

## The Menil Collection Opens *Out of Thin Air: Emerging Forms* at the Menil Drawing Institute

*Exhibition explores drawings from the permanent collection that are united by a visual language: emerging forms*



HOUSTON—*August 26, 2024*—**The Menil Collection will open *Out of Thin Air: Emerging Forms* on September 20, 2024.** On view exclusively at the Menil Drawing Institute through January 26, 2025, twenty-nine works—dating from the late 1930s to the present—are united by a visual language: emerging forms. Not fully resolved or strictly defined, the works are open, suggestive images that seem as though they are still in the process of becoming. Artists represented include Lee Bontecou, John Cage, Gustavo Díaz, Hiroyuki Doi, Sonia Gechtoff, Gregory Masurovsky, Alan Saret, and Hedda Sterne, among others. The show will include drawings acquired by John and Dominique de Menil as early as the 1950s, several gifts to the collection, and a recent acquisition.

Kirsten Marples, Curatorial Associate, Menil Drawing Institute, said, “*Out of Thin Air: Emerging Forms* is a show about discovery and possibility, and the artworks on view—some of which have never been displayed at the Menil—can be considered as portals to personal reflection. I hope each viewer is empowered to look closely and call on their own interpretations.”

This presentation examines drawing as a meditative process of finding form, whether abstract or representational. Artists have embraced this approach to drawing for many reasons that include unlocking the subconscious and exploring nature's most complex systems, from vast cosmic realms to immaterial energies.

In the first gallery, visitors will encounter a group of works by artist Gregory Masurovsky (1929–2009), who sought to investigate the forces animating the universe. The marks comprising his delicate ink drawings hover between materialization and imminent dispersal. Described by the artist as “a sort of ambiguity rendered with precision,” his drawings suggest fleeting swarms, vibrations, or cloud formations.

Acquired by the museum in 2023, Gustavo Díaz's (b. 1969) *Imaginary Flight Patterns V*, 2021, explores the notion of complexity through an intricate network of marks that recalls electrical currents, aerial maps, or flocks of birds in flight. Díaz will participate in an Artist Talk on **Thursday, October 17, 7–8 p.m.** in Houston, with Kirsten Marples, Curatorial Associate, Menil Drawing Institute, and Jan Burandt, Conservator of Works of Art on Paper, Menil Drawing Institute.

Similarly precise and painstaking are the drawings of Japanese artist Hiroyuki Doi (b. 1946), which are formed through the accumulation of minute circles—each symbolic of the universe. They call to mind celestial galaxies, rapidly multiplying cells, or cresting waves.

As if shaped by a gust of wind, the wispy lines in a large, gestural graphite drawing by Sonia Gechtoff (1926–2018) create order out of chaos, coalescing into a figural shape that straddles representation and abstraction. Gechtoff's drawing will be presented in the second gallery alongside works by Alan Saret (b. 1944), in which similar bursts of linear expression seem endowed with a sense of spiritual life force.

Hedda Sterne (1910–2011) generated some of her ink drawings out of a private meditation practice, which she described as an inward spiraling. Her unfurling masses of line—which suggest leafy vegetables and dark intergalactic voids—never fully resolve as distinct images, instead inviting multiple associations. Lee Bontecou's (1931–2022) cosmic architectures hover, suspended at the center of large sheets. They unlock worlds beyond that seem as if they are continuously coming into view.

*Out of Thin Air: Emerging Forms* is curated by Kirsten Marples, Curatorial Associate, 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](http://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](http://menil.org/drawing-institute)

### **Funding**

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### **Image Caption**

Hiroyuki Doi, *Untitled*, 1990. Ink on washi, 25 1/4 x 39 in. (64.1 x 99.1 cm). The Menil Collection, Houston, Gift of Stephanie and John Smither. © Hiroyuki Doi; all rights reserved. Photo: Paul Hester

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