press Contacts**

The Menil Collection

Jennifer Greene, Communications Manager

(713) 525-9477 / [jgreene@menil.org](mailto:jgreene@menil.org)

Polskin Arts

Tommy Napier, Vice President

(212) 715-1694 / [tommy.napier@finnpartners.com](mailto:tommy.napier@finnpartners.com)